

Symposium

THE PROBLEM OF THE RELIGIOUS NOVEL—
CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

TRENDS IN RECENT IRISH LITERATURE—ROBERT GREACEN

LANDSCAPE ON A CHRISTMAS CARD—GAMINI SALGADO

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SCHUBERT AND HIS SONGS—VIJITHA WEERASINGHE

POST-IMPRESSIONISM—GAMINI WARNESURIYA

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BUT TO WHAT PURPOSE—L. N. de L. BANDARANAIKE

R. I. F.—CHANDRA JAYAWARDENE

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EDITED BY W. B. C. SILVA

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CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD
THE PROBLEM OF THE
RELIGIOUS NOVEL

I suppose that most novelists and playwrights have considered, at one time or another, the project of writing a religious drama or novel. There is a sound artistic reason for this. Every writer of dramatic fiction, irrespective of his individual beliefs or doubts, is eager to find characters who will exhibit the maximum variety of reactions to external events. The saint is pre-eminently such a character. Because his motives are not dictated by fear, vanity or desire—because his every action is a genuine act of free will—you never can predict what he will do next. The saint is the most flexible of men. He accepts life more fully, more creatively, than any of his neighbours. And therefore he is the most interesting person to write about.

The most interesting and the most difficult. For, in attempting to present such a character to his audience of average men and women, the writer cannot rely at all on that factor of familiarity, of self-recognition, which assists him so powerfully when he is describing average people, recognizable social types. He cannot expect his audience to come half-way to meet him, exclaiming, 'Why, that's just like Mr. Jones!' The saint, considered as an end-product, resembles Mr. Jones as little as he resembles a giraffe. And yet Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown are all potentially saints. This is what the author has somehow to prove to his audience.

It is a task which demands the utmost persuasiveness, deftness and cunning. At every step, prejudices and preconceptions have to be overcome. The public has its preconceived notion of a saint—a figure with a lean face and an air of weary patience, who alternates between moods of forbidding austerity and heart-broken sweetness—a creature set apart from this bad world, a living reproach to our human weakness, in whose presence we feel ill at ease, inferior and embarrassed. In other words, the dreariest of bores.

If I ever write a religious novel, I shall begin by trying to prove that my saint-to-be really is Mr. Jones. Somerset Maugham, for example, does this quite successfully in 'The Razor's Edge.' Larry, when we first meet him, is an entirely reassuring character, lively, natural, normal, a typical American boy. I think that Maugham's choice of such a character—whom readers could so easily identify with their own sons, younger brothers or sweethearts—had a great deal to do with the immense popularity of his book.

So far, so good. But now a second and much greater problem arises. How am I going to show, in terms of dramatic fiction, that decisive moment at which my hero becomes aware of his vocation and decides to do something about it? Maugham is rather vague at this point: he merely suggests that Larry's change of heart is caused by his experiences in the first world war. Aldous Huxley's 'Time Must Have a Stop' avoids the moment altogether—making a huge jump from Sebastian the precocious, cowardly, inhibited schoolboy to Sebastian the mature, meditative man, already far advanced in the practice of spiritual discrimination. One of the classic examples of a conversion-scene is, of course, Dostoyevsky's account of the duel, in 'The Brothers Karamazov,' which starts the process of turning a stupid young bully of a Russian officer into Father Zossima, the saint. How beautifully Dostoyevsky handles this moment of transformation—without the least sentimentality, in terms almost of farce, yet with such warmth, insight and naturalness! We share the young man's exquisite relief when he finds himself suddenly able, by fearlessly asking his opponent's pardon, to break the bonds of a rigid military code which has hitherto conditioned his behaviour and to perform his first act of pure free will. This is the kind of scene I should like to have in my novel—something slightly comic and entirely natural. In history, we know that many conversions have occurred as the result of a vision. But visions, unless you are writing historical fiction, like 'The Song of Bernadette,' seem to me to be undesirable in the early stages of a story, because they excuse the author from explaining what is happening in his hero's mind. Dramatically, they are a form of cheating.

It is all very well to use words like 'conversion' in an article for a religious magazine. They belong to an accepted terminology. I know that my readers will understand what I mean. But this kind of shorthand is never permissible for the novelist, with his mixed and highly sceptical audience. He has to demonstrate all his propositions, clearly and logically, step by step he has to explain, as though they had never been explained before, his hero's motives and objectives; and this, in a religious novel, is particularly difficult. How am I to prove that X isn't merely insane when he turns his back on the whole scheme of pleasures, rewards and satisfactions which are accepted by the Joneses, the Smiths and the Browns, and goes in search of super-conscious, extra-phenomenal experience? The only way I can see how to do this is with the help of the Joneses themselves. I must show that the average men and women of this world are searching, however unconsciously, for that same fundamental reality of which X has already had a glimpse. Certainly, they look for it in the wrong places. Certainly, their methods are quite unpractical. Mr. Jones will find nothing at the bottom of the whisky-bottle, except a headache. But the whisky-bottle is not to be dismissed with a puritanical sneer: it is the crude symbol of Jones's dissatisfaction with surface-consciousness, his need to look more deeply into the meaning of life. The Smiths conform obediently to the standards imposed by the advertisements they read in their newspapers. They drive the prescribed make of car, smoke the recom-

mended brand of cigarettes, spend their leisure time in the ways and at the places which are guaranteed as educational and enjoyable—and yet, at the back of their minds, there is a germ of doubt. Is this really what we were born for? Is this the whole meaning of existence? That doubt may, one day, be their salvation. It is the measure of their kinship with X. For the evolving saint does not differ from his fellow-humans in kind, but only in degree. That is why X can only be understood, artistically, when his story is related to that of the Joneses, the Smiths and the Browns.

The greater part of my novel would deal, of course, with X's struggle towards sainthood, toward complete spiritual realization. I think that most writers have erred in making this phase of their story too sombre and depressing. True, the path of the spiritual aspirant is hard. The mortification of the ego is tedious and painful. But I see no reason for the author to sentimentalize his hero's sufferings, or to allow him to indulge in self-pity. Sport-writers find no pathos in the hardships of a boxer's training. The would-be saint is the last person in the world we should feel sorry for. His sufferings are purely voluntary. If his will slackens, they automatically cease. 'The Garden of Allah' is not really a tragedy, unless one regards it as a tragedy of weakness. If the runaway monk did not genuinely want to return to the monastery, and was only bowing to public opinion, then it was very weak and silly of him to do so. George Moore, in his two novels, 'Evelyn Innes' and 'Sister Teresa' has traced the development of a famous opera-singer into a Catholic nun. It is a wonderful and moving story, full of acute psychological observation, amounting almost to clairvoyance. Moore is at his best in describing that moment of spiritual vertigo and despair when Evelyn, listening to the trivial chatter of the other novices, thinks 'How can I possibly stay here?' and then, remembering the equally trivial chatter at the dinner-parties she used to attend, asks herself 'But how could I possibly go back to the old life?' Nevertheless, I feel that Moore, like many inferior writers, has made his protagonist's spiritual history too gloomy—perhaps simply because he does not carry it far enough. We say good-bye to Evelyn before she has made any permanent adjustment to her new life, and at a time when she has just lost her marvellous voice. The novel ends on a note of sadness, against which I protest. Surely the mishaps and setbacks which beset the path of spiritual progress can be recounted with some of the humour which invests one's failures in cookery or falls in learning to ski? Maugham, I believe, would agree with me here. There is nothing gloomy about Larry's career. Unfortunately, however, his creator has gone to the other extreme, and one gets the impression that becoming a saint is just no trouble at all.

And so we come to the last phase of the story, the portrait of the perfected saint. Here, I am sure, I should give up in despair. Nothing short of genius could succeed in such a task. For the mystical experience itself can never be described. It can only be written around, hinted at, dimly reflected in word and deed. So far, the novelists have given us nothing but brilliant glimpses—the incident

(Continued on page 13)

ROBERT GREACEN

TRENDS IN RECENT IRISH POETRY

About the end of the "thirties," Southern Ireland, after the great lowering of the Irish Literary Movement, seemed to have gone into a fallow phase; her earlier dynamism was no longer evident. In the North of Ireland—whose main mass of population differs in religion and tradition from the rest of the country—on the other hand, a few young writers reacting against a concentrated money-complex, felt they had to get out of the provincial rut if they were to achieve anything of more than ephemeral and localised merit. This new work was based largely on English models and only in a secondary sense on Anglo-Irish: and still more remotely on the Gaelic. But a few instances can hardly constitute a movement, unless there is cohesion among the writers concerned, as well as a willing public of keen, alert and critical readers. These poets soon found themselves confronted with conditions of semi-war—Northern Ireland had one foot in the war and one out of it, for certain political reasons—while forming their audience, stuttering out poems to a chaotic world.

For the time being, some of the young poets stayed at home. During the early "forties" a group at Queen's University, Belfast, formed in a definitely *ad hoc* manner about the Northman Magazine: Roy McFadden, John Gallen, myself and the others had little in common save a similar intellectual background. McFadden's early work, highly emotional, coloured and melodious, contrasted with the precise, almost strained severity of Gallen's clear imagery. McFadden is haunted by the evil of our time, conscious of the futility of war and despairing of man's teachability.

John Gallen, with whom I edited the Northman, was accidentally killed early last year in India, shortly before demobilisation. A fine intellectual, we have lost one of the most alive and sensitive minds of our generation. His poetry, of which only a few short pieces appeared in English magazines and anthologies, was based on his deepest religious and emotional experiences; to it he brought his whole being. Underlying sensuous and lyric qualities is the religious pattern evolved through conflict and stern discipline of mind. He owed much to T. S. Eliot and, particularly in his earlier poems, Dylan Thomas. Both religious attitude and influences can be seen in the fine opening to "In This Dead Month," perhaps his most successfully sustained poem, published, incidentally, in the Crown and the Sickle:

*In this dead month, between
the agony and the labour
all things are dead.
Breath of the roots is still, and in the hush*

*rises no scent of blood drying or of earth flowing,
I alone am left alive, watching
the cold convulsing of my dead members and I know
in this dead month, that I can never die.*

Two themes, one generalised and one personal, intermingle and integrate; the echoes show the assimilation of influence, not the hand of an adolescent trading in pastiche. The result, as in so many of his other poems, is both satisfying and beautiful.

Louis MacNeice, Belfast born, was never one of the more enthusiastic politicians of the New Verse movement, yet a certain section of his work—Autumn Journal, for instance—shows how definitely he was of it. Both he and Cecil Day Lewis (the latter was born in Eire) have interspersed in their more didactic verse many finely lyrical poems; they both use the “repeat refrain” to good effect. Both on occasion adopt Irish attitudes of thought and emotion that often are not recognised as such. It was more recently that W. R. Rodgers, really of their generation, appeared as a poet, vital, original, somewhat intoxicated by the virtuositities of verse technique. His chief influence is Hopkins which, in a man of less ability, might be exceedingly dangerous; but Rodgers, less wedded to tricks like repeated alliteration, promises a great future. How compelling he is when he writes:

*Bearnagh and Lamigan and Chimney-Rock,
Spelga, Pulgrave and Cove—all these names lie
Silently in my grass-grown memory,
Each one bright and steady as a frog's eye;
But touch it and it leaps, leaps like a bead
Of mercury that breaks and scatters
Suddenly in a thousand shining strings
And running spools and ever-dwindling rings
Round the mind's bowl, till at last all drop
Lumped and leaden again to one full stop.*

Another contemporary of Rodgers is John Hewitt, also an art critic of distinction. He, too, is a Belfastman—a townsman who has discovered rural Ulster, who knows and loves its soil and rocks and chequered history. Although he has been writing and publishing verse for about twenty years Hewitt has limited his audience by not publishing in book form; at last, a volume now in the press is to appear with the imprint of a leading London firm.

Shortly before the last war the early fire had gone out of nationalism in Southern Ireland, for political freedom was no longer a sharp or simple issue. Rather, during the last “thirties” the fresher minds were drawn to an undefined Left in politics and to realism in literature: there was what some considered an Irish parallel to “proletarian” writing. Patrick Kavanagh was not affected by the new winds from across the Irish Sea: his roots in peasant Monaghan, whence his family had migrated from the West, were too deep not to be strongly nationalist and Roman Catholic. But as his long poem, “The Great Hunger,” was to show in 1942, he was profoundly aware of the social and personal frustration that hung like a pall over the Irish countryside. This moving poem explored the life of the Irish peasant with

an understanding that would be impossible for a town poet less steeped in the life of the people. There is a devastating irony in such lines as these :

*The world looks on
And talks of the peasant :
The peasant has no worries ;
In his little lyrical fields
He ploughs and sows ;
He eats fresh foods,
He loves fresh women,
He is his own master
As it was in the Beginning
The simpleness of peasant life.*

And then there is the implicit agony :

*But the peasant in his little acres is tied
To a mother's womb by the wind-toughened navel-cord
Like a goat tethered to the stump of a tree—
He circles around and around wondering why it should be.*

But quotation cannot give an adequate idea of the "Great Hunger," for the effect is cumulative.

F. R. Higgins, who sat at the feet of W. B. Yeats, had a strong lyrical quality, a voice of his own. I do not know whether he had a hatred for what Yeats considered the modern "rabble" equivalent of Whiggery, but he wrote no marches for the near-Fascist Blueshirts of General O'Duffy. Higgins' last book, *The Gap of Brightness*, came out shortly before his death. I remember how in 1940, that summer of European debacle, its dark, smouldering passion matched so well, in its private way, the public terror. During the last years of the nineteen-thirties Leslie Daiken, Ewart Milne and the woman poet, Blanaid Salkeld, were producing work which they have largely augmented during the past few years.

The newer arrivals are Valentin Iremonger, Pearse Hutchinson, Maurice James Craig, Freda Laughton, Sam Harrison and Nick Nicholls : all these have written mostly in Dublin though only the first two are native Dubliners. Iremonger and Craig are nearest to what one may term "lucidity." Iremonger's work has a defined edge and bite : he veers a little to the classic in literature and has a good technical grip on his subject-matter. Above all, he is not a mere propagandist. One of Valentin Iremonger's most moving poems, the one about Icarus, shows his effective control of catchword slang and colloquial comment :

*But star-gazer, big-time-going, chancer Icarus
Like a dog on the sea lay and the girls forgot him
And Daedalus, too busy hammering another job,
Remembered him only in pubs. No bugler at all
Sobbed taps for the young fool then, reported missing,
Presumed drowned, wing-bones and feathers on the tides
Drifting in casually, one by one.*

Maurice James Craig, with a background of Belfast, Dublin and Cambridge is difficult to classify as a poet ; his poems are even, well-worked, drily ironical, while his ballads have a fine gusto. In one of the latter he writes :

*O the bricks they will bleed and the rain it will weep
And the damp Lagan fog lull the city to sleep ;
It's to hell with the future and live on the past
May the Lord in His mercy be kind to Belfast.*

In contrast, there is what one might rightly call a grouping of those poets who turn away deliberately from English influences to Gaelic and traditional sources—Austin Clarke, Robert Farren and Padraic Fallon among others. Donagh MacDonagh, who has written an entertaining verse-play, "Happy as Larry," shares of both worlds. Therefore one sees the conflict of two tendencies, an inward and an outward movement. Except for the Northern writers and exceptions here and there in the South, poetry has in a sense leap-frogged over the violently social and war phases, to something like emphasis on the personal vision. Like Auden, many Irish poets are attempting to strike that all-but-impossible balance :

*There is no such thing as the state
And no one exists alone.*

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GAMINI SALGADO

LANDSCAPE ON A CHRISTMAS CARD

It stands on the photo-laden mantel-piece,
Above the fire's large, conceited glow ;
In a corner, strangled in tinsel, the fir-tree wears
Bright baubles with a conscious elegance.

Judiciously silver-dusted, the decorous snow
Is background for a coach and six in blue—
In front, a stout, top-hatted scarlet smudge
Slaps its Dickensian paunch with yuletide zest.

The holly comes in of course ; three bright balls
With green baize leaves, complacent, geometrical—
The whole caged in with bars of gold and black
And sold at Woolworth's, with envelopes, for six pence.

Inside, embossed in quaint, olde English script,
The well-beloved wish, soaked in Christian love ;
To Mum and Dad, to miscellaneous aunts and uncles,
Tied in pink ribbon and posted early for Christmas.

Inelegant now, to pause before the fire
And look beyond the pretty black-gold frame
To where the holly bleeds upon the heedless snow
And bells ring out the stuttering peal of guns.

Nottingham, Winter, 1948.

UPALI AMARASINGHE WILFRED OWEN

Although the poetry of Wilfred Owen is not unfamiliar or forgotten the reputation and currency which his verse has secured for him does not with any justice reflect the power and brilliance of his best work. Apart from a *Memoir* in Edmund Blunden's all too rare edition of his collected poems and some interesting quasi-biographical information in Sassoon's *Siegfried's Journey*, his work has rarely received the type of serious critical attention it so eminently demands. Time has conferred upon his verse the somewhat dubious distinction of a place in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and has made his "Greater Love," mainly on account of its romantic appeal, into something of a standard anthology-piece. But for the general reader Owen remains, somewhat indiscriminatingly, as one of the lesser Georgians, among Ralph Hodgson, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Harold Monro and all the other music-makers and dreamers of dreams. It is time some attempt were made to rescue his better work from such undeserved critical neglect.

In examining Owen's poetry it soon becomes evident to even the most casual reader that it possesses only a single subject, an unvarying theme—the war. As he puts it himself in his fragmentary *Preface* to Sassoon's edition of his poems—

'Above all this book is not concerned with poetry.

The subject of it is war, and the pity of war.

The poetry is in the pity.'

As a young man influenced by the French poet Laurent Tailhade, Owen commenced writing in his early twenties, some little time after the outbreak of the first world war. Unfortunately he did not live to see its end. On November 4th, seven days before the end, he was killed while leading his men across the Sambre Canal. His untimely death at the early age of twenty-five brought to a tragic end his short but distinguished poetic career.

Friendly critics are sometimes fond of referring to the event in passing with a certain melancholy, even nostalgic, regret. It was easy to conjecture casually that had he lived he would have developed into one of the major poets of the century. It is undesirably a sense of this unfulfilled promise which prompted Sassoon to write—'I do not doubt that had he lived he would have produced poems of sustained grandeur and ampler design.' This may or may not have been so, but some idea of its conclusiveness as a critical judgment may be obtained if we place it beside that of I. M. Parsons, himself an appreciative critic, who found it possible to comment on the question with equal assurance—'had Owen lived it is unlikely that he would have written finer poems.' But the grounds of controversy here, as will be seen in a moment, are not of any decisive significance. Perhaps on different themes Owen may have written indifferently or magnificently well, but our feelings about this must inevitably remain unsatisfactorily speculative. Parsons and Sassoon, after examining his verse, could come to conclusions irreconcilably different. No con-

clusive answer could ever be possible, and even if it were, it could make little difference to Owen's poetry as it stands. The only important way in which his untimely death affected his poetry as written was that it prevented him from writing upon any subject other than that of war.

War as a rule tends to produce two kinds of poetry. Quite commonly as in the signal case of Rupert Brooke it tends to produce a sort of verse which has very little indeed to do with war, the occasion of its creation. Averting their eyes from the intolerable horror which is immediately before them, such writers rely on the frail wings of poesy to help them spin out the diaphanously pretty-poetry of escapism. Such attempts at creation, of their very nature immature, heroic and sentimental, could hardly hope to succeed. Any poem of Brooke's on the war would bring this out very well but his sonnet on 'The Dead' would do as well as any other.

*'Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But dying has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.*

The poem is a pompous piece of sentimental glamourisation. The dead provide Brooke with an excuse to pour out the warm gush of feeling which the idea (not the reality) of war and romantic adventurous death aroused in his boyish heart. Everything is beautiful, sentimental, heroically 'moving.' The dead die decorously, 'pouring out the red sweet wine of youth' and Holiness, 'lacked so long,' Love and Pain watch Honour paying out wages while Nobleness walks about in the background. All around echo hollowly cracked bugles dragged from the dusty attic of 19th century Romanticism. The poem in its stacey theatricality avoids reality with consistent and commendable success.

It is with such writers in mind, who sang so assuredly of the glory and grandeur of war, that Owen wrote—

*'If in some smothering dream, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin . . .
My friend you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria Mori.'*

But distinct from such escapist writers who tended more toward a rejection than an inclusion of the very experiences which drove them into expression, there were others who attempted to set down their responses to war in terms of objective reality. The approach was of its very nature superior because more solid, mature and courageous. But those who wrote successfully in this manner were not numerous. They included Robert Graves, Edgell Rickwood, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon and most notably of all, Owen.

In his early poems printed in Army magazines like, *Hydra*, Owen succeeded mainly in photographing honestly and often with painful accuracy the horror that lay around him. But these were not his best work. The starkness of the reality they presented tended to exclude almost everything else. Good poems could be written, and were written by Owen himself, in this manner but they were but rarely anything more than effective minor verse. The danger was that even when the most rigorous objectivity was pursued the mind that created was too closely involved with the heart that suffered. But in his later work Owen rises above such simple realism. The outstanding qualities of his best work were not merely the powerful strength of his realism but the fine maturity of his general attitude towards war.

The strength of his poems themselves lie in the manner in which they cohere around vivid, concrete and often horribly evocative details. The particular, the objective, the real are invariably the outstanding qualities of his verse.

Take *Exposure*, for instance, which begins—

*'Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us . . .
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent . . .
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient . . .
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious nervous,
But nothing happens.'*

The half-rhymes, a characteristic innovation of Owen's, suggest strongly the initial sense of tense frustration. But the attitude maintained is more complex than this. The ironic intention is easily missed by the casual reader. What is intolerable to these soldiers, sick to death of the war, waiting in the night is paradoxically its very peacefulness.

'Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent.'

The stillness, the silence, the normality itself is what is difficult to endure.

The short line—

'But nothing happens'

which is repeated time and again with insistent emphasis in the poem becomes finally a supplication, an entreaty, a prayer that something should happen—that the bestial fighting they revulse and hate should begin again.

Comment has sometimes been made about the manner in which Owen used alliteration, assonance and dissonance in his poetry. But the characteristic device which he employed most effectively in his best work may be termed the use of an organic, internal *contrast*. He achieved this most often by the skill with which he merged contrasting ideas in a single image, by the adroitness and precision with which he

manipulated the ambiguous meanings of words. These characteristics of his technique may best be seen by a detailed examination of three of his most celebrated poems—*Anthem for Doomed Youth*, *Greater Love* and finally *Arms and the Boy*.

The first of these *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is a comparatively early poem of Owen's. The theme is the same as that of Brooke's sonnet to *The Dead* quoted earlier with which it invites comparison—

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns, only the stuttering rifles
rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells,
And bugles calling for them from sad shires—
What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

The strength of the sonnet lies in the insistent background of reality which is always present at the back of the poem. It prevents the sonnet from moving unchecked as Brooke's does into the easy cataloguing of a number of beautiful images. The background of reality gives Owen's feeling an objective definition which Brooke could never achieve.

The technique requires some comment. Two sets of contrasted ideas are superimposed and played against each other throughout the poem. Against the harsh, turbulent anger of guns, wailing shells and men dying like cattle Owen poses the quiet, distanced, religiously solemn associations, proper to an anthem, of bells, prayers, orisons, candles and choirs. The turbulence and quiet are welded organically together with singular power and brilliance. The stuttering voice of the rifle changes into the intonation of the priest pattering the final orisons over the dead, and in—

'The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells'

the wailing of the shells and the voices of the choristers become fused in a single song.

Owen's best-known poem *Greater Love*, a favourite of the anthologists, is too well-known to need any quotation here. The centre of the poem is again a contrast. The body of a dead soldier and that of his mistress become symbols of the two types of love—the sexual and the spiritual—with which the poem deals. The 'greater love' of the former becomes in fact its theme. But the contrast itself is developed with a certain care. Each aspect of physical loveliness in his mistress is seen again as a horrible travesty of itself in the body of the soldier. Her full, red lips merge into his blood-bedabbled ones; her tremulously exquisite attitude into the exquisite agony of his knife-skewed limbs; her voice, soft 'even as wind murmuring through rafters loft' into the rasp of his cough.

The poignancy of the grief results from the skill with which the contrast is maintained.

Arms and the Boy, perhaps the finest piece of work Owen did, is worth considering in some detail. The fine sensitiveness with which he controls ambiguities of meaning gives it a certain terse complexity.

*'Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade
How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood ;
Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash ;
And thinly drawn with famishing for flesh.'*

The way in which the words *cold* and *keen* are made to function is important. *Cold* can refer not only to the chill coldness of steel but also, in human terms, to an absence of emotion, a mercilessness. So too *keen*, means not only *sharp* but the metaphorical shift which enables him to write of the *hunger* and *famishing* (purely animal qualities again) of the weapon is maintained in the final pun on *drawn*—a dagger not only unsheathed and bare but drawn and emaciated, consumed with fierce hunger for blood. What Owen has done here is to enter the weapons with a certain inhuman, even bestially evil power. They become together with the boy symbolic vehicles for the expression of his overpowering feeling of hatred and horror for the violence of war and its wasteful cruelty. The boy is as much a symbol of the natural order, as they are of an unnatural, a perverted one.

*'Lend him to stroke these blind, blunt bullet-heads
Which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads.'*

Note here how the affectionate associations of 'stroke,' 'long' and 'nuzzle' serve to conceal yet emphasise the shocking horror that these same 'blind bullet-heads which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads' (an analogy to the affectionate movements of horses and dogs is implicit here) which the boy handles so lovingly, are in fact the agents of his maiming and destruction.

The final stanza combines with singular effectiveness and power the contrasted symbols of good and evil—

*'For his teeth seem for laughing round an apple.
There lurk no claws beneath his fingers supple ;
And God will grow no talons at his heels
Nor antlers in the thickness of his curls.'*

One notices the change from the natural to the perverse—from fingers, to its bestial perversion claws ; heels to talons ; curls to antlers.

The coherence and unity of the final images may be compared with those of Stephen Spender's poem on the same theme, *Ultima Ratio Regum*, where the image of—

'The boy lying dead under the olive trees'

is never as satisfactorily linked with

'The machine-gun anger that quickly scythed the grasses.'

Arms and the Boy expresses in a general way Owen's attitude to war. He was too intelligent and mature to be taken in by all the heroic *blaque* and tinsel patriotism which carried Brooke and the rest off their feet. He saw piercingly behind the facade of propaganda and big talk which accompanies any war. His hatred was not a simple hatred directed against the enemy. He could write in *Strange Meeting*,

'I am the enemy you killed, my friend.'

Instead the hatred he felt was for war itself and for those responsible for it—those who appear as the old men in *Parable of the old Men and*

the Young,' whom he symbolised with bitter irony by

'*Bold uncles smiling ministerially,*'

all 'the valiant who aren't dead.' He saw war in all its ugliness and horror, but nevertheless he accepted it. His acceptance itself was never resigned or fatalistic. His response was far more positive—a bitter anger at its wasteful stupidity chastened by a sense of sublime compassion and pity, which in its hard objectivity was quite free of the pathetic or the sentimental.

THE RELIGIOUS NOVEL—(Continued from Page 3)

of the Bishop's candlesticks in 'Les Misérables,' the few interviews with Father Zossima, Huxley's sketch of Bruno Rontini. These three men are only minor characters in long and crowded stories. Maugham is greatly to be admired for his more ambitious attempt—even if, as I have indicated above, it is not altogether successful. Tolstoy, toward the end of his career, outlined what might have been a masterpiece. We cannot be sure. The life of Father Sergius is told in less than fifty pages. Perhaps even Tolstoy felt himself unequal to the undertaking. Perhaps the truly comprehensive religious novel could only be written by a saint—and saints, unfortunately, are not in the habit of writing novels.

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VIJITHA WEERASINGHE

SCHUBERT AND HIS SONGS

Of the Great Masters, the names of Mozart, Handel and Schubert stand out as song-writers. While Mozart excelled in Opera, and Handel both in Opera and Oratorio, Schubert is probably the greatest composer of lieder the world has ever known.

Franz Schubert was born in Vienna, bred in Vienna, and is considered the classical embodiment of musical Vienna. In comparison, the other great Viennese masters—Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Gluck and Brahms—were mere visitors from Austria, Bohemia and Western Germany.

Schubert was born in 1797 and died in 1828, thus spending a scant 31 years on this earth; this fact must be considered in estimating his genius. During this time, he wrote 10 symphonies, about 25 chamber works, 14 sonatas for pianoforte, 3 operas and 5 operettas, 6 masses, many secular pieces for choral voices, and 606 songs. His works are said to reach the total of nearly a thousand.

His first instrument was the violin for which he wrote very little. However, his melodic inventiveness found its strongest and immediate expression in the song. He had a beautiful treble voice which secured for him a place in the Choir of the Imperial Chapel in Vienna, and undoubtedly helped to foster his interest in singing and songs.

Schubert's first music teacher was his father, a musician of sorts; then he studied with Michael Holzner and later with the great Salieri, who had taught no less a person than Beethoven. In spite of the instruction he received, Schubert always remained an instinctive rather than a learned craftsman: the beauty of his art lay in the natural ease with which it subdued its materials. Although he was not particularly keen on or good at writing fugues, the wonderfully unconstrained combining of melodies, as in the slow movement of his C major symphony, bears sufficient testimony to Schubert's skill as a contrapuntist.

Melody flowed from Schubert like water from an inexhaustible fountain. He was the first composer who realized fully that music could adequately express the three essential qualities of a poem—its meaning, its mood, and its form; he composed his songs accordingly. The melodies of his songs are distinctive: One feels that no other music would fit those words. Songs written by other composers to words which Schubert had set, have not been very successful; perhaps the only exceptions being Loewe's setting of Goethe's "Erl-könig" (The Erl King), Mendelssohn's "Faith In Spring" and "The King of Thule" from Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust."

It is said that Schubert composed so rapidly and prolifically, that he sometimes failed to recognize some of his own songs when he heard them after a period. When he had done writing one work he immediately proceeded with the next. Only a few songs were revised after they were written, and that too because Schubert was asked to take an example from Beethoven who carefully revised his compositions.

During a certain period of his life, Schubert shared his humble

lodgings with the German poet Mayrhofer some of whose poems he set to music. Mayrhofer tossed them to him across the table and Schubert would set them to music completing one song down to the last detail before Mayrhofer could toss over his next poem. Among these is "Der See" (The Lake)—a supreme masterpiece.

Schubert had a reputation for being able to compose anywhere and in any surroundings. His song "Der Zwerg" came to life in a music shop, and he scored an overture for two pianos in hospital while conversing with a friend. Once Schubert, while dining out with some friends, was glancing through a book of poems. While so doing he had murmured that he had 'such a nice melody in his head.' A friend promptly grabbed a bill, hastily drew some staves on it, and gave it to Schubert who proceeded to put down the melody. This is the legend of how—in the unromantic atmosphere of a third-rate restaurant, among hurrying waiters and obstreperous customers—the immortal "Serenade" was born.

Of Schubert's songs a substantial number are masterpieces. At fourteen he took his first important song "Hagar's Klage" (Hagar's Lament) to Salieri who approved of it. At the age of eighteen (*i.e.*, in 1815, a vintage year for Schubert compositions) he gave to the world a gem of the first water, acclaimed by many the greatest song ever written—"The Erl King." It would be taking a pardonable liberty to write at some length on such a masterpiece.

When Schubert set to music the words of Goethe's poem "Erl-könig" (The Erl King), he wrought a miracle. It is the story of a father riding home through the night clasping his child close. The Erl King is a German mythical bogey who called the child to him offering various enticements.

"Come down with me you handsome boy,
I've many a game and many a toy."

and again:

"Oh! come, sweet boy, thro' the gloom we'll fare,
For my lovely daughter awaits thee there,
She shall dance with thee ev'ry night in the hall,
With music and singing thy heart shall enthrall."

But the child cries out:

"My father, my father, oh canst thou not hear
The Erl King calling to me low and clear?"

and again:

"My father, my father, with pale outstretch'd hands
The Erl King's daughter out yonder stands."

The father tries to calm the child when he first cried out, saying:

"'Tis but the wither'd leaves blowing wild!"

and to the child's second cry:

"'Tis only the willow ghostly and grey!"

The Erl King losing patience says that he will take the child by force, and the child cries out:

"My father, my father, he seizes me now,
The breath of the Erl King is on my brow!"

The father in terror rides madly on, and

"He reached his home in doubt and dread,
But in his arms the boy—lay dead."

"The Erl King" presents to the vocalist technical difficulties which are not easily overcome. It demands a singer with an agile voice and good technique. The singer is taxed with four different parts (the narrator, the child, the father and the Erl King). It contains the expression of several emotions, in addition to many modulations. Indeed it would take a good singer many months of serious study to be able to render this song well enough even to a degree.

The song was greatly admired, and the only criticism was an objection to the discord which appears when the child cries out "My father, my father" terrified by the spirit he can hear and see. This is a deliberate discord and Schubert was the first composer ingenious enough to introduce such an unconventional twist to secure the desired effect. The discord expresses to perfection the anguish of the dying child, and has long been recognised as the finest thing in the song—as the unmistakable mark of genius. It was not appreciated because approximately a hundred and thirty-three years ago, the average musical ear was not prepared for it!

Schubert's work is essentially lyrical. The themes from his instrumental works may be hummed or whistled and sound like songs. His quintet "The Trout" is so-called because it contains variations on the theme of his song "Die Forelle" (The Trout). Schubert's incomparable D minor Quartet contains variation on the theme of his "Der Tod Und Das Mädchen" (Death and the Maiden) song. "Der Wanderer" Schubert expanded into one of his greatest piano works—The Wanderer-Fantasia, which is virtually a symphonic poem. It is worthy of note that a successful song has been written to the music of Schubert's pianoforte Impromptu in A flat. The "Swing Fiends" have utilized (and needless to say—ruined) a theme from the symphony in B minor. [There exists a popular misconception that this symphony known as the "Unfinished," could not be completed because Schubert died before he could do so. The fact is that he forgot to write the final movement. As this symphony has since been completed by Frank Merrick the title "Amnestic Symphonia" (Forgotten Symphony) is considered more appropriate.]

Not the least thing remarkable about Schubert's songs is their accompaniments. The accompaniment is an integral part of a song, and a Schubert song in particular rendered unaccompanied, loses much of its characteristic beauty. Schubert's accompaniments may be regarded as pieces of programme music, *i.e.*, descriptive music like Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, as opposed to absolute music, which is music existing for its own sake like a Bach Fugue.

The accompaniment to the "Serenade" (words by Rellstab) is reminiscent of the strumming of a guitar—the traditional troubadour's instrument. That of the "Erl King" even to an indifferent listener, is the mad galloping of a horse. That of "Gretchen am Spinnrade" (Margaret at the Spinning Wheel) to words from Goethe's "Faust" and another notable masterpiece is at once recognised to express the rapid revolution of a spindle. The accompaniment of "Softly Murmuring Stream" to words by von Salis and written in typical barcarolle time, is soft, tranquil, and ripples along with the song in a flow of melody. The impression of restlessness in "Rastlose Liebe" (Restless Love) with words by Goethe, is conveyed by the perpetual movement

melody. The impression of restlessness in "Rastlose Liebe" (Restless Love) with words by Goethe, is conveyed by the perpetual movement of the arpeggio accompaniment. The haunting effect in the accompaniment to "The Wraith" is produced by a simple device. Schubert was responsible for giving the piano accompaniment an increased significance.

Schubert wrote three song-cycles, two of them in collaboration with a minor poet—Wilhelm Müller, whose verses are simple, frankly sentimental and therefore touching. These are "Die Schön Müllerin" (The Fair Maid of the Mill) containing 20 songs, and "Der Winterreise" (The Winter Journey) containing 24 songs. The last cycle of songs is not a true cycle since there is no common ideal linking the poems, which are by Heine, Rellstab and Seidl, together. The publisher called it "Schwanengesang" (Swan Song) which is an inaccurate title.

Schubert set to music the works of poets great and small. "To Music" with words by Schober is a straightforward melody with hardly a modulation as is "Au den Mond" (To the Moon) with words by Goethe. "Am Meer" (By the Sea) words by Heine, is also a simple song with a descriptive accompaniment. "Night and Dreams" to words by Schiller apostrophizing night, is an appropriately sedate melody. In "Der Wanderer" the melody conveys truthfully the feeling of the words. "Ungeduld" (Impatience) to words by Müller, rushes along to terminate in a short expressive passage. "The Trout," whose happy strains breathes of the open air and pictorial in effect, is to words by Daniel Schubert. "Heidenröstein" (Hedge Roses) words by Goethe, is a pretty strophic song. "Der Jung Nonne" (The Novice) is a singularly passionate song with a tempestuous accompaniment. "Death and the Maiden" consist of two parts. First, the maiden exhorts Death to leave her alone for 'her soul is full of fear,' and it is sung quickly and fearfully. In the second part, Death claims the Maiden, and the music is slow and dark with many repetitions of the same note. The "Cradle Song" (Wiegenlied) is full of the tenderness that a lullaby demands, while "Wohin" (Whither) is very melodious and subtly expressive. "The Organ Grinder" (Der Leierman) words by Müller, although simple, monotonous, and intrinsically a dialogue between accompaniment and solo voice, has a strange fascination.

Schubert set to music German translations of two Shakespeare songs. They are "Hark! Hark! the Lark!" a particularly bright and merry song, and "Who Is Sylvia" consisting of three verses sung to the same melody. He also set poems from Scott's "Lady of the Lake" (in German of course) the most popular being "Ave Maria." Its popularity may be gauged by the fact that "Ave Maria" has been arranged for almost all solo instruments, and has been scored for orchestra and choir by many eminent musicians.

It is passing strange, that the operas and operettas of so brilliant a song-writer as Schubert, should not have been successful. Yet the fact remains that they all had shocking short shrift. These included "The Devils' Pleasure Castle," "Fierrebras" with a libretto by Josef Kupelweiser, "Die Zwillingbrüder" (The Twin Brother), "Alphonso and Estrella" and "Rosamunde." Now, except for a few

extracts, and the Ballet Music from "Rosamunde," they have all passed into a probably undeserved oblivion.

Schubert influenced all the German song-composers of the 19th century, among them such musical giants as Schumann, Brahms, and Mendelssohn, and Hugo Wolf who was almost exclusively a song-writer—and a great one at that. Schubert's setting of Goethe's "Au Schwager Kronos" which is an ode to Time has been described as "titanic." Schubert's style in this song illustrates his influence on Wagner.

Within the space of thirty-one years, Schubert left for imperishable heritage, a larger life work than other composers of twice his age have accomplished; what he gave to the world in song can never be replaced. The epitaph on his tomb which lies a short distance from Beethoven's grave (a wish of Schubert's to be buried there being complied with), epitomizes Schubert the Man and his Music. It reads: "Rich in what he gave; richer in what he promised."

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GAMINI WARNESURIYA

HISTORY OF MODERN MOVEMENTS IN ART

II.—POST-IMPRESSIONISM

The name Post-Impressionism was invented by Roger Fry and includes all those progressive and reactionary movements in painting which succeeded Impressionism towards the end of the nineteenth century.

It must be emphasised that any intellectual attempt at classification is bound to be dangerous. A sort of academic analysis would certainly warp the real significance of art and thereby hinder appreciation. Classification can only lead to a survey of superficial technical peculiarities. The real meaning of art is something far more profound than that. Any work of art must convey an emotion or a feeling. It is in the intensity of that feeling which could be 'infected' to others that the greatness of the work lies. One does not need to bother about theories to be genuinely moved by art. At the same time it is quite useless and even dishonest to force upon oneself a false emotion, when on its own the picture does not excite any such feeling at all. New advances of creative artists have often been taken up by their followers and admiring critics, and explained away in highly complex and 'intellectual' theories, which to the artists concerned might not have even vaguely occurred. It is not the function of art to blindly follow a dogma nor is it the literal transcription of accepted appearances, but it is essentially the communication of an emotion. There is much truth in the saying that, "All true art is wireless telegraphy," where the objects painted are not merely imitated but arranged and-selected in such a way as to convey a particular feeling. It is the lack of this essential feeling that characterises most of the arid, barren works of academic painters. To them the highest achievement is the mastery of a technique used by a painter who worked at least half a century earlier. They attach overmuch importance to superficial effects rather than to the vivifying qualities that underlie the work of the masters. Academies are more or less technical schools that produce mechanical unimaginative painters who are capable only of imitating a technical 'heresy' developed earlier, and canonized by the academic bodies. It is therefore not surprising to find Academic Exhibitions of today filled with poor imitations of Impressionism, the very 'heresy' which they chastised fifty years ago. All this seems to have very little to do with Post-Impressionism, but it is quite important to realize before studying the work of any group of painters, that the main point about a work of art is the underlying emotion that it conveys, and not the degree of verisimilitude or of technical merits.

Every manner of expression had its own period of dominance. The mental life of the age probably had its influence on it. It has been suggested that the vagueness of Impressionism was the counterpart in art of Balfour's 'philosophic doubt' and Huxley's agnosticism. Whatever the significance of it may be, it is an undoubted fact that the manner of expression has to change if there is to be any progress in

creative art. This change might be brought about by external influence together with an inner call for novelty as one form grows stale. However it is quite evident when considering the works of academicians, that those who slavishly followed the technical principles of the innovators, achieved only dead imitations, lacking in the fresh vitality that is to be found only in the works of pioneers. This is because the original creative artist worked instinctively. There was not that weary exhortation to follow a technical formula mechanically. His manner came from within, as a natural consequence of the urge to express himself. The work of the original artist, also seems spontaneous because of its naturalness and fullness of emotion.

The original Impressionists produced significant art of great creative importance, but their followers extirpated the soul from the body and developed the academic vice of merely imitating the technique, solely for the purpose of achieving its surface merits rather than as an instrument for emotional expression. As said earlier there has always been a tendency for the manner of expression to change. Even Seurat, who produced almost literal representations in most of his pointillist paintings, showed a significant departure towards Oriental ideals in his famous 'Le Chahut.' The naturalism of the luminists did not seem to lead very far. When fully exploited as in neo-Impressionism it only offered a close substitute for colour photography. It became time therefore for the more creative artists to make of Impressionism a leaping board to arrive at a new manner. The result was a sumptuous variety of manners.

"The Impressionists made the grand escape from the body. They painted him, or her, a web of woven shadows and gleams—delicious! and quite true as far as it goes. A purely optical, visual truth, which paint is supposed to be. They painted delicious pictures, a little too delicious, but when the cat came back from the delicious Impressionist excursion it came back rather tattered, but bristling with its claws out. The glorious escape was all an illusion. There was substance still in the world a thousand times be damned to it! There was the body, the great lumpy body. What really existed was lumps, lumps. Then paint them—this was the rebellious mood of the Post-Impressionists. They still hate the body—hate it—but in a rage they admit its existence and paint it as huge lumps, tubes, cubes, planes, volumes, spheres, cones, cylinders, all the 'pure' or mathematical forms of substance."* This return to form, volume and substance as a reaction against flimsiness was led by Cezanne. Although he exhibited with the Impressionists he was never one of them. Knowing the weakness of Impressionism he said, 'I want to make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the art of the Old Masters.' The followers of the Impressionists tended to produce virtual snapshots and to ignore the more important principles of pattern. They were too absorbed in details to appreciate the rhythm of the whole. Together with a return to solidity there arose an emphasis on pattern in the Post-Impressionist paintings. There was also felt the increasing influence of African and Oriental art, an influence which resulted in the break from imitative realism. The Post-Impressionists triumphantly freed themselves from the quest for illusion

* D. H. Lawrence—*Introduction to Painting.*

and strove to realise formal beauty. Manet the impressionist said, "There are no lines in nature," but Paul Gauguin, the pioneer rebel against realism, put in defiance a heavy black outline round his forms. The emphasis on pattern led to simplification of form, and the art and life of primitives seemed alluring. Fired by this love for simplicity Gauguin sailed to Tahiti, there to live and work in the primitive and simple way of the Tahitian natives. His successors found similar inspiration in primitive Italian painting of the thirteenth century. Others went even further and found their ideals in the Byzantine and Alexandrine paintings of the fourth and fifth centuries. The last group of these painters were led by Henri Matisse.

The Post-Impressionist reactions towards solidity, emphasis on pattern, and simplicity could best be appreciated by considering separately the works of the leading Post-Impressionists.

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) is generally referred to as the 'Father of Post-Impressionism.' In his landscapes and still-lives one could at once sense the weight and solidity of the objects. His work is more powerful and simpler than that of the Impressionists. Colour is intense and luminous, but most of all there is the 'irresistible power of nature.' Distance and forms he represented in different planes of colour as in his splendid landscapes of Provence and in the crumpled-tinsel like folds of cloth in his still-lives. It was a new grasp of substantial reality. In it was impregnated the germ of cubism. Writing in the 'Birmingham Post' a certain writer said of him, "Nature was for him a living thing and it impressed upon his mind its enduring and vital images. He was not concerned with imitation of natural forms, but with the emotional expression of the ideas they evoked." Cezanne was honest and he died poor. "After a fight tooth and nail for forty years, he did succeed in knowing an apple fully, and not quite so fully, a jug or two. That was all he achieved. It seems little and he died embittered. But it is the first step that counts, and Cezanne's apple is a great deal more than Plato's Idea."*

Fourteen years younger than Cezanne, Vincent Van Gogh started by being a shop assistant, then school master and missionary before he began painting. He was a Dutchman by birth. While in Paris he started painting about 1886 under the influence of Pissarro and Seurat. He was a dramatic Luminist. With strongly accented brushwork he obtained from colour maximum emotional intensity. His sensitive temperament could be excited by even a common kitchen chair. One need only look at a simple picture like Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' to realize his depth of vision which went to make so commonplace a subject seem truly majestic. Rhythmic line is a prominent feature in Van Gogh's work. Even the pigment was placed in fine curving lines bringing out the contours in a whirling rhythm. Nature seemed to him a dance of curving shapes. His lovely landscape with cypresses, one could never forget—the clouds and trees, the grass and even the heavy stones seem to be whirled about in a wonderful cosmic dance. Van Gogh once declared, "I want to paint humanity, humanity and again humanity." But humanity did not treat him well. His sensitive nature would always come in conflict with the unkind world. He was a great humanist. He died at the early age of thirty-seven

* D. H. Lawrence—*Introduction to Painting.*

in a mental hospital at Arles, where he had painted many of his unforgettable masterpieces. Together with Cezanne he helped to give reality and substance to modern painting.



Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)—*Ta Matete* 1892.

Of the Post-Impressionists, Paul Gauguin, with the exception perhaps of Henri Matisse, made the furthest leap away from realism in pursuit of simplicity and formalised design. Born in 1848, Gauguin was quick in deciding upon art as a career. He studied under Camille Pissarro, the great Impressionist, and with the hope of finding primitive simplicity among the unspoiled Pacific islanders, set sail to Tahiti at the age of forty-three, leaving behind his family in Paris. Writing from Tahiti after his arrival he said, "All the joys, animal and human, of a free life are mine. I have escaped everything that is artificial, conventional and customary. I am entering into Truth, into Nature." He was the first to abandon the complexity of the Impressionists in favour of simplification. Also, he vehemently emphasised the primary necessity of pattern. An intense love for a humble and simple life pervades all his work. Even his 'Madonna and Child' does not possess that elaborate pomposity that others imparted to the same subject. He saw the holiness of that sacred maternity in the humble, untainted purity of Tahitian motherhood. As such, he painted the Blessed Virgin and the infant Christ, in Tahitian surroundings, as an ordinary Tahitian woman carrying a child, with faint halos above their heads. Gauguin's primitiveness gave rise to many caustic comments in Paris. In a quarrel with a certain Parisian literary friend he flared out: "Your civilization is your disease, my barbarism is my restoration to health." Gauguin rebelled against the scientific complexity of the neo-Impressionists. For him there was no 'broken touch' but with

a sweeping brush he layed out large flat masses of colour, often introducing heavy outlines to bind his forms. His defiant attitude towards the neo-Impressionists is well summarised in his argument that "a metre of green is more green than a centimetre if one wishes to express greenness." Although he did not adopt Impressionist devices, there is a warm luminosity in his colours, especially in his 'magnificent yellows' which, 'shine with the mellow glow of old-stained glass.'

The movement led by Gauguin may well be summarised as a reaction against complexity. Many of his contemporary Paris artists welcomed this change. "If our life is diseased," they argued, "our art must be diseased also, and we can only restore art to health by starting it afresh like children or savages. The lead given in this direction by Gauguin was followed by a group of painters known as the 'Fauves' or 'wild-beasts,' who sought inspiration in the Italian primitives and in Alexandrine and Byzantine art.

The attitude of the public towards all these new-fangled movements was one of ridicule and scorn. Post-Impressionist art was and one regrets still is, considered by many, to be hideous and loathsome. Gauguin was reviled for his barbarism. Monet at the age of forty had not sold a picture. They all lived in poverty till their death. Many tales are related about how spectators at their exhibitions fainted through hysteria. Bilbo in his 'Moderns' presents an interesting story of how Madame Pissarro, wife of the famous Camille Pissarro, visited an art dealer's gallery in 1895 with two Van Goghs. The dealer, Vollard, refused to buy them, but a young man who witnessed the episode bought the paintings for a mere song just as Madame Pissarro was about to leave. The indignant Vollard thereat exclaimed, "As the purchase took place in my gallery, I insist on your ordering the frames for the pictures from me." Those same two paintings are said to be valued today at many thousands of pounds. An equally interesting episode is related in the same text: Vollard drove up to Cezanne's studio in a lorry, "climbed the five flights to the studio and filled the lorry with Cezannes. Just as the lorry was about to drive away, Cezanne opened the window and shouted down: 'Monsieur Vollard! Monsieur Vollard! you have forgotten three!' These three paintings which Vollard had not thought important enough to bother about, were auctioned in New York the other day and fetched sixty-eight thousand pounds." Once when Gauguin had an exhibition, he asked Strindberg to write a foreword for it. Strindberg refused commenting, "Maitre, your work is too barbaric for me to like, so I cannot write about it."

Whether the creative artist will ever be understood and appreciated by the public is doubtful when one considers the savagery, and spiritual barrenness that still exists in the world. The artist might always be the butt of scorn and ridicule. In a world where greed holds sway, ridicule would be the only reception, that the genuine artist could get from a spiritually dead public—"they laughed, they still laugh—and I am afraid they always will laugh."

REGAL

CEYLON PREMIERE

FRIDAY, 4th MARCH, 1949.

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PERFORMANCES—Two performances on Friday 4th March, 1949: one at 6-15 p.m. (Premiere) and at 9-30 p.m. From 5th March daily at 10 a.m., 3, 6-15 & 9-30 p.m.

PASSES AND CONCESSIONS—Passes suspended. Ladies' Concessions available for morning shows ONLY. Concessions to School Children in batches of 50 and over are available for Morning Shows, provided early reservations are made.

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R. SIRIWARDHANA

THE FILM AND ITS CRITICS

Some decades ago only the boldest would have claimed for the film a place among the arts. Today few persons will deny it that status, and, in the words of an American writer, "more and more people, including a growing number of young folks, have begun to take the motion picture seriously and there is a very definite trend towards studying it as one would study, say, music or the drama." Here in Ceylon this trend can be seen in the formation of a Film Society and the serious interest taken in films by students in schools and at the University. It appears worthwhile therefore to try to examine the state of film criticism at the present time and to consider what guidance is available in existing critical literature for the serious student of the film. I will begin by saying that it is my own feeling that in no field of art criticism (not even in that of music) is there such confusion and lack of adequate standards as exists among the film critics. Perhaps this isn't surprising in view of the fact that, as we are often told, the film is 'the youngest of the arts.' Moreover the critic of the film is handicapped by difficulties which are inherent in the medium itself. A painting, a poem or a novel is the creation of an individual artist, it exists objectively on the canvas or the printed page, and the critic knows exactly what he is dealing with in these art-forms. Even the critic of a play or a musical composition has little difficulty in separating the work itself, the play or sonata as Shakespeare or Mozart wrote it, from its existence in a particular performance by Olivier or Menuhin. A film however (particularly under the conditions under which it is produced at present) isn't in the same way the product of an individual, it is rather the aggregate of the work of a large number of artists and technicians. It is true that the best films derive their excellence primarily from the inspiration of a single person—the director; but even so, the meaning of the film as the director conceived it comes to life only as it is interpreted for the audience by a host of actors, cameramen, scriptwriters, composers, etc. (I shall consider later the exceptional cases of Chaplin and the Russian directors in whose work the subordination of the film to the inspiration of a single individual seems to have been achieved to the fullest extent that is possible). From this arises the temptation for the film critic to lose himself in a consideration of acting, photography, musical scores, etc.—although even the best talents in each of these fields can be added together to make a film that is artistically worthless. The exploitation of distinguished talents and infinite material resources for the most trivial or undesirable ends has become typical of the film—the art of an age of mass-production. It seems to me that a complementary fact is to be found in the pre-occupation of most critics with film technique, considered as an end in itself. Not even the academicians of music are guilty so often as the professional film critics of divorcing form from content—as a glance at any of the "standard" works on the film will show. Manvell's popular "Film" (Pelican Books) is a typical example; it discusses "The Art of the Film"—that is, camera-angles, lighting, sound effects, and the other devices of the director's bag of tricks—in one chapter, and "The

Social Achievement of the Film"—that is, films in terms of their 'messages'—in another. Lewis Jacob's exhaustive study "The Rise of the American Film" reveals the same confusion of standards. Discussing Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" he can pass from such statements as

"The film was a passionate and persuasive avowal of the inferiority of the Negro. In viewpoint it was surely narrow and prejudiced. Griffith's Southern upbringing made him completely sympathetic towards Dixon's exaggerated ideas . . . The necessity of the separation of Negro from white, with the white as the ruler, is passionately maintained throughout the film," to a reference on the next page to "the picture's artistry, its rich imagery and powerful construction," and the final appraisal—

"'The Birth of a Nation' propelled the film into a new artistic level . . . So rich and profound in organisation was this picture that for years thereafter it directly and indirectly influenced film makers everywhere, and much of the subsequent filmic progress owes its inspiration to this master achievement." It is clear that for Lewis Jacob's "art" and "technique" are equivalent terms. At the other extreme we have writers like the author of "From Caligari to Hitler" and Parker Tyler, the film critic of "Kenyon Review," in whose criticism the film as such disappears and is replaced by a socio-psychological complex of which it is presumed to be the expression; so that for the former "Caligari" reflects the mass-neurosis of the German people in the post-1918 period, and the latter sees "Dead of Night" as an allegory of the schizophrenia of the film audience. Considering phenomena such as these, I think it would be more relevant to talk of the schizophrenia of the film critic himself. It is refreshing to turn from this laboured jargon to, say, the informal reviewing of Caroline Lejeune, who merely puts down the responses of an intelligent person to the films she sees—a more objective starting-point, one feels, than the technicalities of the academic film critics. John Grierson's writings on the film seem to me to have the same value—reading them one feels that here is an intelligent and sensitive mind reacting to films at first-hand and not blinkered by any pre-suppositions about technique.

What I wish to do in the succeeding part of this article is briefly to raise some questions regarding the medium of the film which I feel are too often lost sight of in current film criticism—in particular I wish to examine the confusion apparent in the use of terms like "film art" and "film technique." I shall then attempt, in the light of this discussion, to suggest a critical estimate of "The Battleship Potemkin," which I have chosen as being in general acceptance a film "classic."

II.

A history of the film like Lewis Jacob's is valuable, particularly to those of us whose acquaintance with films does not extend beyond the last decade or decade and a half, in helping us to understand the stages by which the mechanics of the film developed. In particular, it is important to realise that the emancipation of the film from the mode of presentation of the stage-play was slow and difficult. We are told that when Griffith first attempted to cut from one scene to

another before either was finished, he had to face complaints like, "It's jerky and distracting! How can you tell a story jumping about like that? People won't know what it's all about." Let us take an actual piece of 'cutting' which some of us will remember from the films of our childhood. In the 'last-minute rescue' which was a frequent episode in these films, the camera would cut backwards and forwards in succession from the helpless heroine on the railway line or in the burning house, with death approaching nearer and nearer, to the hero who was galloping desperately to her rescue. This was a simple form of the device; it could be developed further by continually increasing the tempo of the alternation of shots so as to intensify the stimulation of the audience's nerves. To us now this device will appear so simple as to seem obvious; however it appeared so unusual to directors whose films had been photographed stage-plays that when Griffith first used it it was considered revolutionary. Now one can, if one wishes, dignify such a device by the term "technique," as long as we don't forget that the technique we are referring to here is of a strictly mechanical kind. It is true that without such discoveries as this, the development of the medium of the film and its genuine artistic achievements would not have been possible, but what must be remembered is that such a device cannot in itself raise its material to the level of art (the emotional content of Griffith's films seems to have been that of sentimental melodrama). Perhaps it required genius of a kind to make Griffith's discovery, but the genius involved was not that of a great artist. Griffith seems certainly to have done a great deal in helping the film to realise the conditions of its own medium, which, as critics today rightly insist, are primarily visual—but to follow Griffith's dictum, "Above all, I am trying to make you see," is not all that is necessary to make a good film. What has been said about Griffith's 'cutting' can, I think, be said with equal truth about all the other technical devices which are the primary concern of most film critics—right up to the most sacrosanct of them all, 'montage.' In spite of Eisenstein's attempt, on the basis of Marxist 'dialectics,' to attribute an intrinsic virtue to montage, it should surely be obvious that like other techniques of the director it is merely a means of organisation, which can be applied equally to the poorest as well as the richest material. Most film critics however are ready to describe a film like "Birth of a Nation" as a classic of the cinema because of its place in the development of film 'technique,' although its emotional (and technical) level was probably not different from that of the popular 'Western' of today. We have not yet been able to see Griffith's films here, but many of us will remember the sense of disappointment we have often experienced on seeing at a Film Society revival, a film which we had earlier read of as a 'classic.' A standard "History of the Film" says of a film shown recently by the Film Society (I quote this from the programme note), "'The Stroke of Midnight' seems rather old-fashioned to us today . . . partly because technically it was at the time so very important and so new. It seemed literally too dazzling then, now it seems almost obvious." One might well be surprised at the aesthetics involved in the elevation of a film to the status of a classic on such grounds. An equally objectionable tendency is that of the critic who praises a film for some iso-

lated effect—*e.g.*, for the “brilliant shots” it contains. A film is not merely a series of animated pictures to be judged by the criteria which one would apply at an Exhibition of Photography. One has seen only too often the depressing spectacle of brilliant single shots in films which regarded as a whole were bad art—the Mexican film “The Pearl” and John Ford’s “The Fugitive” and “Fort Apache” are examples from films seen recently in Colorado. The film critic who attaches a disproportionate importance to this kind of technique might well consider the place of technique in the other arts. I think it will be agreed that in literature, music or painting the only technical developments that are significant are those which have been evolved in the course of an artist’s struggle to extend his experience, to digest new material. Such a technical discovery cannot be “outdated” at any time because the experience it embodies remains of permanent significance. Of how many of the achievements of the “classics” of the cinema can this be said? To exalt a “technical” discovery which was important in 1915 and has ceased to be so today to the level of “film art” is to blur important distinctions, and the critic here reinforces the tendency of the film itself to set up as an end that perfection of the mechanisms of entertainment which is really the death of art.

III.

“Potemkin” is undoubtedly a film which deserves serious attention; together with the other contemporary Russian films, it attempted almost for the first time to treat a serious and socially significant theme on the screen. Moreover it was made by a team of craftsmen working under the control of a single director, Eisenstein, who took his art very seriously, and, we are told, “planned, constructed and analysed every element of the picture according to its probable effect on the audience.” The result is a work which (like very few other films) can be seen several times; and one has the impression that with each viewing one comes to understand more clearly the details of the film in their inter-relations. This impression can be confirmed by looking at the analysis of the structure of the film made by Lewis Jacob’s in his book or Manvell’s commentary on a single sequence. It seems to me important however to realise that what one arrives at in this way is a fuller understanding of the intricacies of the film’s technique—an intensification perhaps, but not a deepening, of one’s first emotional response to the film. This is so because the experience the film has to offer, in spite of its complex technique, is relatively simple, even superficial. The limits within which the action is to be viewed are severely restricted; by Eisenstein’s method the characters are seen as one mass against another, in simple black-and-white contrast, and even the few persons who stand out are presented as types and not as individuals. Eisenstein’s conception of the film is at an opposite extreme from that of Chaplin, whose work derives all its life from the individual personality of the hero. I have said before that the films of both Eisenstein and Chaplin are controlled at every point by the director’s conception; at the same time it must be pointed out that while Chaplin offers us an individual view of life and society, the organising ideas in Eisenstein are limited to a few political commonplaces. It seems to me that Chaplin’s is unquestionably the richer art, what he attempts is more important,

judged by its artistic, that is, its human content; and "Potemkin" is therefore a lesser film than "Modern Times," "The Gold Rush," or even "Monsieur Verdoux." (I should add, to anticipate objections, that I am not referring to the kind of technical difference which can be explained by the fact that "Potemkin" was produced a decade before "Modern Times." On the contrary, the interest which an intelligent audience, unaffected by political partisanship, can take in "Potemkin" today seems to me to be of a strictly technical kind). Within these limits Eisenstein's method would have been completely successful if he had adopted an impersonal documentary technique. Unfortunately the film is vitiated by the forcing of its effects which is made at several points in order to subserve its overriding propagandist intention. In making this criticism one is not advocating a creed of "art for art's sake," nor does one ask that the action of the film should not have been treated from the standpoint of certain values. What is necessary however is that these values should be seen to emerge inevitably from the action; Eisenstein might well have left the events of the meeting to speak for themselves. Instead there is an unpleasant attempt to arouse illegitimate emotional responses; this is apparent in the caricaturing of some of the figures "on the other side" on board ship, and the sentimentality of some effects in the Odessa steps sequence. While there is no doubt that this sequence was a technical tour-de-force, it might be asked whether its emotional level was very different from that of the average Hollywood film about Nazi atrocities. In the use of the mother and child and the baby in the perambulator the film made an irrelevant emotional appeal to values which were not within the scope of the film's conception; consequently these effects can only be called sensational. The association of simplified ideas and responses with technique consciously planned to influence the audience and operated with considerable talent is an ominous one; and Eisenstein seems to me to have been one of the creators of the form of totalitarian art which since then has been increasingly employed in several countries. A quotation from a lecture given by him in 1930 will confirm this account—

"We have discovered how to force the spectator to think in a certain direction. By mounting our films in a way scientifically calculated to create a given impression on an audience, we have developed a powerful weapon for the propagation of the ideas upon which our new social system is based."

MARCH 1949

FILM REVIEW—Charles Abeysekera

L. N. de L. BANDARANAIKE
BUT TO WHAT PURPOSE

"The writer presents an interesting case—I mean himself."

—F. R. LEAVIS.

Before we examine the delicate reply of our Marxist (that it is in the best of taste, no one but an "acrobatic intellectual" would deny) we must first congratulate him on his loyalty to a philosophy, which on his own admission, "the whole of the intelligentsia" has abandoned. We do not suggest any reflection on his intelligence, on the contrary, we appreciate his (self-confessed) gallantry.

His reply, we must admit, displays the same quixotic spirit. He ascribes to us, with the most disarming certainty, a motive we never had. With the greatest assurance in the world, he drops brick after brick in between lengthy abusive outbursts. We do not intend, as our Marxist has done, to make unsupported statements. We have had occasion to comment on his sensibility in our last article. We now wish to make some preliminary remarks on the equipment he possesses.

Our critic talks loftily of the pulpit tone in our comment on "minor problems like the existence of God." Where the pulpit creeps into a simple statement of fact, we do not know, but we suggest that he read a History of Philosophy (Russell's would do) since he seems to be quite unaware of the disturbing fact that Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Samuel Alexander, even Bergson, to say nothing of Sankara and the Upanishadic thinkers, were all terribly concerned with this "minor problem." We do not think we need comment now, on his familiarity with philosophy!

The naivete of his pronouncements on psychology illustrate, similarly, his knowledge of that science. He works out a number of diverting implications from "even a slight knowledge," etc. The statement was made not to impress, but surely because, we were dealing, at the moment with elementary psychology, so familiar and so publicised nowadays, as to be almost clichetic. His comment on our reference to behaviourism—"pretentious and irrelevant," is exquisite. It affords perhaps the best clue to his familiarity with psychology. Behaviourism is Marxist psychology, it describes the mind entirely as the result of the environment (thereby contradicting its own thought). Hence our statement. Anything, as I shall illustrate later, our Marxist cannot comprehend, is "pretentious and irrelevant." He finishes this revealing paragraph with a disastrous *faux pas*—"Freud himself was an anthropologist before he became a psychologist." We recommend Freud's "Autobiographical Sketch," from which we quote "It was hearing Goethe's beautiful essay on Nature read aloud at a popular lecture by Professor Carl Boubil, just before I left school, that decided me to become a medical student." Freud was a physiologist before he became a psychologist.

His treatment of Burnham confirms our suspicion that he has not read "The Managerial Revolution." "The point is that he (Burnham)

interposes the Managerial State between Capitalism and Socialism." Another brick! Burnham does nothing of the sort. In an entire chapter (iv) Burnham proves that Socialism will not come at all, that even if it is attempted, as in Russia, the result is a Managerial State. "We have ample evidence, from actual events, that *Socialism is not coming*"—Managerial Revolution, p. 39.

In our treatment of dialectics, we quoted the case of India. Again our Marxist finds it "pretentious." It seems that he cannot see the connection. We concede him an explanation. The reference was introduced for three reasons because Indian history—(i) is more or less the story of a series of invasions (until the 19th century) following a stock pattern, (ii) continually repeats itself, (iii) possesses a unique institution, which until recently, defied class divisions—caste.

The editor has strongly advised us to be as concise as possible. We regret we are unable to discuss the equipment of our Marxist further, but enough has been said to ask the question: "Does it permit the enormous conceit apparent throughout his article?" Our analysis above answers the question with a definite negative.

He talks at length on the "gentle art of bluffing." The irony clearly indicates that he is incapable of such action. But consider. We quote an excerpt from anti-Duhring where Engels clearly explains, "external forces" as "terrestrial forces." Our critic conveniently defines "external forces" as the mode of production, completely ignoring Engel's explanation. But of course this is not the gentle art of bluffing.

We confess to the sign of resignation with which we approach his scanty arguments. Once the enormous windbag of his verbosity is pricked, what remains but a mass of empty abuse, false facts, and futile manipulations?

He complains about "substantial freewill being a sufficiently obvious fact," and proceeds to prove it at length, for which service, we thank him. "He takes for granted precisely that which he wants us to prove," he objects. He is mistaken. Just as in his article he wrote "the connections between religion and the mode of production are obvious" before attempting to show them, so before destroying the Marxist case for determinism, we stated our conclusions. Yet he rants!

We have already indicated his familiarity with psychology. The crux of his argument is that "the unconscious is the product of primitive societies." His assurance is amazing. Freud himself never attempted to ask how the unconscious arose. "The further question as to the ultimate nature of the unconscious is no wiser or more profitable than the older one as to the nature of the conscious"—Freud. We are tempted to inquire which summary of Freud our critic read.

Space does not permit us to dwell at length on the well-known theory of genes. Our Marxist, of course, vigorously destroys it, though in his own words he "knows nothing of it." Briefly, genes are cells that contain potentially the characteristics of the individual within them. They are ultimately responsible for his personality, for they condition such factors as height, colour, intellectual ability, etc. We do not, after all, require Adler to know how shortness may influence a man's development. Genes which are transmitted from parents to

children are largely independent of the environment. This is the "learned reference" which is in reality no more than as well known a theory as evolution. Yet—"we are not making a plea for ignorance."

We have very little space left. Let us therefore consider only the more important of the points raised, namely the discussion of literature, philosophy and "Barbarism or Socialism."

Malraux and Silone are cited in support of his arguments. His attitude to them is illustrated by the remark "the petty-bourgeois intellectual confused the party for the movement and the masses." The contemptuous superiority in the line is characteristic of the Marxist critic. Does he labour under the tragic delusion that Malraux, Dos Passos or Silone, abandoned Marxism, because individual parties "betrayed it." The writers quoted are not isolated examples. "Every intellectual of note" has followed the same course. "It would seem to be an universal malaise, a sort of infantile mental disorder from which the intelligentsia suffers, a disease which only exceptionally gifted individuals like our Marxist, proves superior to. Against such conceit we can say nothing. We can only advise him to re-read Malraux and attempt to obtain a copy of "Bread and Wine."

The kind of juggling with which he disposes of Berdyaev is quite clever. He starts with a non-existent distinction between "absolute" and "objective" truth—for the former includes the latter. Berdyaev's argument is simple. Materialism describes all ideologies as reflections of the mode of production; yet it claims to be superior to all other ideologies. On its own admission, Materialism itself is a reflection of the mode of production. Therefore how can one reflection claim to be superior to all other reflections? Note how skilfully our critic avoids the straight issue. He talks of Berdyaev's "disparaging tone," of how Berdyaev "discredits all other thought"—when in reality, Berdyaev is stating the self-contradictory Marxist position, he talks of "tricks," but where does he meet Berdyaev's arguments? He only says that "bourgeois and idealist philosophies are inconsistent with reality", dismissing the keenest thinking of twenty centuries in a sentence. What in any case is "reality." Is Marxism alone consistent with it? But Marxism is, on its own admission, just another "superstructure on the mode of production." The Marxist is clearly out of depth, he sinks into contradictions.

Next dialectics. Our critic shows at length how man can in one sense be an animal, and in another something more. We did not for a moment quarrel with the ambiguity of the word "animal." Indeed we stressed it. But the point we made was that no dialectical sentence is valid once the terms are strictly defined. Then we have to "descend" again to the syllogism, because the "dialectic" dissolves into two separate propositions. Thus the moment the terms were defined in the dialectical sentence "man is an animal and not an animal," we violated the fundamental law of contradiction in logic. Thus dialectics have not progressed from the syllogism. What then is the use of the laboured explanations of our Marxist? A play on the ambiguity of language—incidentally a good definition of dialectics.

Finally "Barbarism or Socialism." It is sufficient to quote Lenin (whom our Marxist should read) "what objections does he (Mikhailovsky) level against the facts and considerations on which Marx

based the conclusion that the Socialist system was inevitable by virtue of the very laws of the development of capitalism?" (Selected Works, Vol. I. Collected Ed.) Lenin's reply to his own question admirably sums up our opinion of our Marxists article, "on empty words, that are just space and wind." We recommend to our Marxist the aphorism of Wittgenstien—"whereof one cannot speak—thereof one must be silent!"

R. I. P.

It is time to cry halt to this controversy for our critic has persistently refused to discuss the subject. Instead, in his first article he was intrigued by our "sensibility," and now in the second he inquires into our "equipment," i.e., how many books we have read. We are flattered by his wonderment at our person but unfortunately we are compelled to tweak the ear of our indiscreet little biographer and remind him first, that the subject under discussion is Marxism and second, that the readers of this magazine may not share his inordinately enthusiastic interest in the person of his

"MARXIST."

Editorial Note

THE DEBATE ENDS.

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G. H. WICKRAMANAYAKE

DESTINATIONS II. BELIHUL OYA

Dear Editor,

You wanted an article on philosophy. There are subjects more pleasant to write about than the possibility or impossibility of synthetic *a priori* propositions; and I propose to tell you of a trip you can make to Belihul Oya.

Many roads lead to Belihul Oya. But few have made their way there from Horton Plains. Horton Plains and the Rest-house have already been introduced to you by Mr. Sri Pathmanathan. You should leave the Rest-house as early in the morning as you can. An alarm clock would come in handy. For if you have told the Rest-house boy to wake you at 6 a.m. you can be sure he will not call you till 7-30 a.m. After breakfast you will set out along the track that leads to World's End, carrying in your ruck-sack a packed lunch provided by the Rest-house. Before long you will reach Little World's End near which two of my friends met a leopard on Boxing Day. Passing Little World's End you will come to World's End proper, a good two miles from the Rest-house. Here if there is no mist and you are not bilious, you will not be able to resist the temptation of crawling on your belly and peeping over the edge of the rock at the country at least a couple of thousand feet below you.

From World's End to Nagrak is a distance of about 3 miles. You will by now have begun to feel thirsty and tired with walking. If you have been hiking in England you will longingly recall, as I did, the innumerable pubs in which the hiker can quench his thirst with a Mild, Bitter, Black and Tan, or strength-giving Irish Guinness which it is as pleasant to sip as to look into smiling Irish eyes, and of which the Nuwara Eliya stout is a pale reflection. You will recall the cheerful fire, the buzz of the conversation, the barmaid who pumps the frothing beer into a glass and hands it to you over the counter with a smile and a "Here's your pint, sir;" or the inter-university dart-matches and games of dominoes and share-a-penny played in these same pubs. You will miss most of all the popsics who, wearing shorts or skirts and carrying ruck-sacks on their backs, will tramp over hills, slide down scree, and walk hand in hand with you to the next youth hostel. You will remember, too, the nights spent in youth hostels; the spud-peeling before dinner and the washing up afterwards; the community singing; the mild ragging which is seldom offensive and never intended to hurt; the friendliness of the women who, if there aren't enough chairs, will rather sit on your knee than deprive you of your seat and will take a very dim view of you if you don't let them; the rush to the pub for a last drink before lights-out; or the types you've met youth-hostelling, school-teachers, students and dons from your own as well as from other universities, and popsics from the Continent.

Groaning under the weight of your rucker and experiencing a feeling of dissatisfaction at being deprived of all the pleasures which youth-hostellers in England enjoy you will walk along the path that

descends from World's End to Nagrak. On your left is a precipice, on your right jungle-covered hill-slopes. (This is not the only route from Horton Plains to Nagrak as I discovered one day to my cost. I left the Rest-house about 9-30 a.m. and set off along the Bogawantalawa Road thinking that I was going to Bogawantalawa but took the wrong turning somewhere and landed at Nagrak about 1 p.m. having covered 9 miles in all). After an hour's walk you will reach the Estate Bungalows on Nagrak Estate. Here you get at a higher elevation the same view as from the Haputale Gap; on a clear day you may see Tissa or Hambantota or the Galle light-house; from here you will see also a hill covered with a brighter green than you would ever meet in Horton Plains. No one seems to know the attitude of Nagrak. One or two bods I met on Nagrak Estate seem to think that it is higher and colder than Horton Plains; but of this I am doubtful.

From Nagrak it is not more than 7 miles by short-cut to Belihul Oya. But the short-cut is only a foot-path and very steep. You will take the short-cut if you have set off in the morning. As I had not left Horton Plains Rest-house until after lunch I preferred to follow the estate road. Thanks to the Conductor on Nagrak Estate I was able to hitch in a lorry carrying tea to Non-Pareil, the next estate. The factory on Nagrak Estate has been dismantled. The tea plucked on Nagrak is taken every day to the factory on Non-Pareil. The journey by lorry from Nagrak to Non-Pareil is the most nerve-racking experience I have had in my life. I have been driven in a jeep through Diyagama Estate to Horton Plains Rest-house. But driving through Diyagama to Horton Plains must be child's play compared to driving along the estate road from Nagrak to Non-Pareil and from Non-Pareil to Atalanta. The road is narrow and very steep, has sharp corners and runs along the edge of a precipice.

When we had driven 5 miles from Nagrak we came to Non-Pareil on which you look down from World's End. Here I had to alight as the lorry would go no further. I met some very decent types on Non-Pareil, the Assistant Tea-Maker, the Superintendent and the Estate Doctor. The Doctor has to look after the labourers on these estates, Nagrak, Non-Pareil and Atalanta, and is busier than any Colombo specialist. He operates on patients without an operating theatre and with very few surgical instruments. He is driven from estate to estate at the peril of his life. He attends at the delivery of a baby every other day. His only assistant is a mid-wife who is not trained. The commonest disease on these estates is pneumonia. I was not surprised at this when I realised that the labourers had no beds or fire-places in their 'lines.'

A lorry was waiting at Non-Pareil. It had brought the tea from Atalanta to the factory on Non-Pareil as Atalanta, like Nagrak, has no factory. In this I hitched the 4 miles from Non-Pareil to Atalanta. The lorry stopped on the way to pick up some empty barrels. These were barrels in which toddy had been brought to the estate. The labourers on Non-Pareil consume about 30 or 40 gallons of toddy every day. Where the tavern is from which the toddy was brought I was not able to discover; this I leave to you, dear Editor, to point out. The lorry stopped at Atalanta. I had to walk in the dark the 2 miles from Atalanta to Belihul Oya Rest-house.

The Rest-house is the only place where one can stay a night at Belihul Oya. But rest-houses are beyond the means of students and even of junior dons. What is wanted in Asia is a Youth Hostels Association, such as exists in Europe and America, and youth hostels which would provide bed and breakfast for a rupee or one-fifty. For one could get across quite cheaply to South India by schooner and from there one could walk or bike to Karachi or Penang, provided one is given the facilities. But there will be no youth hostels in Ceylon as long as there is no demand for them. There can be no demand for them as long as parents are backward, or people think that the best way to spend a holiday is to go by car or train to a hill-station and then walk to the park in the morning and spend the afternoon and evening in a club, hotel lounge or flick-house.

I hope you will forgive the frequent digressions and the occasional lapses into my college slang. I shall be satisfied if I have persuaded you to make the journey from Horton Plains to Belihul Oya either alone or, better, with a popsy.

Yours sincerely,
G. H. W.

P.S.—You'll feel thirsty on the way. Before you leave Horton Plains Rest-house pack a couple of bottles of T-beer in your ruck-sack.

Editorial Note

The editor regrets that he has been unable to locate the particular tavern referred to but hopes that the T-beer will do just as well.

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