

of making his own experience the criterion of truth. Miss Hirst, with all her admiration of Blake, recognises this, and it is one of the merits of her book that she does so.

All students of Blake will have to take account of the facts gathered in this work; it also supplies many useful, curious and interesting footnotes to other writers, though not everyone will accept the validity of these in every case. The mass of information about the neo-Platonic and gnostic tradition in later times and its connection with the legendary wisdom of the east, its defence also of Renaissance scholars accused of paganising, would be even more valuable than it is if the whole book did not lack something of coherence, and if the style were not marked by certain peculiarities which subtract from its lucidity. This book, nevertheless, is a valuable guide in a field where one should not be ignorant but where knowledge is difficult to obtain unless like Miss Hirst, one be possessed of unusual zeal, ability and diligence.

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THE MYTHS OF LOVE, by Denis de Rougemont, translated by Richard Howard; Faber and Faber; 25s.

No other emotion can be as revealing of a man's personality as his capacity for love. The inner self is both constituted and manifested through spontaneous emotional responses of tenderness and affection. On a wider scale, the established attitude to love is symptomatic of the state of health that characterises a particular creed or culture. But to reach a balanced judgment on these issues, it is necessary to estimate the dimensions and varieties of the emotion in question. Contrary to the traditional dichotomy between concupiscence and friendship, between egoism and altruism, man must first find his own ego before he can discover and cherish the self of another. In the words of Nietzsche: 'We must beware the man who hates himself, for we are sure to be victims of his anger and his vengeance. Let us therefore try to persuade him to love himself'. Love thy neighbour *as thy-self*. Of the many varieties of amorous behaviour distinguished by the Greeks, Eros (love-as-passion), so much suspected by the Christian Fathers, has been reinstated by Freud. More than any other type erotic love has fashioned the mores and literature of the world. It is a fundamental structure of the human psyche.

To love and not to desire, to desire and not to love. The need to dissociate love from pleasure is indicative of that inner tension that tortures the human condition. It may express itself in one or other of two extreme attitudes. One seeks to transcend duration, to regard our present incarnation as a state of suffering and illusion and pursues ecstatic peace in a drama of increasing intensity. This attitude is typified in the eroticism of Tristan—the Tristan of myth and music, the archetype of love without pleasure. The other attitude despises duration; an insatiable thirst for novel excitation, its desires are those

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which rapid possession anesthetizes: it concentrates on the intensity of the moment, the historical, the material. Here we find the eroticism of Don Juan—the archetypal pleasure without love. Tristan and Don Juan are not as different as would at first appear. Both have embarked on a sisyphian pursuit. They are seeking the impossible but it is there precisely that their justification lies. They are in pursuit of something they can never possess and it is this inaccessibility that supplies the fuel for their dionysiac fury. What is necessary is pursuit not capture. Fortunately, Tristan and Don Juan are not persons but powers; symbols of an inner contradiction of personality; neurotic symptoms of a man whose personality has disintegrated. The truth of human existence is not an either/or but the fusion of the two forces of love and passion; for love is a passion and no passion is beyond good and evil. 'Power is made perfect in infirmity'.

M. de Rougemont is commonly associated with the philosophic system known as Personalism: a sort of existentialist insistence on the unique value of the person as against the categorising tendencies of Marx, Freud and modern technological collectivism. The work under review is a collection of essays continuing the mythanalysis he had undertaken in *Passion and Society* (1939). Using the two great myths of love: Tristan and Don Juan, de Rougemont is searching 'for the nature and motives of choice typical of a person or character that defines them; the idea of man which they imply and suppose'. This is of contemporary interest. It throws a great deal of light on the modern revolt against established conventions and collective orthodoxy. In addition it reveals the soul that animates contemporary erotic literature. Beginning with the 'verifiable meaning' of the erotic myths in Western culture, followed by an analysis of the archetypal themes of three well chosen modern novelists: Nabokov, Musil, Pasternak, we see these themes existentialised in the lives of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Gide. Having thus asserted and placed in perspective the dialectic of love and of the person, we end with an enquiry into the meaning of *person* and *self* in the great religions of East and West. A difficult book to read because of its somewhat Joycean style, it is nonetheless stimulating.

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