

GRAY, Darrel - A Man in Search of the Synthesis of Being,
Essays on Dissolutions, Abraxas Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1977

In Darrel Gray's book Essays & Dissolutions¹, we meet a man in quest of art as a process capable of integrating fact and spirit, of creating magical intuitions, primeval feelings, and of transforming the world into novel occasions. He refuses to consider art as an 'artifact', as some thing or system of things which radiate back on an essentially impersonal fusion.

Gray prefers to deal with the work of art as if it were a "form of life", and use the light of the general structural theory to bring forth a new theory called Actualism, which, according to him, can coordinate poetic impulses and processes into a single structural event, and give a more faithful reproduction of the qualitative character of experience than any theory of poetic organization that preceded it.

For him the poem is, first of all, a potential "discovery system" that prods its readers into the world, where lie its ultimate roots, and directs those readers outward and towards the conditions that make joy possible. Thus the poem is a force whose total realization only the actual exigences of life can validate, not its generalized symbolic emotions. It is not "experience transubstantiated into poetical form", since the poet does not use experience as materials for the creation of the poem, but rather discovers within the materials those values which give rise to the work. In fact if one is a poet, according to Gray, one goes back to the original stillness, one becomes an Automorph, one becomes continually happy, joyful and boundless, like everything else that surrounds him in the world, and celebrates the actuality of being alive.

Gray claims that Actualism is not an aesthetic "movement", but states that its theory can give a more faithful reproduction of the qualitative character of experience than any theory of poetic organization that preceded it, since, according to William Carlos Williams's epigram, "Actuality is never frustrated because it is always complete". It seems to me that Gray takes Carlos

William's words as axiomatic, and based on them draws the conclusion that actualism is the perfect theory that does not have to be formulated in order to gain acceptance on the part of readers. As a matter of fact, he fails to define the most fundamental terminology of his theory, such as: "values of material", "discovery system", "conditions that make joy possible", "preview of affirmation", "information relay and relay mechanisms", and the most central of all, "Automorph". Indeed the closer definition of Automorph is contained in his definition of the Poetic Metasystem, which is a "system containing two active unities: the psycho-physical and the formal, which are the coercive forces regulating the genesis, proliferation, and dispersion of poetic impact." "I think that his incursions into the principles of poetic generation serve more to evade the central problem of defining Automorphy than to face it. His elaborations tend to become circular and to lead you nowhere. Here are examples of them:

" . . . What makes a poem modern in the structural is . . . neither mimesis nor solipsism. . . Tone is the non-localized vehicle by which the poet escapes his in complete self, affirming or denying those real or imaginary boundaries of his localized phenomenal being . . . The text is neither subordinate to nor superior to the world, for the world as "actuality" has in terfused the poet with its sheer immediacy. . . culminating in an epiphany or reconciliation between his physical and spiritual being. . . (page 12)

In my opinion, Gray fails to supply an understandable and logical explanation of the integration of fact and spirit. In fact the epiphany of reconciliation between the poet's physical and spiritual beings is a crucial synthesis obtained at the expense of sheer magic. May be Mr. Gray conceives poetry as a business of Magicians.

REYNALDO GONÇALVES

Do nothin Till you Hear from Me
Pay No Attention to What's said...

NTOZAKE SHANGE

A poem
A poem on the stage
frenetically danced
Colored coppery bodies
claiming for awareness

The colored tom
tom
of
Shange's rainbow
presses the dark clouds
or her folks

Freedom, Freedom
rolled from their red flesh
to their burning nakedness

Sounds, sounds
Colors, Firing colors

A poem on the stage
frenetically danced

The music of the art falls round
for colored girls at one stage

And deathlike dreams thirsty
shaking indigo, red, brown,
green, blue, yellow
hands

Songs in the eyes
Smiles in each cheek
Freedom, Freedom
whispering to their minds

Faint white shadows frightened
faded. . .fa. . .de. . .d
do. . .w. . .n

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