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James Wieland

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Abstract

From the mid-sixties Nissim Ezekiel's considerations of his focal themes of commitment, identity, India, poetry, love and prayer have become more radically fictive.' It is as though to make sense of his world, he has been working to break down perceptions into 'new structures, r~cher, finer, fitted to the primary tendencies of our nature'.² But these fictions, the suggestion of infinite variations and of no one 'truth', enter Ezekiel's poetry almost reluctantly. He was early struck by a need to define, to place his world and to see himself 'No longer unresolved I But definite as morning' ('Something to Pursue', A TC, p. 14). And even when he recognizes that his 'dim but definite ... final shape I Is probably uncertainty' it alarms him ('What Frightens Me .. .', Third).

'Making light of the process': Nissim Ezekiel's poetic fictions

From the mid-sixties Nissim Ezekiel's considerations of his focal themes of commitment, identity, India, poetry, love and prayer have become more radically fictive.¹ It is as though to make sense of his world, he has been working to break down perceptions into 'new structures, richer, finer, fitted to the primary tendencies of our nature'.² But these fictions, the suggestion of infinite variations and of no one 'truth', enter Ezekiel's poetry almost reluctantly. He was early struck by a need to define, to place his world and to see himself 'No longer unresolved / But definite as morning' ('Something to Pursue', *ATC*, p. 14). And even when he recognizes that his 'dim but definite ... final shape / Is probably uncertainty' it alarms him ('What Frightens Me...', *Third*).

In his early poetry, up to and including much of *The Unfinished Man*, there is a strangely felt tension between the logical workings of the reason and the non-logical associations of the intuition. There is a desire for an equitable balance 'Between the élan of desire / And the rational faculties' ('In Emptiness', *ATC*, p. 12), and this balance, which becomes a part of the poetry of the sixties and later, is to be seen not as an arrival but as a way of proceeding. And while the doubt and ambivalence of the early poetry constitute elements of his later knowledge, his poetry, through variations, repetitions, and the increasingly open-ended nature of his vision, becomes a record of the growth of a mind acquiring a more complex and inclusive knowledge. So that, when he speaks now of giving things their 'exact name', we sense a radical shift in Ezekiel's thought. He now seeks to name the essence of things and, after the fashion of Wallace Stevens, he seems to hold that things reveal their essence as a sum of variations.

Ezekiel's most recent work is a poetry of process and growth blending reason and intuition ('the light of reason', 'Mind', *Hymns*, p. 43) and reclaiming something of the 'lost language of dreams' while retaining a hard-headed awareness of the need to confront the present. Such a view of poetry prompts significant formal changes, but it does not lead to

diffusion or a shattering of the poetry. His thought is anchored in reality; and the later poetry contains innumerable excursions into stereotypes out of which truth and validity have been emptied. His appeal is for a growing knowledge which can make of his place an 'environment'. India becomes somewhere to endure, to survive, where he is not imprisoned by time, place, or idea ('Choices'), for '[t]he sky / Is smaller than this open eye' ('Subject of Change', *Hymns*, p. 9). As he says in his review of Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, the Indian fails to perceive that his 'ideals are false and stultifying ... (causing) the insensitive contradiction between belief and way of life' (p. 202), and by facing change, the fluctuations of knowledge, and the need to live the everlasting now of the 'vital present tense', Ezekiel projects a vision of the future.

He contends that he lives 'on the frontiers of the future' and it is out of this zone of change and movement that he makes his poetry.³ Ezekiel's most convincing engagement with 'the future' is to be found in the poetry of *The Exact Name* and later, and while the thrust of this paper is towards this later poetry, the early work lays the foundation for what is to follow and will be briefly looked at.

There is a cohesiveness to *A Time to Change* which is not to be found in Ezekiel's work again until *The Unfinished Man*.⁴ There are certain focal poems ('A Time to Change', 'Something to Pursue', 'To a Certain Lady') to which groups of poems cohere, establishing a web of linkages and setting in motion central themes while catching the ambivalence and equivocation of a mind seeking certainty.⁵ For Ezekiel, a poem is a moment, a fire-like fusion in the continuous flux of the creative life. A poem isolates an event, a moment, an idea, and inscribes a circle around it;⁶ whereas 'poetry', he suggests, moves with the whole flux of experience, seeking to find a coherence but not isolating that experience from the flux out of which it originates. This is the principal difference between the controlling attitude of mind of the early, and the late, poetry. He comes increasingly to accept that 'The end does not matter, / The way is everything' ('Something to Pursue'), and, looking forward to the open-endedness of his later work, he calls on the reader for a kind of Sartrean commitment:

Touching what I have said,
The voice alone is mine,
The rest is what you make of it.

And, on returning to India in 1952 after more than three years in England, the easy complacencies and the confident moments of his first two volumes of poetry are dashed. The insight, latent in *A Time to Change*, of the frail but intense humanity of man, surfaces: Adam-like, 'Upright (he) goes forth / To meet the world' ('Paeon', *The Third*). The journey, not the arrival, becomes the focal point of the poet's excursions into inner and outer reality: he is man alone facing a fallen world of which he must make sense. His sense of the reality he faces is framed in terms of the difficulty of catching reality in language:⁷ reality is in flux, it can be held only for a moment and the language must live and grow with these changing perceptions.

The unity of *The Unfinished Man* revolves around the dialectic established between poems like 'Love Sonnet', catching the mystery at the centre of both love and words, and 'Urban', 'Enterprise', and 'A Morning Walk'. There is a place for city and hill (and their various analogues) in the lovers' world; and out of the tension between these four poems a vision of a mind piecing the parts into a whole. And in 'Case Study' and 'Jamini Roy' Ezekiel seems to have come to accept the interrelatedness of all relations. 'Case Study' gathers in ironically the idealism of 'A Time to Change' ('His marriage was the worst mistake of all') and compresses this idealism into an awareness of his need for stability and the impossibility of attaining it: 'he never moved / Unless he found something he might have loved'. 'Jamini Roy', on the other hand, looks forward to 'the law' which can make life's 'spirit sing and dance': this is a new kind of synthesis built upon infinite process. Roy's paintings flow from a mind in harmony with the external world. His fictions are personal, and yet, the poet says, they 'make my childhood crystallize'. As surely as the archetypes of sun, hill, and tree, Roy's fictions reach to the essential.

In 'Case Study' the schizoid voice of much of *The Unfinished Man* finds a synthesis: one voice speaks to another. This is not the re-integration of personality that we might expect as a resolution for the schizoid, so much as an acceptance of the condition. The narrator warns the protagonist against the debilitating custom of his life and advises him to 'break / It with a sudden jerk'; but, he cautions, 'use your head'. There can be no either/or: the figure must accept the dual aspects of his being. And, ultimately, the resolution of the volume is that there can be no resolution: it *is* 'the unfinished man' speaking. Like Roy's paintings what the poet says is becoming less literal voicing a larger reality with which he is in touch through his imagination. Hence, while in this volume and *The*

Exact Name Ezekiel draws on conventional archetypes to carry his vision, it is the imaginative fictions he makes that speak of the elemental truths.

As he begins to see himself and his society with new eyes, so his poetry undergoes a reshaping: there are significant technical changes and extension of themes as he searches for the word and the formal pattern which can body-forth his particular and personal experience.⁸ His sense of being alone, of being divided man, and of living and moving through a world of change form the basis of his vision. His vision of reality now embraces the dualities, the beauty and the horror of existence, its joy and despair; for to ignore these is to live in pretence ('A Conjugation').

Ambivalence becomes a value. 'There is a point', he says, 'in being obscure / about the luminous' ('In Retrospect'); too often in the early poetry, he admits, he 'used too many words'. And it is 'In Retrospect' which makes the clearest technical break with the poetry which has gone before. There is a compression of language to an epigrammatic conciseness, accompanied by a flexibility of syntax and tone which strive to maintain the integrity of the idea or experience embodied in an image: the reader now has a place in the poem.

The interrelatedness of groups of poems, noted in *A Time to Change* and *The Unfinished Man*, becomes more crucial: 'Perspectives' links 'Love Poem' to poems such as 'An Affair' or 'Event' by picking up the hill imagery of the earlier poems and, by echoing the situation of 'Love Sonnet' of the previous volume, it also stands in ironic juxtaposition to the discordant sexual encounters of 'Event' and 'Marriage'.

Sex and religion become sources of blessedness, and with this comprehensiveness of spirit the lover-poet can risk being 'Diverted from the safer paths of men' into the 'marsh to see the Grail'. There is an allusion here to 'A Morning Walk' and the 'marsh' of appearances, but now the context is affirmative. Risking the ride into the marsh, he finds not an illusory world 'where things are what they seem' but the Grail, symbol of the pure and contrite, and outward symbol of one's primal unity. His illumination comes from what he absorbs in his spirit, not from what he perceives with his eyes.

Ezekiel's sense of reality is now enlarged from the predominantly external world of the early verse. He pleads for that 'cold / Lucidity, of mind, where 'the mills of God are never slow', which gathers together 'flesh and bone' and 'myths of light' into a vision which may make 'the dead ... hear, the blind recover sight' ('Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher'). This unique improvisation stems from an understanding of that 'silence near the source (of a river), or by a shore / Remote and thorny like the heart's

dark floor'; that is, from that solitude in which one can see into the life of things. This is an expression of the imaginative self feeling its separation from, but giving shape to, reality. He will 'wait for words ... in patient love', before articulating the abstract into sensuous form. Poet, love, and birdwatcher are drawn together, observers not only of outer but also of inner worlds, and the passion of their act is transmuted into a 'slow movement (which) seems ... to say much more' and shows no restless searching after completion. Poetry and love, word and woman, restless companions in Ezekiel's earlier verse, are now interlocked in a poetry of process. Poetry is being made out of the commonness of 'flesh and bone' and the mystery of 'myths of light', and, we sense, out of the crooked, restless flight — in which he struggles to synthesize disparate elements of his art — comes a sudden ignition, a 'unified flow of language within which meanings are isolated at the peril of both language and meaning'.⁹ Throughout 'Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher', language and meaning strain at the tightly rhymed ten-line stanzas, but there is a high proportion of run-on lines (ten out of twenty) giving freedom to a multi-levelled apprehension — the intellectual and emotional movements of the poem — and the long sentences catch the tensions of a mind immersed in the flux of being.

As 'Poetry Reading' (*EN*) suggests, the poem may take on a life of its own. Listening to a poem, the speaker is drawn into the experience of the poem as images fall, swell and bring back 'message(s) from another shore'. The poem flows from the core of the poet's being, but once it is created it assumes its own presence, forms links with other poems and with other experiences, calls upon the reader, and reader, poem, and poet are drawn into a unique and ever-changing relationship. The final impression of 'In India', for example, issues from the juxtaposition of the separate scenes (as on canvas¹⁰), each of which must be interpreted and absorbed as we take in the whole. And the variations in form constitute a technical comment on the need to break with a redundant formality and custom.

The technical experiments of the volume begin with 'Night of the Scorpion'. The narrative is colloquial in diction and tone, and it approaches the movement of free verse, but in spite of the numerous run-on lines and a minimum of syntactic marks, the formal rhetorical devices create a technical tension within the poem. As Parthasarathy points out, the 'parallelisms ... are obviously borrowed from the register of ritual and liturgy'.¹¹ And what began as a laconic recounting of 'the night (his) mother was stung by a scorpion' develops into a ritual exorcism in which

only the mother retains her objectivity: the speaker momentarily falls into the parallelism which characterizes the peasants, and the 'sceptic, rationalist' father attempts his own magic to exorcize the 'Evil One'. What stands out is the selfless love of the mother for her children in contrast to the ritual formula of the peasants' incantation, the mesmerized speaker, and the confusion of the father. The event is turned over in the poet's mind, catching views from several perspectives and drawing the reader into the event. And, in its very open-endedness and its rhythmic tensions, we sense a more exact naming of the event than any purely objective account.

Meaning ceases to be designative or referential during, and after, *The Exact Name*; there is a repudiation of singular categories, and Ezekiel increases the burdens he places on his reader. Such an opening-out of his craft can lead to irresponsibility but he hints at the kind of commitment he envisages. He wants 'Light' and spontaneity, however, there can be no satisfaction 'in being compulsive / or mindless' ('Transparently'). And, with pertinence to the act of reading as well as the making of poetry, he asserts that

The most painful
confrontation
makes me happier.

Any resolution now will be 'within [his] limits', and any 'act' is performed, 'not to be known', but 'to become form and find / [his] relevance' ('In the Theatre'). Ever conscious of his outsider status, he can nevertheless come 'home', and make of his homecoming, his fluctuations of spirit, and his struggle with language, a poetry which expresses his turmoil. While not a Hindu, Ezekiel seems to be calling for a renaissance of the traditional Hindu acceptance of change and quest as a function of being. He is both of, and not of, the society; all he can hope to know is the 'landscape' of his own being — 'justified by being there' — and although 'the view' hurts 'it seems important / somehow ... to endure it' ('A Small Summit', *JSAL*, p. 93).

In this late poetry Ezekiel is continually trying to restructure his relationship with the spiritual and the phenomenal world. He is conscious both of the difficulty of knowing the self and of the 'hundred veils' and more that cover Creation, but it is 'death' to seek release from the acts of finding out. His 'action' or 'commitment' is not a release, or a desire for escape from the world of actuality into a spiritual transcen-

dence, it is an endeavour to embody the two in a world-view which pushes one's being to the limits of consciousness. Ezekiel is now writing a poetry which seeks, through 'fictions', to accommodate man to his own, and the world's, transience.

I am tired
of irony and paradox
...
of poetry direct and oblique
of statement plain or symbolic
of doctrine and dogma
of pure sensibility consuming
 the world with fire
 and leaving it ashes
of categories and labels
and of that which is beyond
of the divisible and indivisible
of the Many
and even, yes,
of the One.

(*'Theological'*, *JSAL*, p. 99)

But it is in the ironic gap between an apparently indifferent God and the blinkered vision of man with which Ezekiel is engaged, and such an engagement is an active commitment to being.

In 'Island' the poet and the landscape mirror each other: and by finding his way in his 'island'-city the poet may find his way into himself. One element of this awareness is of his islanded, cast-away status.

Unsuitable for song as well as sense
the island flowers into slums
and skyscrapers, reflecting
precisely the growth of my mind.
I am here to find my way in it.

(*Hymns*, p. 14)

'Sometimes I cry for help', he admits, 'but mostly keep my own counsel', making fictions to find 'a single willed direction'. He 'cannot leave the island, / [He] was born here and belong[s]', and although it may be 'imperfect' it is a kind of 'paradise', to humanly be made sense of.

Ezekiel keeps circling back to the need to find 'meaning / in the flux' ('For Satish Gujral', *Hymns*, p. 28). Here, the poem gyres outward from the deaf artist to the metaphorical deafness of us 'all', who 'martyr' meaning

to lonely
and heated visions whoring
after truth.

But now the 'resolution' the poet seeks is to set music free in the air, 'to hear what can't be heard / when everybody speaks'. As he says in 'Testament', a poem largely concerned with ways of 'seeing', 'More should be remembered / than is forgotten'. Memory, however, is only the beginning; then comes 'the silent hour' of contemplation in which the event is reborn; and 'later, the moment of winging...' which is 'the resurrection'. After the rebirth of this memory — 'fact and fiction' —

we owe the event a colour,
form and future history,
not the thing alone created
or the city served
but a life designed
for a steadfast radiation

(*'Testament'*, *JSAL*, p. 109)

The transforming imagination can find a contemporary relevance in a remembered private or public event, and can transmute the memory into a pattern 'designed / for a steadfast radiation', opening the event to interpretation. For without this kind of re-creation,

we never learn the art
of bringing up-to-date
the essential truth of old performances,
abandoning the costumes, make-up,
settings, stage directions;

we never learn the art of making our own fictions: of 'finding what will suffice'. But Ezekiel does not confine this kind of creativity to 'poets alone'; it is the 'calling ... of men and nations / the spaceship earth itself'. All are cast into the role of creator; perhaps it is only through a creative redemption of being that the future can be faced.¹²

Ezekiel would face the future with an 'open' life, 'stripped ... of all pretence', working at being 'exact ... in quietude of mutual need' (*'In Twenty-Four Lines'*, *JSAL*, p. 110). His wish is to grow into the future; 'we cannot live on echoes' (*'Poem of the Separation'*, *Hymns*, p. 29),¹³ and, as he studies the organic world about him, he begins to understand the careful nurture central to growth. In *'Lawn'* (*JSAL*, p. 113) the earth is transformed by the gardener (Gardener?) into 'a thin transparent

green', but the gardener, the quintessence of patience, knows 'the gentle art of leaving things alone'. Confident in the process of change and growth, he possesses that esemplastic power which intuits

a silence in the depths
a stir of growth
an upward thrust
a transformation —
botanic turmoil
in the heart of earth

The present turmoil, growth of grass or soul of man, is seen in terms of a metamorphosis which has to take place to enable a growth into the future. In terms of its philosophical-religious and aesthetic statement the poem is central to Ezekiel's *oeuvre*, for

when the grass becomes too long
you only
cut it
short
to let it grow again.
You keep an eye on it
in rapport with its secret laws,
maintain its ritual
of mortality.

(‘Lawn’)

The problem of creating and interpreting one's own 'fictions' may lead to a withdrawal into self to become a victim and a cause of the fever of the universe 'without a cure of it'. There is always the hope, however, that 'A man withdrawn into himself / may be a man moving forward'. But any such movement must be towards the rediscovery of the 'lost / ... language of dreams'. If he gives himself to a sense of spiritual emptiness — 'upsurges, explosions, abysses, paradoxes' — there can be no reintegration of the divided self which is in part built upon the very isolation and precariousness that it would reject. The synthesis which Ezekiel seeks is one to which the notion of change is essential.

The searching, inquiring mind behind these poems finds the expression of its organic and growing ideas in forms which are themselves organic. The analogy between poetry-love-religion still holds, but there is an element of faith present which has largely edged out the agnostic of the earlier poetry: the Word now seems more protean, more mysterious:

Just when you give up
the whole process
begins again

and you are as pure
as if you had confessed
and received absolution

And in a group of aphoristic statements at the end of his *Poster Prayers*,¹⁴ he speaks of a 'new poetry / by a new man' drawing his Word from God (19, *JSAL*, p. 137), finding his song where he belongs (20), from the 'near, (with) / affection for the familiar' (18). He prays that he can resist unravelling the mysteries of the heart (15) and let his 'actions' (his poems) 'earn their names' (16): he is singing, he says, 'The song of [his] Experience' (11). But, as 'Passion Poems' and 'Hymns in Darkness' (*Hymns*, pp. 50-62) make clear, his world is given an order and coherence by its sense of change; 'The Enemy is God / as the Unchanging One' (59). He sees himself as a 'permanent and proud / metaphor of struggle', but this strange bravura is then undercut, for the struggle is between the warring sides of his personality: his 'creative, self-destructive self'. And it is ultimately to this dividend creative self that we attend: he cannot, like a Dhanya or a Ganga (see *JSAL*, 139, *Hymns*, 37),

... pass
through the eye of a needle
to self-forgetfulness.

(*'London'*, *Hymns*, p. 33)

And although 'the language really / separates' ('Minority Poem', *JSAL*, p. 143), making him aware of his isolation, it is also, he says, 'our conspicuous gift' ('Talking', *JSAL*, p. 148). He sees the need continually to remake it 'as we make our lives', for in the struggle to apprehend, 'the words / materialize, begin to matter'. Ezekiel is here calling on both the primal meaning of language, the original breath, and the creative involvement of man's intellect with language, continually searching it for its essence. And the reach of his fictions, forever remaking self, time and place, is towards those 'supreme fictions' which strike to the essences; towards 'the Word, / made flesh', sought again and again.¹⁵

Growing into his poetry and his environment, Ezekiel moves towards radical fictions as the only way of expressing the reality he sees. From the mid-sixties onwards he has been creating a spiritual and psychic 'room' of his own which may either provide access to nothing or serve as a

doorway to the infinite enigmas of self and place: he says, 'I have to name anew / the things I see' ('The Room', *Hymns*, p. 42). And while outwardly 'the room is always the same', as psychic reality it shifts 'restlessly / and falls into different patterns'. Like Naresh, in *Marriage Poem*, Ezekiel recognizes a need to 'improvise from day to day, [since] this improvisation is our existence'.¹⁶ Such an idea of creative continuity derives from a sense of the mind as both intellect and imagination, reason and intuition,¹⁷ confronting and attempting to make sense of the beauty and the terrifying reality of the present. And, while Ezekiel feels cut off from the Hindu (and Indian) because of an accident of history, he cannot help sensing that 'residues of meaning still remain' from the past, just as 'darkest myths meander through the pain / Towards a final formula of light' ('Philosophy', *UM*): he is possessed by and possesses all that constitutes his world (*Nudes*, 1).

Nudes, in its infinite variations, is Ezekiel's most recent exploration. Trying to find the exact words to praise his love's beauty, the lover-poet lists 'all those landscape images' — 'Hills, valleys, swelling river-banks ... / ... breasts and buttocks seen as fruit, thighs as tree-trunks' — but these only 'tell a small / fragmented part of the story': 'as person' she resists definition, reclines, 'resisting form' (*Nudes*, 9). And he, as lover-poet 'given up to nakedness', asserts: 'We cannot be transcribed' (*Nudes*, 1). With a belief in growth and the future, and willing to be 'absorbed in ... everything', he seeks to evoke the 'living presence':

life on earth, the cosmos,
even the spirit of God
in the void and the void.

(*Nudes*, sonnet 8)

Form and idiom have been gradually modified to implicate the reader in the act of the poem and to provide the mind with a catapult into a larger reality: the poet would bring back messages 'from another shore' in the hope that we may 'see, touch, hear, hold' (*Nudes*, sonnet 8) the breathing life of the poem and the experience from which it is spawned.

Nissim Ezekiel gives us a mind 'in the act of finding / What will suffice', but it is the mind of a man who has made certain commitments to his time and place ('Background Casually', *Hymns*, p. 11). And, in his role as maker and namer, he names the presences and absences of his 'room': its shadows and its visions, and this may lead either into an abyss or 'right into the air' ('Testament'), making 'light of the process' ('After Reading a

Prediction'), The truth he now seeks is qualitatively different to that conceived of in the earlier poetry; it is a profound and fruitful knowledge, beyond 'meaning' and 'understanding', drawing the whole being of poet and reader into the reality of the poem and its perception. This is a coming home to language and to poetry; it leads towards and not away from reality. He seeks an 'art' that 'entrances reason / and makes us human'. And this is the impetus of Ezekiel's art and his insight: to make us human. He acts, creates, he suggests, to be enjoyed and to speak of truth, thus transforming his experience and vision of reality into something original. He has acquired a kind of tolerance — not a blind submission — and he celebrates his very survival and his 'home ... a kind of hell / to be made tolerable' ('After Reading a Prediction'). On this 'firmer ground' of a synthesis built on a holistic sense of self and place, different with every passing moment but permanent in its changeability, he says, 'I seek ... / To improvise my later fiction'.

Ultimately, Ezekiel acknowledges the flux and change of outer reality, but he seeks to come to terms by growing and changing with the flux. As he says in an early poem, he could withdraw into 'a world of old simplicities', turning from 'The World' to live in an unambiguous past, but instead he embarks on something of a renaissance, reclaiming the mind and creativity out of the Hindu past and projecting it into the future. In this way he would inject life into the moral, spiritual, and ethical world of the contemporary Indian. At the centre of his world is active and enduring man. We are conscious of his infinite potential and his ravaged, crushed limits. And we sense in the making of his fictions that Ezekiel is trying to construct and convey a dynamic continuum between a man and his world.

NOTES

1. All references to the poetry and essays of Nissim Ezekiel are to the following volumes or articles. Hereafter, all references, with the relevant abbreviation and pagination, will be included in the text. *A Time to Change* (London: The Fortune Press, 1952), (*ATC*); *Sixty Poems* (Bombay: Published by the Poet, 1953), (*Sixty*); *The Third* (Bombay: The Strand Bookshop, 1959), (*Third*); *The Unfinished Man. Poems Written in 1959* (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop, 1960), (*UM*); *The Exact Name. Poems 1960-1964* (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop, 1965), (*EN*); *Hymns in Darkness* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), (*Hymns*); *Nudes*. All quotations are from a MS. kindly given to the writer by Mr Ezekiel, who also provided a copy of *Sixty*

- Poems* and was a patient correspondent. *Nudes* has subsequently been published in the first issue of *Kunapipi* (Spring, 1979); *Journal of South Asian Literature*, XI, 3-4 (Spring-Summer, 1976), 'The Nissim Ezekiel Issue'. This collection has been drawn on for poems from *The Third* (unprocurable) and for poetry written later than 1965 and not included in *Hymns*. The issue also contains Ezekiel's review of V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, 'Naipaul's India and Mine' (pp. 193-205), (*JSAL*).
2. As Frank Kermode says of Wallace Stevens, quoting from Santayana's *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (1900, p. 270). Cited by Kermode, *Wallace Stevens* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 81.
 3. See John B. Beston, 'An Interview with Nissim Ezekiel', *WLWE*, 15, i (1976), p. 90.
 4. The logic of the volume captures the vacillating spirit of a mind, on the one hand, seeking a pastoral ideal of 'old simplicities' in which everything has its place, and on the other, becoming lost in 'absurd and devious routes' ('The Worm', p. 11). The results are the 'schizophrenic agonies' of 'Something to Pursue, I' and 'The Double Horror'.
 5. 'Foreword', *Sixty*: 'I am interested in writing poetry, not in making a personal verse record. But poetry is elusive; to write a poem is comparatively easy'. 'Poetry' alludes to this sense of structure.
 6. See Henry James, 'The Preface to *Roderick Hudson*', *The Art of the Novel* (1934; rpt. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 5.
 7. The poems of *The Unfinished Man* are underscored by the tension between these 'old' and 'new' positions: the wish to define, and awareness of a world in process.
 8. See Christopher Wiseman, 'The Development of Technique in the Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel', *JSAL*, XI, 3-4 (1976), 241-52. While in essential agreement with Wiseman's thesis we believe that by overlooking *A Time to Change* in which, within the formal patterning of stanzas, there is considerable variation, Wiseman misses the continuity in Ezekiel's poetry.
 9. Ezekiel, 'Poetry and Philosophy', *Quest*, 50 (1966), p. 25.
 10. See also Michael Garman's useful comments on the Cézanne allusion, in 'Pilgrimage and Myth', *JSAL*, XI, 3-4 (1976), p. 222 fn. 12.
 11. See R. Parthasarathy, 'Foregrounding as an Interpretative Device in Nissim Ezekiel's »Night of the Scorpion«', *The Literary Criterion*, XL, 3 (1974), p. 44 and passim.
 12. In an interview with Anees Jung, Ezekiel explained his belief that 'the goal of life is determined in terms of an individual's understanding and fulfilling his own destiny'. 'L.S.D. The Meaning of Reality'. *The Times of India*, 1 December 1968, p. 12.
 13. See Ezekiel, 'Naipaul's India and Mine', p. 204. But cf., V. S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 191.
 14. In 1973 and 1975 Nissim Ezekiel had two exhibitions: *Poster Poems* and *Poster Prayers*, respectively, see *JSAL*, pp. 119-31, 133-37).
 15. See also Raja Rao's comments in 'The Writer and the Word', *Critical Essays on Indian Writing*, ed. M. K. Naik, S. K. Desai, G. S. Amur (Dharwak: Karnatak University Press, 1968), p. 361.
 16. *Three Plays* (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop, 1969), p. 74.
 17. Cf., Kermode, *Wallace Stevens*, p. 97.