CHAPTER IV.

TECHNIQUE : CHARACTERS.

The Characters in Fry's Plays.

(a). Introduction.

(b). General Classification:

1. Comic Stereotypes.

2. Symbolic Characters.

3. Living or Round Characters.
The object of this section is to study Fry's characters in general and also to assess the extent to which they fulfil their roles in the presentation of the themes of the plays.

Characters are not real people since art cannot be a substitute for life and what an artist gives us is his conception of people through whom he makes explicit his understanding of the world. In drama, the only vehicle that can cover the whole gamut of the dramatist's vision is the characters. Fry like any other dramatist endeavours to present his understanding of the world in his plays. Talking about characters he explains his own conception of characters in drama thus, "If the characters were not qualified for tragedy there would be no comedy and to some extent I have to cross the one before I can light on the other. Somehow the characters have to unmortify themselves to affirm life and assimilate death and passover in joy. Their hearts must be as determined as the phoenix, what burns must also light and renew, not by a vulnerable optimism but by a hard-won maturity of delight, by the intuition of comedy and active patience declaring the solvency of good." What he means by this perhaps, is that the characters in his plays must come closer to death to enjoy life in all its potentialities. In many of

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his plays the protagonists come almost very close to death, and then they have a fresh lease of rejuvenation. For example, the Duke in *Venus Observed* before he acquires a state of peace, gets himself locked up in his observatory when it is set on flames.

Moses in *The Firstborn* suffers a spiritual death before his resurrection. Tegus in *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, almost decides to kill himself for his dereliction of duty. One is reminded here of Milton's conception of virtue. He says in *Areopagitica*, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed that never sallies out and meets its adversary but slings out of the rage where that immortal garland is to be run for not without dust and heat." A cloistered virtue could never be appreciated by Milton. It must come out and meet vice. So too Fry's characters.

If they are fit for comedy they must qualify for tragedy too, for comedy and tragedy are two sides of the coin called life. Since Fry glorifies life in all his plays his characters must represent both sides of the coin. This gives us an idea of what type of characters he introduces in his plays. Fry tries to unravel the mystery of life and one can see this in his characters, for he thinks that man is compelled to dwell in the midst of mystery in this world.

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As he himself puts it, "I could see no reason though writing such a comedy why I should not treat of the world as I see it, a world in which we are all poised on the edge of eternity, a world which has deeps and shadows of mystery in which God is anything but a sleeping partner." This belief has shaped his characterisation to a large extent. He also makes an attempt to create a full cast of diverse characters, who have been particularised or individualised by their idiosyncrasies. In many of his plays the type of hero that he presents voices the feelings of the age and focuses attention on the inner conflict of the modern man. Since Fry feels that his characters must be both tragic and comic, he wants to express through them the conviction that life is full of both good and evil, sin and redemption, vigour and decay. As Emil Roy points out, "Festivity and sacrifice, vitality and decay, sin and redemption, all spring from the integration of tragic and comic which Fry calls the 'contention of death with life which is to say evil with good, which is to say desolation with delight.'"

Though some of Fry's characters are legendary and Biblical, they do not appear to be strangers to us. As Rudolf Stern has noted, "The fact that Fry is interested above all in the metaphysics of the human condition has its influence on the way his characters are drawn. They are never psychological studies, as he explores precisely what is not reducible to logic in our psyche, and loves people who behave us unusually and madly as to defy all psychological systems. His legendary, his biblical and his fairy-tale figures are real as creatures of the imagination." The distinguishing feature of all his major characters is their faith in life. Though they are confronted and confounded by the problem of evil in its myriad forms, their innate faith in life enables them to overcome evil. They are all extremely vocal and wittily so, but this should not lead us to believe that they are merely flippant and have nothing to convey, as Kenneth Tynan puts it, they "studiously express different attitudes towards life, but they use interchangeable rhythms and identical tricks of speech in which to do so. They tell us with ruthless, fluency, what kind of people they are, instead of letting us find out ourselves." Through many

of them speaks the voice of the dramatist, expressing his own strong and unshakeable faith in life and his feeling that this world is a mystery.

Referring to Fry's characters Stanford says, "In his strange work, Fear and Trembling, the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard provides us with two psychological portraits that may prove some that relevant.............. There are, he tells us in relation to spiritual matters three types of mentality: the mundane or material; the aspiring but uncertain and transcendently sure. The first is one that needs no further preface, to it belong perhaps nine-tenths of mankind and who may almost be said rejoice in the appellation Philistine. The second is a category more difficult to define, and is constituted of those beings who while they have discarded worldly values, cannot as yet claim to have found those new spiritual standards and bearing for which they are seeking. In terms of an image they may be described as Colombuses who have passed beyond the local waters of convention with however, sighting the looked for land. Such explorers clearly to an heroic category which Kierkegaard collectively designates as that of knights of infinity or knights of infinite resignation."

Some of the protagonists of Christopher Fry can be termed as 'knights of infinity' for they also are groping towards a newer life and faith. Characters like Moses, Thomas, Tegus, Sattner and Cynan belong to this group. On the whole Fry's characters reveal ample variety and thus reflect what Fry himself has called the 'polyphony' in which we live.

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S. Christopher Fry, "Personal Correspondence", April 10, 1978.

Vide, Appendix 1.
(b). General Classification.

Fry's characters can be broadly divided into three categories vis. (1) Comic Stereotypes, (2) Symbolic Characters and (3) Round or Living Characters.

(1). Comic Stereotypes.

Many of the characters in Fry's plays are dramatic stereotypes which may be sub-divided into three groups. To the first group belong pompous and corrupt officials like Hobble Tyson and Edward Tapperoo in The Lady's not for Burning and Readbeck in Venus Observed. The second type consists of simpletons and ineffectual people like Colgrim in Shor with Angles, Matthew Skippes and the Chaplain in The Lady's not for Burning. Garrulous type of people like B Cuthman's mother in The Boy with a Cart, Doto in A Phoenix too Frequent and Bates and Readloman in Venus Observed belong to the third type. All these have been stock characters on the comic stage.

Hobble Tyson— the very name Hobble suggests one who literally babbles with sarcastic statements— is the mayor and a pompous official. He always searches for his missing handkerchief, is afflicted with his office and like Chaucer's Man of Law appears to be busier than he is. Even when confronted with a crisis, he is not bothered about anything except his nose and his office (perhaps is
that order when Thomas Mendip meets him in the hope that the mayor is the gateway to his 'eternal rest'. Tyson says,

"Dear sir, I haven't yet been notified
of your existence. As far as I'm concerned
you don't exist. Therefore you are not entitled
to any rest at all, eternal or temporary."³

When his clerk Richard tells him that Thomas Mendip wants to get hanged, instead of getting surprised, very coolly and casually he says, as though it is something quite usual in his busy official routine;

"Out of the question
It's a most immodest suggestion, which I know
of no precedent for— cannot be entertained.
I suspect an element of mockery
Directed at the ordinary decencies
Of life."¹⁰

When Thomas says

Here is unimaginative bureaucracy at its comic best. And that he has come to get hanged, even without listening to him he asks him whether he has filled in the necessary forms, He is corrupt both

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10. Ibid., p.133.
morally and ethically. He feels that the charm of Jennet is "too unusual not to be corrupt," and would like to take unfair advantage of her.

Similarly Edward Tapperoom the Justice is also anything but a justice. He is also a corrupt official and is interested only in feathering his own nest and cares little for the law and justice. He exhorts his friend the Mayor to be patient and tells him:

"You must wait

Until to-morrow, like a reasonable chap.

And to-morrow, remember, you'll have her property

In stead of your present longing for impropriety

And her house, now I come to think of it

Will suit me nicely." He wants to occupy the house of Jennet after disposing her of (by branding her as a witch and by burning her to death) without any qualm of conscience what so ever.

To this category also belongs Readbeck in Venus Observed. He is a man with an idee fixe — and that is embarrassment. He is agent to the Duke and overtaxes the subjects of his master without his knowledge and misappropriates that extra money, when his son

12. Ibid., pp.188-189
asks how he has become rich, he lies to him:

"Just so; we've been very fortunate.
Your Uncle Hector, when he put on immortality
In Tasmania, increased, to a certain extent
Our freedom from curb; and old Lady Bright, my first
Employer, when she passed on, passed on
Herself to heaven and the rest to me."

But all this fails to convince his son: he pesters him to reveal the truth; then he lies to philosophise:

"In all the streets of men, some one you know
Some one must keep alive that quality
Of living which separates us from the brutes
And I have proposed it should be I."

Still unconvinced his son corners and forces him to admit his embasement and then he unashamedly confesses:

"... certain eccentric
Means have had to be taken for splendid ends
Church and state in a way, agree
In justifying such a course of action

14, Ibid., p. 185.
A kind of casual taxation. I hope I explain quite clearly. It's true I have overlaid the Law with a certain transposition; we might call this process Readbequity.¹⁵ His coinage of the term 'readbequity' reveals the extent of his shamelessness.

The second category of these comic types are simplesons and ineffectual and peevish people. Colgrin, in Thor, with Angels, the Chaplain and Skipps in The Lady's not for Burning belong to this type.

Colgrin is a man without common sense but with an inexhaustable store of abuse. When Guichelm, his master taps at the door he retorts by responding thus:

"Frog-man, fen-fiend, werewolf, oul, elf.

Or whatever unnatural thing you are

Croaking in the voice of Master Guichelm."¹⁶

Again, when all men rush to kill wolves, Colgrin who is in charge of the prisoner remains in the house and when questioned by his wife he tells her that his duty is to look after the prisoner; when she points out that the prisoner too is gone to kill wolves, he replies:

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"All the more reason
Why the other half of the arrangement should stand
If the horse gets out of the stable it doesn't seem
The stable is justified in following
I'm a man who can be relied on." 17

In The Lady's not for Burning the Chaplain is an ineffectual and ridiculous clergyman who is always mouthing absurdities and he is ever conscious of his own limitations. When people are discussing an urgent matter, he says,

"I wish I were a thinking man, very much
Of course I feel a good deal, but that's no help to you." 18

Here is his evaluation of himself:

"I know I am not:
A practical person, legal matters and so forth
Are Greek to me, except of course
That I understand Greek, and what may seem nonsensical
To men of affairs like yourselves might not seem so
To me, since everything astonishes me,
Myself most of all, when I think of myself
I can scarcely believe my senses. But there it is

All my friends tell me I actually exist

and by an act of faith I have come to believe them. 19

Similarly, when Matthew Shipps, a drunken fool, 'the rag-and-bone merchant' enters, the whole situation is surcharged with farcical humour. He is tipsy and unsteady, when someone tells that he has been dead since that morning, he replies:

"Dead, well, you take me breath (breath) away. Do I begin to stink then?" 20 He is definitely stinking, if not after death, but before with liquor.

The third category among the comic types includes Guthman's mother in The Boy with a Cart, Doto, in A Phoenix too Frequent and Box Recliner and Doto in Venus Observed. They are all extremely garrulous people. Guthman's mother is a peevish old woman, always speaking disjointedly. When she is thrown out of the cart and the mowers in the nearby fields laugh, she exclaims:

"I should like to box the ears of the whole lot, but there are too many of them, it would take too long." 21 and on another occasion she indulges in autobiographical revelation:

"Your grandmother used to say to me when I was a girl, 'Daughter' she would say, 'never get above yourself, it will be your own..."
fail.' Little did she guess what things would happen to me, and it's just as well... I was her favourite daughter."

Doto in *A Phoenix too Frequent* is another type of garrulous woman, who, unlike Cuthman's mother, is intelligent and witty and she is prepared to starve to death along with her mistress in the tomb, not that she is particularly devoted to her. But in her own way she is a feminist also. When Tegyes intrudes into the tomb, she tells him:

"Be a gentleman

If we can't be free of men in a grave

Death is a dead loss.""23

On another occasion, blaming the entire male sex she says,

"You sex of wicked beards

It's no wonder you have to shave off your black souls

Everyday as they push through your chins."24

In *Venus Observed*, Captain Fox Reedleman, the butler of the Duke and Sates his footman have a constant feud and are extremely vocal about it. The very name, Fox Reedleman sounds funny and farcical. He was once a lion-tamer but has now lost his nerve. This does not prevent him from trying to tame Dotes. He tells the Duke:

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24. Ibid., p.15.
"I have to tell your Grace, in all decency
To the footman Bates, who I religiously despise,
If the fellow comes on duty with a bloody nose
"'T is my doing and long may it bleed.'"

When the Duke points out that he is no longer a lien-tamer he says,

And that

Was a bit below— I'm severed from my mother
Or she would have felt it severely. I'd remind you
"'Twas . . . fighting for king and country I lost my nerve
And b'Daniel, it's a sad job to be parted

From the lords of the jungle."26

The enmity between Bates and Reedleman is portrayed very humorously.
The most comic part of it is that they do not confront each other
directly though they meet often. Everytime they talk to the Duke
accusing each other in a most vivid manner. For example, when
the observatory is burnt both vie with each other to save the
Duke and Perpetua but not caring for the gravity of the situation,
they continue to accuse each other. Bates complains,
"Couldn't the Lord Lieutenant
Even keep his nose out of this little job?"27

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26. Ibid., p.2.
27. Ibid., p.222.
and Westcliffman asks the Duke not to come down by the ladder placed near the window, because it's brought by Bates.

"Your Grace,

You're not so out of your mind as to go out of the window? Encouraging robbery and violence, you are, to set your foot on a ladder propped up against your property without permission and in the middle of the night when no decent man would be lashing one ladder to another, and he in his shirt."

As said earlier, these comic stereotypes provide a farcical element to relieve the tension in serious situations. Particularly in the early plays, these secondary characters with their idiosyncrasies occur frequently. As Stanford points out, "In the two earlier comedies it is the subsidiary individuals who strike us most as being characters in the Dickensian sense of that word... Continental these character-sketches in the manner of Dodo, the Chaplain and Tyson, Fry gives us the figures of Westcliffman and Bates—stock comic types but with lives of their own." Subsidiary comic characters like these are however largely absent in the later plays.


(2). **Symbolic Characters.**

One finds in many of Fry's plays certain characters symbolising certain values. They are obviously meant to represent his own creed of unshakable faith in life.

The dramatist employs the elementary device of naming some of his characters in conformity with their roles. This rather elementary device of calling persons after their characteristics is usually employed by many comic dramatists. In *A Phoenix too Frequent* the heroine is called 'Dynamene' which might suggest her dynamism. It is she who guides the mind of the soldier Teseus, from a death-like despair to a cheerful willingness to live. When he prepares himself to cut off his head for violating his duty, the suggestion that he could escape death by exhuming and substituting her husband's dead body in the place of the stolen corpse, comes from her. Stanley Wiersma, justifying the name, points out that Dynamene in Greek means power and "The change that comes over her is the change from destructive to constructive power. Her new lover has as many limitations as the dead husband. Dynamene's resurrection in in part her learning how to dispose her feminine power to creative ends."

The maid's name Doto from Latin 'dowry' has two meanings: by widow's dowry, Doto is left by Virilius to Dynamene, by bride's dowry she becomes the property of Chromis."

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between Tegcus and Dynemene further illustrates the importance of names. When Dynemene knows the soldier's name is Tegcus, she says, "That's very thin for you. It hardly covers your bones. Something quite different. Altogether other. I will think of presently." Later she names him Chromis and tells: "I shall call you Chromis. It has a breadlike sound. I think of you as a crisp loaf." William Marshal in Curtmantle is also named most appropriately. He is an important character in the sense that his mind is the stage for the play. As Fry himself puts it in the foreword to the play, "The form it takes is one of memory and contemplation. The state is William Marshal's mind, as though he were remembering the life of Henry." His duty is to marshal all the incidents in the King's life, before the audience. As Woodfield points out, "Marshall's name suggests his function; he is a high official of the court close to the King; he marshals the facts in order.

for the audience; and he records the passing of time and events." 34

Thus the name Marshal symbolically suggests the structural role
that he has to perform. Similarly the very title of the play
'Curtmantle' is suggestive. Referring to this word in the foreword
to the play Fry says, "his 'Henry's) nickname of 'Curtmantle' (is
derived from the plain short cloak he wore." 35 Since the word
refers to the loose cloak which Henry wore it might suggest that
the play concentrates on Henry and not on the martyrdom of Becket.
Apart from this the short plain cloak suggests the simplicity and
modesty of Henry the King. It also symbolically suggests his fall
and tragedy, for in the last scene when he is literally stripped of
his mantle, his fall is complete and he dies frustrated.

The name Perpetua — "a radiant refuge from spring" — in
Venus Observed suggests the idea of perpetuity in the cyclic pattern
of human feelings and emotions. The Duke who, through his experience
of near-death by fire in his burning observatory in the end
achieves the maturity proper for his age. And this Perpetua and
Rosabel who are largely responsible for this. The name Rosabel
Flamming has something of a 'flame' in it. It is she who is

34. Woodfield, "Christopher Fry's 'Curtmantle'— The Form of Unity",
Modern Drama, 1974, p.309.
responsible for setting the Duke's observatory to flame, of course under the impression that it is empty. It is this conflagration that burns not only the observatory used by the Duke for his clandestine meetings but also burns his hedonism too as though it is through these purgatorial flames that the Duke gets cleansed gains the realisation of his amorousness and that his days of philandering are over. He then reconciles himself to his autumn and settles down to wait for Rosabel Fleming to come out from prison, for she too cleanses herself of her guilt by going to prison.

Apart from this, the presence of the rose in the names Rosabel and Rosamun in Venus Observed and The Dark Is Light Enough respectively is significant. Rose is a symbol of the divine. Dante visualises God and the saints as a full-blown flower, with God at the centre and the saints as petals. According to the Muslim tradition, when Mohammed took his journey to heaven, the sweat from his forehead, when it fell on earth, produced white roses. Christian tradition attributes the rose to the blood of the first martyr. The Rose also stands for love. A legend says that when the Flood ceased, Love threw to earth a flower to show Noah that the wrath of God was extinguished. The flower took root and became a rose and we ever since the rose has been an enduring symbol of love. Christopher Fry seems to suggest both these aspects, viz., divinity as well as love.
in naming those two women characters. The Countess Remaria has something almost of divinity in her. In the play when she disappears Belmann says,

"The Goddess of it, in her Godlike way,

Is God knows where."

he continues further,

"You know the Countess has the qualities of true divinity."

Her charity, generosity and spirit of forgiveness are almost supernatual. And it is this divine spark in her that effects a metamorphosis in the character of Richard Cettner at the end of the play.

Rosabel Fleming's love for the Duke impels her to set the observatory on fire and it is this that makes the Duke realize her love for him. She tells the Duke when he is blind of her devotion for him:

"How do you know

How can you tell who loves, or when or why they love,

You without a single beat of heart

Worth measuring? You sit up here all night

Looking at the stars, travelling farther and farther

away from living people."

later, feeling frustrated at the Duke's indifference, she tells him,

"What goes on in other hearts than your own,

That's as remote to you as a seaside lodging-house
To a passing whale." 39

But finally she does succeed in winning the love of the Duke.

The characters in *A Sleep of Prisoners* are named after their roles. The names almost sound Biblical. The four characters are David King, Able, Meadows and Adams and they not only draw of certain Biblical parables in which Biblical characters like Cain, Abel, King David and Adam figure, but also have the same names in most cases. Private Adams becomes Adam in the dreamy David King becomes King David; so also Able becomes Abel. This device of the approximation of the names of the characters to the Biblical names enables Fry to weave the past into contemporaneity. The reenactment of the story of Cain and Abel symbolically suggests the unchanging nature of man and his craze for violence from the past even to the present day in spite of advancement and civilisation. The Biblical character David was a musician but his modern counterpart David King (in the play) considers music as a torture. This may indicate how values have undergone a

transformation owing to violence and war. The name 'Meadows' reminds one of Nature with in turn signifies life. Trys to his name it is only this character, who appears as God and the son of God in the first and the last dream respectively and speaks of the importance of life and how it's time that man believed in the powers of good.

Apart from this, as already noted, the four seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter represent the life of man in general at a broader level. That is why one finds in the plays, characters in tune with certain seasons. Fry himself talking about "The Lady's not for Burning" says, "I have tried to make the words and deeds of the characters move all the time with a sense of the particular moment at which they are said or done, so that we can be aware continually of the April afternoon for example, with the scents and sounds an essential part of the action conditioning the words of the characters,"\(^40\) It has already been discussed how Fry's four comedies represent four seasons. *The Lady's not for Burning* represents Spring, *A Yard of Sun* summer, *Venus Observed* and *The Dark Is Light Enough* autumn and winter respectively. The protagonists in *The Lady's not for Burning* are young; they get their misgivings

\(^{40}\) Christopher Fry, "Comments on John Gielgud's production of "The Lady's not for Burning", *World Review*, June, 1949, p. 21.
dispelled in the end, leading to a spring-like happiness. In A Yard of Sun the main characters enjoy the warmth of a summer of reunion after the war. In Venus Observed the hero, an old man achieves autumn-like maturity, after delusions of spring. In The Dark Is Light Enough the two main characters, each complementing the other, express the cyclic idea of how winter leads to spring. Thus these four comedies taken as a whole represent the life of man in general with the four seasons in his life.
(3). **Bound or living Characters.**

Fry seems to feel that his principal characters must have a phoenix-like experience and yet resurrected. As already noted, he states that "Some how the characters have to unmask themselves to affirm life and assimilate death and persevere in joy. Their hearts must be as determined as phoenix, what burns must also light and renew, not by vulnerable optimism but by a hard-won maturity of delight, by intuition of comedy and active patience declaring the solvency of good."

In doing so, they accept certain new values hitherto unknown to them. The protagonists in the plays, The Lady's not for Burning, A Phoenix too Frequent, Venus Observed, The Dark Is Light Enough, The Firstborn, Ther, with Angels, Curtmantle and A Yard of Sun can be grouped together as Bound or living characters. All these characters seem to be complex and show development from their entry on the stage to their exit. They are many-dimensional and highly individualised and can therefore be considered to be 'Bound' or living characters.

A close study of these characters reveals that they all attain self-knowledge and the three forces that win for them this awareness and self-knowledge are love and encounter with others, sorrow and misfortune and the experience of God.


In *The Lady's not for Burning* Thomas Kendip and Jennet Jourdemyne are brought together by circumstances. Both arrive at an understanding of life through love. Thomas Kendip is a maladjusted idealist full of disgust and despair and his memory of long-campaigned in Flanders makes him sick of life but in the end he develops a fresh interest in life and decides to live, abandoning his death-wish. Jennet Jourdemyne who is a misanthrope, to start with, later rediscovers a zest for life, as Fry himself puts it, "They start by having two opposing views of life; they end by fusing them and creating a third view."

A look at the incidents in the play reveals that they are changed slowly. At the start of the play, Thomas Kendip wants to get hanged and he even confesses to having had committed two murders. And Jennet Jourdemyne is unjustly mistaken for a witch and which makes her lose all faith in humanity.

When both they are held prisoners in one room, Jennet is attracted towards Thomas Mendip and slowly he too is drawn towards her. We are given to understand, that ultimately they love each other and this makes them abandon their earlier attitudes towards life and a fresh interest in life starts for both of them when they arrive at a new awareness. And the force that brings them to this new awareness is love.

In A Phoenix too Fragile, Tegeus and Dynamene discover a new set of values and a new will to live. Once again here the force that changes them is love. Tegeus falls in love with Dynamene who has decided to put an end to her life. But he with his youthful charm and vitality of life exerts a powerful influence on her, as a result of which she decides to live, and is won from her death-wish to life. After deciding to live, she in turn exerts a similar influence on Tegeus. When he finds that one of the bodies he is supposed to guard is missing, he is prepared to die for the dereliction of his duty, the penalty for which is death. He gets ready to kill himself. Now it is the turn of Dynamene to come to his rescue. As seen in the play she exhumes her husband’s body, and gives a fresh lease of life to Tegeus. Thus the two characters are complementary to each other. Both help each other to a phoenix-like resurrection, through the agency of love.
In The Dark Is Light Enough, Richard Gettner, who has subjected himself to humiliating mockery of others in order to save his life, finds himself in the end undergoing a total metamorphosis unthought of and unexpected earlier. This is wrought in him when he encounters a powerful personality like the Countess. The mantle of the Countess descends on him when she dies and he gets ready to face the Austrian soldiers who come in search of the Hungarian Col. Janik—the very same person who had come earlier in search of him. This sudden change resulting in a total transformation of his earlier values is because of his encounter with a magnetic and strong personality like the Countess. Earlier Richard Gettner had wanted to live at any cost: He says:

"I'll not die to oblige anybody
For for the sake of keeping up
Decent appearances, before I do
I'll get down on all fours, foot-kissing
Dust-licking, belly-crawling,
And any worm can have me for an equal
Rather than I should have no life at all."

In the beginning he is introduced this:

"Richard Gottner, that invertebrate
That self-drunk, drunken, shiftless, heartless
Lying malingerer ... .......
. . . . . . . . . . . .
Unreliable, when he was drunk
Irresponsible when he was sober
Useless to any world, sober or drunk."44

But this drunken, cowardly wretch in the end rises to lofty heights, preparing himself to save Col. Janik even at the cost of his own life.

Similarly in Thor, with Angela Cymen, the leader of the Jutes gets transformed when he has an encounter with another personality. Cymen believes in his pagan gods, Thor and Valhalla, who stand for violence. It is a mystery how he finds some unknown power working in him which makes him spare the life of the Briton, Beal, captured in battle. This encounter with Beal brings unforeseen and unthought of change in him. He brings him home and loses himself in introspection and is called to meet St. Augustine and after this meeting he returns home metamorphosed with a new-born belief in the Christian values of forgiveness, mercy and compassion.

Edmondo and Roberto in A Yard of Sun are two different types of characters but are both arrive at a new awareness when they

encounter some strong personality. Edmondo feels at the beginning of the play, that he can buy anything with his money but realises in the end that life is larger than money. This he realises when he encounters his own brother Roberto who constantly confronts him and puts him in his place. Edmondo attempts to assert himself in his house, returning home after a long time, but Roberto foils his attempts. Edmondo's attempts at making Grazia, a model are once again frustrated by Roberto. He with his father turns down the proposal of changing the palazzo into a hotel. All the attempts of Edmondo—thanks to the efforts of Roberto—result in a grand fiasco and he is forced to realise in the end that life is not what he can make of it with his money. Roberto, who has a better perspective in life than Edmondo, also arrives at a deeper understanding of life at the end. He is drawn towards Edmondo's wife Ana-Clara. But she tactfully checks his amorous advances but also makes him realise the necessity of certain values in life as a result of this he is cured of his infatuation and at last settles down to marrying Grazia to whom he is betrothed already.

Henry in Curtmantle and the Duke in Venus Observed arrive at an understanding of life through sorrow and calamity. In the case of Henry, it is a personal sorrow leading to complete frustration, his tragedy is complete with his fall; In the case of the Duke, it is a calamity that brings him to an understanding of life.
Fry himself has summed up Henry’s character in the foreword to Curtmantle: “His(Henry) character covers a vast field of human nature. He was simple and royal (his nickname of ‘curmantle’ derived from the plain short cloak he wore), direct and paradoxical, compassionate and hard, a man of intellect, a man of action, God-fearing, superstitious, blasphemous, far-seeing, short-sighted, affectionate, lustful, patient, volcanic, humble, ever-riding. It is difficult to think of any facet of man which he didn’t demonstrate except chastity and sloth.”

Henry tries to establish firmly the roots of law in England, but he realises in the end, while working for the accomplishment of his goal, that he has only succeeded in achieving alienation from others, including his sons. It is a fall from the heights of glory to the lowest levels of abject misfortune, followed by death.

The Duke in Venus Observed comes to realise his limitations through a calamity. He arrives at awareness when the observatory is burnt down. When Rosabel sets the observatory on fire, he comes very close to death. At the beginning of the play, he is a perfect hedonist interested only in the pleasures of the flesh. The burning down of the observatory effects a sudden transformation. The Duke emerges out of this calamity with a new awareness. It is

as though his soul gets cleansed in these purgatorial flames and
he reaches a new realization of his limitations and the fact of
old age, which at last brings him peace. It is a leap forward towar-

ds a in The Firstborn higher life which brings him peace and solace.

In The Firstborn, in the character of Moses, one sees man's
experience of God or the handiwork of God. "The character of Moses",
as Fry himself puts it in the foreword to the play, "is a movement
towards maturity, towards balancing of life with in the mystery,
where the conflicts and dilemmas are the trembling of the balance.
In the last scene he suffers a momentary spiritual death, (I followed
a light into a blindness) at the moment when the first-born's physical
death creates the Hebrew's freedom; and his resurrection from that
to become a great leader, though only hinted at as the curtain falls
carries with it something of the life of Amos."46 From the
beginning of the play, Moses makes an attempt to understand the
inscrutable ways of God. He works for the deliverance of the
not
Israelites but does know how to achieve it and simply waits for
God's intervention. Even in the end after the death of the
first-born he does not understand why there is grief, he says:

"I do not know why the necessity of God
Should feed on grief."47

47. Ibid., p. 140.
He later reconciles himself to the fact that all this is inevitable and necessary and that the eternity bears a witness to it. Though he feels that he 'followed a light into blindness' which the dramatist himself refers to as 'spiritual death', his emergence as a great leader of twelve hundred thousand Jews indicates a resurrection.

To sum up, all these characters start their lives with a certain world-view but in the end, they arrive at a totally new perspective on life, which is better than the earlier values— and they undergo a new spiritual regeneration or awakening which is wrought in them through various forces: like love and an encounter with a strong personality, as in the case of Thomas Handip, Tegens, Cymen and Gettner and others; or like sorrow and a calamity as in the case of Henry and the Duke respectively; or through an experience of God as in the case ofkosos. These characters develop and change as living or 'round' characters always do.