CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

On a small, but suggestive canvas Ransom has delineated his unambitious men and women, throwing into focus a host of problems that confront man perennially. Loss of faith and a disregard for values leave them groping for the centre they have unwittingly forfeited owing to their dependance on abstractions. The failure to integrate themselves into a totality of being is the curse of these humble characters. They have only minimum desires, but even these desires cannot be satisfied as they lack the strength of mind to rise above their immediate circumstances.

In the foregoing five chapters an attempt has been made to lay bare the objective manner in which Ransom treats of the theme of death and mutability which in effect resolves itself into a collective study of man's failure to forge an integration necessary for a unified experience. Miriam Tazewell and Margaret cannot become mothers and in order to escape from the pain of their non-fulfilment find consolation in flowers and foliage which they caress fondly as if these flowers and foliage were their babes. One also encounters forlorn lovers who cover up their failure to consummate their love by
dreaming of their sieges of forts and castles or by finding in books lurid passages which deflect them from a meaningful relationship, like the frustrated lover in "The Miller's Daughter," who when pornographically inspired, fantasises over the 'white moons' of the miller's daughter. Ransom diagnoses these aberrations as the disorders of the consciousness, which, incidentally, is the curse of the modern times.

Ransom takes on the guise of an impersonal narrator who watches his protagonists and then comments upon their fates. By forcing them to look into their own minds he makes them conscious of their deficiencies, but when he realizes that the experience of such an introspection is painful to them, he cleverly distances them from a direct confrontation with reality through a language specially designed to assuage pain. This language is a mixture of colloquial and pedantic expressions which prove to be an ideal vehicle for effacing his personality and at the same time help reinforce his ubiquitous presence as a 'persona' in the poems. He reprimands his characters and at the same time even sympathises with them and in this way actively participates in their mundane activities. Intending to keep them within the confines of respectability he uses a pungent irony through which he points out to them the difference between what they desired for and what they actually experience, making them
conscious of the situation in which they are placed, thereby equipping them to face the reality resolutely.

Ransom's vision of life was not as rich as that of Shakespeare or Milton, but it was comprehensive enough to hold in balance the dualities inherent in life. Though he attempts to effect a polarization between what is real and what is ideal, the fragmented minds of the characters do not allow this and as a consequence they wallow in their sloughs of unreality, denying themselves their aspirations to enter into a right relationship with Nature.

Ransom is convincing in the novelty of his treatment of death and change. The failure on the part of the characters to realize themselves makes them afraid of what is inevitable and like Janet in "Janet Waking," they struggle to form a positive response to it. Ransom wants them to be aware of mortality for only then can they prepare themselves for the event and accept it with equanimity. Expressions like 'foul subtraction' and 'transmogrifying' conceal the terror of a tremendous finality, but it also assists in impressing upon their consciousness that this tremendous finality is a fact which they can never escape.

While treating of death, Ransom as in the poem "Dead Boy," reminds the humble dwellers of his little universe
of the need to conform to a reality which alone can assure them of a return to a centre which they have lost and in this way discounts the element of grief natural on such occasions. The theme of mutability is integral to his poetry. It appears in many poems as a variation upon the central theme of the dividedness of man in the form of the transition from what has to be to what is. The failure of the lovers and the spinsters to realize themselves is the result of their inability to comprehend the immutable fact of change. Their response to this change is one of trepidation and it is this uncertain attitude towards it that wraps them in a 'phantasy of good' as is the case of the girl in "Vaunting Oak." The harshness of this reality is such that being fragmented personalities they dread it forever. This leaves them 'perilous and beautiful' like the equilibrists in the poem "The Equilibrists." Their precariousness is unresolved or even if they are, like Drury and Jenny, ("Winter's Tale") restored to their original dignity, this seeming salvation lacks a certain conclusiveness and it is this inconclusiveness about life in general that Ransom articulates in his poems. He never permitted his characters to contemplate suicide nor did he make them dream of resurrection. Suicide and resurrection only jeopardise the torturousness of their earthly plight which, if sustained, manifests the insoluble ambiguities of the world, resolvable only in a natural death.
Similarly change is perceptible when 'pigeons' take the place of 'peacocks' as in "Old Mansion." It is not at all easy for the characters to adjust themselves to the fall of a region from a once pre-eminent position. Ransom believed in myths and rituals and considered them to be requisites for a rich religious experience. Only by observing customary rites and rituals and by perpetuating the sacred traditions of their region, the South, can the undistinguished people redeem themselves from the vulnerability of their situation. Despite warnings of a certain disintegration if values are not adhered to, these unfortunate men and women who are the victims of modernity have abandoned all valid monuments of faith and in the process, got sundered from their moorings in life.

Finally, convinced that they cannot attain a unity of being, Ransom by keeping his emotions in check watches these 'marchers unto night' ("Eclogue") trundle towards their annihilation. The urgency with which he has expressed in poetry the predicament of the dissociated man, makes him "one of the most commanding and assured voices . . . of our time."
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