

essay

Both a Borrower and Lender Be

by K Z Karim

Blessed are the greedy for words, for they shall have vocabulary.

"NEITHER A BORROWER nor a lender be" said Polonius, in one of those triumphs of the folk mind over good sense which have long confused and are likely to continue to confuse modern thinking. Borrowing is and always has been the great fact of civilization. To confess that one has not borrowed other people's discoveries is to confess that one knows very little. To say of a people that they have borrowed little is to say that they are barbarians. Dominant cultures everywhere have rested upon borrowing. The great fact of both ethnology and history is that almost everything that any person or any people owns at any one time has been taken from — somebody else.

Now, confessedly, I am have using borrowing as a sliding middle term, but borrowing is essential to modern life even in the restricted sense in which Polonius presumably used the term, the taking of money on a promise to repay. All modern industry of any size or complexity is based upon borrowed money. In a modern world, most investments must be loans. Without borrowing or lending, automobiles could not be made or sold, airplanes could not be flown. One may disapprove of airplanes and automobiles, but he can scarcely deny that modern society could not exist without borrowing; if one chooses to do without stocks and bonds he must do also without plumbing.

But there are none of the sniveling qualities of Polonius in linguistic borrowing. The linguistic borrower has that fine indifference to distinction between 'meum and tuum' lauded by Charles Lamb: "he troubleth you with no receipt". He takes what he wants where he finds it, assumes that you have served your function in

life by being borrowed from. Borrowing in language is almost as important as it is in culture generally, and no language — anywhere — or at least none of the great languages now known to us — has borrowed so extensively as has English, nor made such good use of the borrowed products.

Rabindranath — the great borrower, under the cascade of linguistic diffusion

Rabindranath was fully aware of the limitation of the Bengali vocabulary and its incapability of expressing all the new ideas and new thoughts imported from the West. He did not hesitate to use the loan words wherever necessary and on certain occasions made comments on the use of such loan-words. While commenting on the use of an English-loan word 'nation', he wrote:

"I have no hesitation to accept the word 'nation' in its unchanged form. We have borrowed the idea from the English and I am prepared to acknowledge the debt by retaining the English word." (Rabindra Rachanabali, XII, 675)

In other article he elaborated this point in the following terms:

"We use jati as the equivalent of the English word 'nation'. The original meaning of jati, as derived from the root corresponds to that of 'nation'. Those who have among them a unity resulting from birth-ties constitute a nation. We could have used the term jati in that sense, but in our language the word jati is used in a wider sense on the one hand and in a narrower on the other. We say purush jati (male), stri jati (female), manush jati (mankind), pashu jati (animal), and so on. Moreover, the difference between a Brahmin (the highest order in the Hindu society) and a Sudra (the lowest order), is that of jati

(caste). This has induced me to introduce the word 'nation' and not to use jati as its equivalent."

"We translate all the six words, 'nation', 'race', 'tribe', 'caste', 'genus', 'species', as jati." [Rabindra Rachanabali, XV, 184.]

He held the same view regarding the adoption of the English words 'religion', 'politics', 'criminal', 'patriotism', 'aristocracy', and 'civilization' to Bengali.

While referring to the English word 'religion' and its so-called Bengali equivalent (dharma), he wrote —

"The word 'dharma' is peculiar to India, just as 'politics' and 'nation' are peculiar to Europe. It is impossible to translate the words 'politics' & 'nation' in our languages; equally impossible is to find an equivalent (dharma) in European languages. We, therefore, make a mistake when we think of dharma as English 'religion'." [Rabindra Rachanabali, XII, 662/46.]

His views on the introduction of the words 'criminal' and 'patriotism' are found in the following lines

"Without making futile attempts to translate the word 'criminal', we want to adopt it as it is, in Bengali." [Rabindra Rachanabali, XII, 887]

"The equivalent of 'patriotism' is not deshhitaisy. The idea is foreign; what harm is there if the term also remains so? He borrowed the words 'aristocrat' and 'aristocracy' and remarked:

"No Bengali equivalent is available for the word 'aristocrat'. The word 'abhijayta' is familiar in Bengal. The word kulin is universally known, but the characteristics of a kulin are not akin to English 'aristocracy'." [Rabindra Rachanabali, XII, 870]

On another occasion he

wrote:

"Nowadays we use the term 'matribhasha'. From our new education we have got this term, too. The English call their own language 'mother-tongue' and our matri bhasha is a literal translation on it." (Rabindra Rachanabali, XIV, 455)

Rabindranath was also fully conscious of the difficulties of transliterating English words into Bengali. In this connection he wrote:

"When I transliterate English words into Bengali, I am confused on many occasions. For instance, take the case of the English word 'sir'. Should I write it in Bengali as sar or sar? Does the English letter 'v' correspond to Bengali b or bh? What shall I write in Bengali, bau or bahu or bau or bhau for the English word 'vow'?" (Rabindra Rachanabali, XIV, 65)

Linguistic lemmings to the sea

It is said that the "Investigator should share some of his primary source material with his readers, particularly when it has a cultural as well as linguistic interest."

Hence, some specimens are given below to show some of the contexts in which English loan-words have been used in Rabindra literature. However, in some sarcastic poems written in a lighter vein, or to make something interesting and humorous, he made use of English loan-words.

As for example:

aditar chila Jitu hisabete tanka,
apise melate chila bajeter anka

Rabindra Rachanabali, III, 451

Free translation:
Auditor was Jitu, expert at account.

In office was adjusting budget amount.
The English words used

in these two lines, e.g. 'auditor', 'office', and 'budget', are very common and have been Bengalised, and the Bengali readers do not find any difficulty in understanding these lines. There is, however, an instance where an erudite English loan-word has been used in a poem in order to make the line thought-provoking e.g. —

man chale jay cinabihin pastaritir pathe " (Mind rambles towards unknown posterity)." (Rabindra Rachanabali, III, 660)

The following conversation exhibits the use of some loan-words in a social drama written in prose:

Shibcharan: "Ki hacche, Gadai?"

Gadai: *Agge, phijitolojir not gulo ekber dekhe nicchi* Shibcharan: *Phijitolojir kon Jaygate acho?*

Gadai: *Harter phansan niye.*

Free translation: Shibcharan: What are you doing Gadai?

Gadai: Sir, I am going through the notes on physiology once.

Shibcharan: What portion of physiology are you studying?

Gadai: About the function of heart.

In Rabindranath's short stories also, English loan-words are found in plenty. This is evident from a few lines given below —

Nandakishor chilén Landan yunibharstai thake pas kara enjiniyar. Akey sadhu bhasay bala jate pare 'dedipyaman' chatra or that, brilliant, tini chilén tai. (Rabindra Rachanabali, VII, 977)

Free translation: Nandakishore had a degree in Engineering from the London University. He was a student who, in the literary language, can be said to be a brilliant one.

Below is given an extract

from a 'novel' and here in also, one can find some English loan-words—

Gabarmenter kaj jara kare tara gabarmenter saktiye nijer Sakti bale garba bodh kare..... ar ami jader jele dii tara je amar bhai hay.

Free translation — "Persons who are in govt service take pride in thinking the govt power to be their own.... but the persons whom I send to jail are my brothers."

And in the linguistic closet

The total number of terms including abbreviated forms thus borrowed from English and used in Rabindra literature comes to 1860. It is well-known fact that the loan words which are incorporated into a language are subject to phonetic and morphological modifications. The sounds of these words are often changed so that they may fit the native phonetic habits. The words, too, undergo changes under certain circumstances, and are used with native morphological elements. Taking all these modifying factors into consideration the English loan-words used in Rabindra literature may be placed under the categories of (a) assimilated loan-words (b) hybrid words (c) acrostic words and (d) clipped words.

The most essential point connected with the use of a loan-word, i.e. the change of context has been more elaborately discussed in the definition of a loan-word given by B L Whorf: "A loan-word may be defined as a word that at some time was first used in context with other words of a given language, having never before been used in context with these words, for the reason that the user had heard and understood its meaning in a different language in which it was in context with words of that language."

focus

Godel and Your Puny Brain

by Andaz

EVER HEARD OF GODEL'S theorem? If you haven't, you need not be embarrassed; it is as important, and nearly as fundamental as Einstein's theory of relativity.

Godel shattered the dream or self-confidence of the scientists and the philosophers, when in 1930, at the age of 24, he dropped a bombshell in the form of his Theorem of Incompleteness.

He proved mathematically that mathematics is open-ended — which means that there can never be a final best system of mathematics. In other words, the human mind cannot solve all the problems it has been grappling with since the beginning of civilization; including the final secret of the universe — that is, the mind of the Creator. God does not pay dice!

Godel's Theorem confirms the limitation of the human mind. Logic and rationality cannot find all the answers or solutions. The human brain cannot find the limitation of the human brain. To do that, a superior brain (or testing device) is needed.

Rational thought cannot penetrate the final ultimate truth. The created can never equal the Creator, otherwise the two would become equal and, seriously, groping in the dark recesses of the vast space around us, speculating that the information we have so far from the visible portion of the universe is only a tiny fraction of what nature is holding back in the dark matter of space. The suspicion comes from the latest findings on particle physics — creation and annihilation of matter involving billions of a second. Newspaper readers now read that the vast space is not empty or vacant, but filled with invisible black holes, from which no communication or signal can come out (even gravity is sucked in, in our language).

Kurt Godel (a Czech) was born on April 28, 1906, and died in 1978. He was a contemporary of Einstein at the Institute of Advanced Studies. He was the greatest logician of the 20th century, and one of our greatest philosophers.

Do not rely too much on human R&D, and what come out of the labs. Life is more than statistics. Still we do not know what causes cancer, and the cure for the common cold; what is the soul, and what happens after death. The birth of the universe is still a riddle for the scientists. Lying before me is a book "The Mind of the Cells", a summary of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. The latest is the Chaos theory (of Western science) — how the fluttering of a butterfly in the Sunderban forest can change the weather over the Amazon forest.

The words tuition and intuition should be noted carefully. Intuition is knowledge from inside. We blindly follow tuition. For

those interested in further readings on Godel and his works (including mathematical puzzle), two books I have enjoyed are 'Forever Undecided — A Puzzle Guide to Godel' by R Smullyan, OUP paperback, 1987; and 'Godel, Escher, Bach' by D R Hofstadter, Vintage PB, 1979.

A new breed of scientists are probing into the inner secrets of microcosm and macrocosm, and trying to establish the elusive link. Now astro physicists and particle physicists are establishing converging communication to fathom the terse message of the sages 'as above, so below'. Leading the group is Stephen Hawkins, whose name must be familiar to readers as the author of the best-seller 'A Brief History of Time'. Then there are the 'chaos' scientists who find meaning and rhythms in chaos and uncertainties (there is a method in the madness). On the scientists' agenda are such weird items as the probability that matter could be created out of nothing (or space/void) — that's how God is supposed to have created the universe.

A young American scientists, Lawrence Krauss (*The Fifth Essence*, Hutchinson Radius, 1989), is literally, and seriously, groping in the dark recesses of the vast space around us, speculating that the information we have so far from the visible portion of the universe is only a tiny fraction of what nature is holding back in the dark matter of space. The suspicion comes from the latest findings on particle physics — creation and annihilation of matter involving billions of a second. Newspaper readers now read that the vast space is not empty or vacant, but filled with invisible black holes, from which no communication or signal can come out (even gravity is sucked in, in our language).

Some of the space data are simply mind-boggling. Since my student days I have been wondering why the space is so vast, and how many stars are there in the *aalam* (the universe). The scientists put the figure at around one million billion (one followed by 15 zeros) in all the known galaxies (the galaxies are grouped into clusters, and clusters into super clusters.....!).

According to an Islamic religious book (which I have in my library) each human soul (from the first born human to the last to be born) has been allotted a star (not to be confused with astrology, and what the stars foretell).

Lets us come down to earth and watch the next proceeding of our parliament!

— Dharitri Feature

performing art

Writing the Impossible

How could one preserve something as ephemeral as a ballet, a circus performance or an ice-skating show? The most obvious solution would be on film. But a picture cannot replace what is written down and there are clashes between several schools on the notation of movement.

by Wilma Levy

WE ARE AT A DANCE rehearsal. On stage, the performers suffer, perspire, try out a formation and then start again. They are working on a new ballet. In the wings, people take notes and make sketches. They are attempting to capture and immobilize movement so as to keep a memory of it and to create what seems impossible, a written heritage of movement.

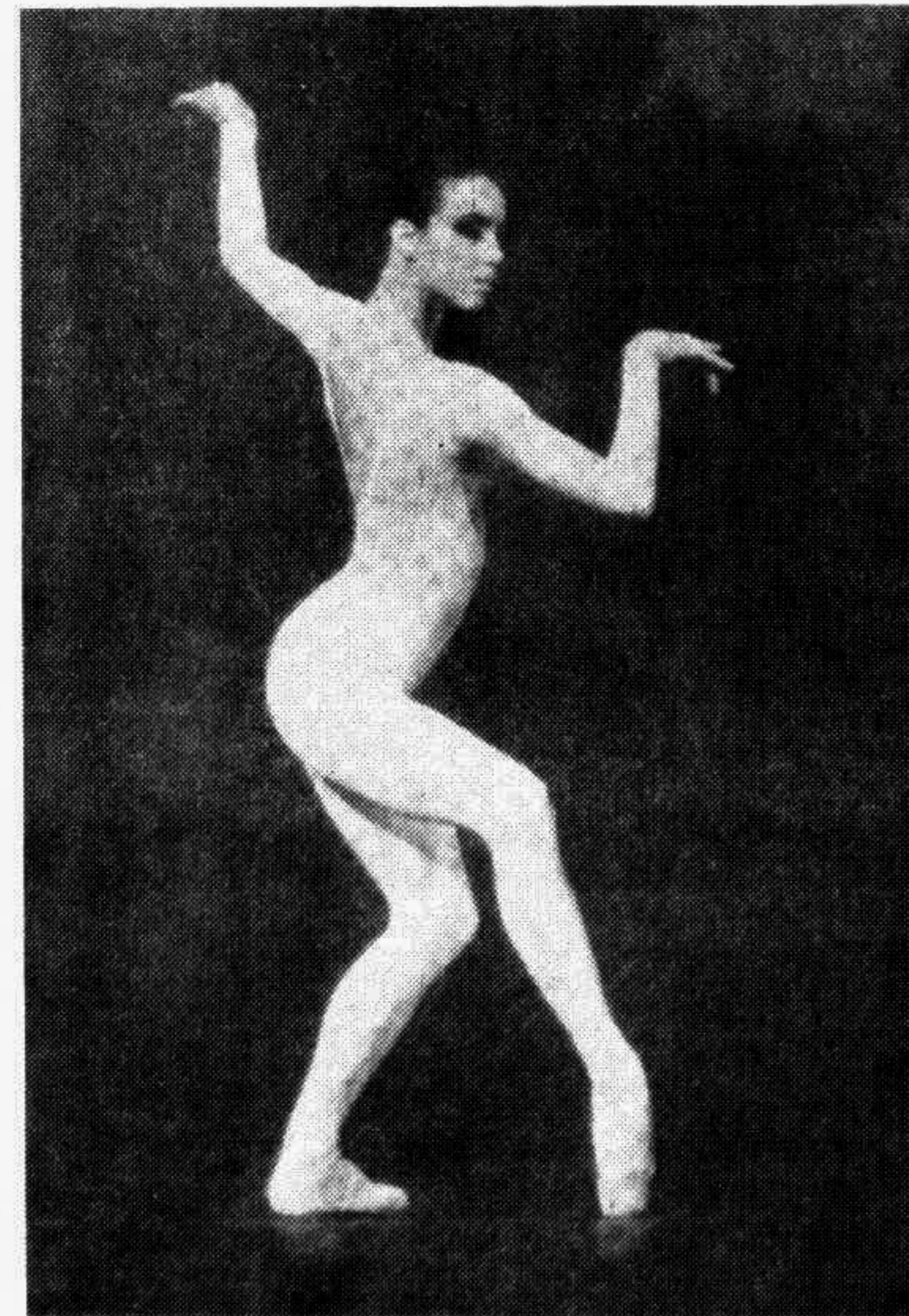
Dance led to the necessity of recording movement. Since the 18th century, the most appropriate way of doing this has been sought. Although video can serve a posteriori and for recent works, it does not compensate for the necessity of producing a sufficiently codified document to enable any director to interpret it, perhaps years hence. Moreover, for specialists, only a "written record makes it possible to protect the will of the creator in the way in which he conceived his ballet". The fact of writing it down, obliges one to analyze it. It is in order to develop this idea that the National Conservatory of Music and Dance at La Villette, in the north, of Paris, recently added the two main theories of notation, in their program.

As ballet is both a story and music, the notation has

to take these aspects into account. After the combination of drawings and comments last century, two schools set to the task more recently. That of Rudolf Laban, known in ballet circles as labanotation, appeared in 1928. It uses vertical stave and is based on three factors: the direction of the movement, its duration and its speed, "which condition the degree of energy needed to accomplish it", explains Jacqueline Challet-Haas, head of the Centre for Writing Movement. The stave is read from the bottom upwards and the movement of the right and left parts of the body are separated by a medial line with each "column" having a special meaning.

In 1956, another choreographer, Benesh, proposed another system. His notation is symbolically represented on a stave of five horizontal lines on which the signs of the movements are inscribed. The lines indicate the movement of the head, shoulders, waist, knees and feet. Changes in the direction of the body are shown by a directional sign placed below the last line.

Dancers are divided between the two schools. Nureyev was always accompanied by a user of Benesh notation. However, the British Royal Ballet follows the Laban method as does



the French choreographer Regine Chopinot. At any rate, everybody has his "scribe" who is a faithful technician of memory.

A single other sector of art is interested in the theory of writing down gesture. This is the Marcel Marceau mime theatre which thus

participated in creating a special notation, centre on gestures of the body, leaving the choice of the facial expressions up to the artist.

This research rapidly extended beyond the simple area for which it was intended. The domain of physiotherapy became interested in it to analyze deficiencies in behaviour with a view to psychomotor rehabilitation. In the United State and in Great Britain it is also beginning to be used to detect professional capacities.

However, in other areas of entertainment or sport, such work of conceptualization still remains to be carried out. But often in an empirical way, they all have to solve the problem of writing the impossible. In this area there is a conflict between the traditional and innovation.

Circus folk, who generally hand down their turns from one generation to another (within families such as Gruss and Fratellini) draw inspiration from "L'acrobacie et les acrobates", written by G Strehly in 1903. Pirouettes are described very accurately in this work in an elegant drawing of the athlete and dotted lines indicate the trajectories.

Skaters are inspired by this technique and, this time, the trajectory is drawn

on the ice. Just as gymnasts do, they complete this, trajectory by pictures reproducing various figures. In certain cases, texts describe the atmosphere or the accompaniment.

More technically advanced, trampolines artists or tumblers (an area characterized by a sequence of acrobatic elements carried out without intermediary steps) use chronophotography which is a series of photos decomposing movement.

More poetically, water dancers use detailed drawing with the trajectories and figures mentioned. These figures have special names often inspired by the animal or plant kingdom. Indeed, the albatross, the dolphin, the pink flamingo and the bud figure among the water dancers' favourite exercises.

Although this abstract and highly precise written description of movement interests the area of dance, other disciplines are only just beginning to become conscious of its usefulness. The necessity of leaving a written trace has not filtered through to all ways of thinking nor to all budgets. Indeed, it is highly costly. For the time being, only a few specialists, often trained by the masters or their immediate disciples, form part of a ballet corps. — L'Actualité en France

poem

Mooring for Peace

by Z A Khan

Death and denial
Cause hunger and funeral.
Yet heart and hearth
Will remain peaceful on the earth.
Till people on the hemispheres
Are ready to spare
Their selfish desire
That are odd and bizarre.
Anguish and torment
Deepen and foment
When God forgot
And goodness blot.
Vessel of peace will moor
At the port whose door
Is open and wide
For the righteous to stride.
Where scourge is rampant,
And evil doers are triumphant,
Succour is but a must.
To make the living just,
Forsake the wrong
To live to thron.
And there shall the vessel of peace moor,
With its gangway ajar,
For a voyage so pleasant,
That generations will reminiscent.

