



book review

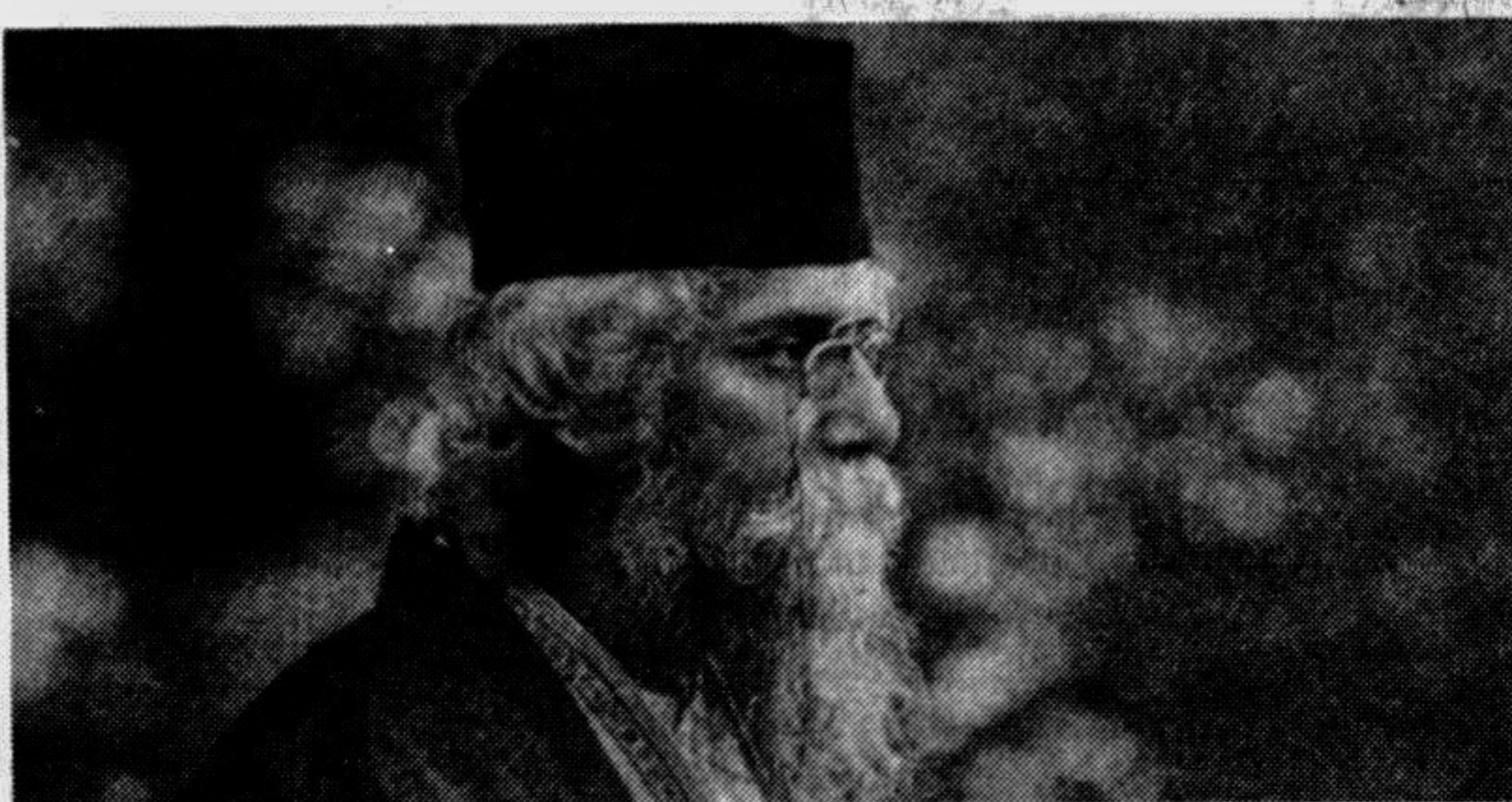
Easeful Death: New Translations of Tagore's Dakghar

by Kaiser Haq

The Post Office by Rabindranath Tagore, translated by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson. Illustrations by Michael McCurdy. Introduction by Anita Desai. New York: St Martin's Press, 1996. Pp.52.

THE Post Office [Dakghar] is Tagore's best-known play, and one for which he himself had a special fondness. It was written in 1911 in a mood of profound Weltschmerz bought on by a series of bereavements and distress at a violent turn in the nationalist movement.

sonage. In an impressive denunciation the King's physician literally crashes into the sickroom to announce his royal master's imminent arrival and as the boy slips into unconsciousness, orders that the starlight be let in. 'Amal represents the man whose soul has received the call of the open road,' Tagore explained to a friend: '... that which is "death" to the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds bring him awakening in the world of spiritual freedom.'



ghetto because it taught that 'eventually one had to learn serenely to accept the angel of death.' But Yeats was responding to a writer who still possessed the virtue of novelty, and Kozak was seeking solace in an extreme situation. To be of continuing interest, at least in the anglophone world, it requires imaginative productions (a subject beyond the scope of this review) and a good English version that is idiomatic and true to the original to replace Devabrata Mukerjee's dated 1914 translation.

Penguin, will be read with pleasure for many years to come. The rival Selected Stories (Macmillan) co-translated by Dutta is simply pitiful (see my review 'Reviving Tagore,' London Magazine, December 1991/January 1992). More recently, Dutta and Robinson have collaborated on Rabindranath Tagore: the Myriad-minded Man, an indifferently researched, badly written and poorly edited biography (see my review, 'Too bad for Tagore,' London Magazine, October/November 1996).

Amal's stepfather!) though there is nothing in the original to justify such a studiously quaint expression. Then, after two sentences of colloquial English Madhav rounds off with a curious mixture of sentimental rhetoric and officialdom: "It breaks my heart to see how your prescription makes him suffer further." Further comment is unnecessary but I cannot help adding that the use of the words 'prescription' and 'further' is not warranted by the Bengali text.

One is a three-act play. But enough is enough. Let students be set the task of comparing the three English translations of the play as a tutorial assignment. Combing through the whole of Radice's translation I found only two sentences that could be called a little clumsy:

profile Anthony Powell: A Major English Novelist

by A S M Nurunnabi

ANTHONY Powell is considered a major English novelist. This estimation rests chiefly on his 12-volume sequence 'A Dance to the Music of Time'. He had, however, published five wholly readable novels in the 1930s.

His earlier novels, wittily contrived and always urbane in tone, take for their subject matter those social echelons observed and depicted contemporaneously by Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh. For examples, 'Afternoon Men' explores the communal distractions and private gambits of upper-middle-class London society, if not wholly in decline and fall, at any rate starting to break up.

Waring is a teasing story about an author who, for what turn out to be very good reasons, conceals his own life behind a screen of mystery. It is possible to find in these earlier novels signposts pointing towards 'A Dance to the Music of Time'. In this most important novel, when considered as a whole, one is conscious that Powell presents his readers with a vast panorama that charts over 50 years of English life in the 20th century.

men of power destroy and are finally destroyed along with their own transient creations. The wit, elegance, and irony, both amused and amusing, are constantly deployed throughout each component part of the sequence and this powerfully imaginative wizardry invests the work with the secret harmonies whose resolution finally is reached in the last volume.

the underlying seriousness with which Powell pictures individual and societal changes, unfolding a story both comic and melancholy. Large metaphorical reference is one of the major devices Powell uses to underpin the structure of this outstanding novel. The cast of brilliantly presented major and minor characters is bound together in the metaphor derived from the painting by Poussin at the beginning of the novel. Life is a dance in which individuals move now in recognisable evolutions, now in seemingly meaningless gyrations, while partners disappear only to appear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle, as Powell with extraordinary skill handles a multitude of strands of characters, places, and events in order to weave his grand design.

ell turned to the writing of his engaging and illuminating memoirs. These were followed by two novels, mannered but consciously so, which carry their learning and wit with characteristic urbanity and elegance. 'A Dance to the Music of Time' is generally considered as Anthony Powell's outstanding achievement. Inevitably, the sequence in that novel has been compared with works of other serial novelists of this century, especially Proust, Waugh, and Snow, whose series also contain elements of social history. Yet Powell's achievement is distinctive. Powell's vision is more humane than Waugh's, his language more allusive, more charged with implication than Snow's. Powell's main character is more outward looking self-absorbed than Proust's.

poems Stop. stop. stop. and nothing does by Nuzhat Amin Mannan On reading Langston Hughes' poem called 'What happens to a dream deferred?' Bedtime (Dedicated to M Huq) From Amrapali to Amar Polli: a Reverse Journey by Rebecca Haque What we had in life before the e-mail