

Review of a Novel by Thomas Meyer:
«Der unverbrüchliche Vertrag»

by R. M. Querido*

It is most unusual in our circles to find an author who writes a novel. Thomas Meyer, publisher of Perseus Verlag Basel, well known lecturer, and author of some outstanding biographies, such as that of Ludwig Polzer-Hoditz and D. N. Dunlop, brought out a novel relating to the end of the millennium, under the intriguing title «The Contract That Cannot Be Broken». It takes place in 1998.

Many of us might have also asked the question, as did Thomas Meyer, «Where are the Anthroposophists who were close to Rudolf Steiner at the beginning of the century - where have they reincarnated, and who are they?» The author takes on this task by weaving a close knit story where characters who had been together around Steiner find one another, and recognize one another as we approach the end of the century.

A few of them have reincarnated in America. The main part is played by Harold Freeman, aged 26, a cultured young American who studied at Yale, and is about to start on a successful, diplomatic career. He is fluent in German and French, a great admirer of Emerson and Herman Grimm, and is well aware of the connection that existed between them.

The story opens in New York as Harold is preparing to embark on his first European journey on the "Queen Elizabeth". On board he already recognizes some of the individualities he was formerly connected with. Every evening he writes his impressions of the happenings during the day to his fiancée, Fiona, a soprano at the Chicago Opera. In fact, Thomas Meyer uses this device throughout the book most successfully: the reader partakes in the events of the day, then Harold writes a letter (or fax) to Fiona, which allows us to see the deeper meaning of the events and meetings, and we hear of Fiona's response by mail a few days later.

If one knows the history of our Society, and has some familiarity with the individualities around Steiner, some of the disguises are rather thin, and a little imagination will point to who these characters were at the beginning of the century.

Having arrived in Europe, Harold Freeman spends some time in Paris, and in Chartres recalling experiences which he had in a former incarnation. As a young diplomat, we find him in Brussels

where he attends sessions of the European Parliament. From there he travels to Colmar-Odilienberg, retracing connections with the Grail saga and occurrences in the life of Odelia. The spiritual journey of discovery and meetings with his former contemporaries take us to Basel, Stuttgart, Vienna, Prague, Weimar, and London. Thomas Meyer displays a real knack in vividly describing those places, and giving us something of the spiritual "aroma" of each city.

Little by little we discover that the "contract that cannot be broken" refers to a vow that four times twelve individualities have made before birth, promising to devote themselves to the progress of humanity in the light of Spiritual Science. It is only towards the end of the book that the name of Rudolf Steiner is actually mentioned, though it is clear that the characters we meet have been close pupils of his in the past, and also now. It is interesting to note that most of them are active in the social, economic and industrial spheres of life, and have a deep interest in the affairs of the world.

Some critics might well say: do we need such a fictional approach, and reject the book outright. On the other hand, one might recognize in it a courageous approach to try to imagine how those close to Steiner might return and be active at the end of the century out of a renewed impulse in Spiritual Science appropriate for the dawn of a new millennium.

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