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**WILL AND VIGOUR IN THE POETRY OF THOM GUNN**

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Thomson William Gunn is the youngest of the movement poets. Around 1960, it appeared as if all the poetry in England was being produced by a 'triple – headed creature' called Larkin – Hughes – Gunn. Gunn began his career with youthful ferocity that he seemed destined to burn out early. He is deeply affected by the sense of chaos. His poetic self is entangled in the meaningless absurdity of social norms. These forces hinder man's realization of his real self. He has no chance to realize and actualize his potential. As a result, human subject is left with self-pity and a sense of guilt generated by his suppressed soul. The will keeps smoldering under the social self. This is what Gunn has attempted to depict in *The Sense of Movement*. This volume is concerned with Gunn's assertion of human survival and struggle against the odds of civilizational progress and other non – human forces. Gunn has used a tough imagery to convey the firmness of human will standing against all odds.

In *The Sense of Movement*, Gunn reveals his obsessional interest in will and vigour with real-life symbols. He finds in them the fullness of human instinct though some of them end on self-pity. Though he went back to academically oriented life, he still longs for that bohemian way of life denied to man. The first poem of the volume 'On the Move' is a critical comment on man's complacency who has subdued his power to act independently. The poem stresses deliberate willfulness. The motto of the man, 'Man you gotta go!' contains the kernel of the poet's plea to man that he must move on without any fear of losing and gaining. Being not at rest and free of all fears of achieving a fixed goal and destinations is the only way to get rid of the restlessness and psychological dilemmas which have infected modern man. His real energy and heroism have become subject to the ordinary ends and means.

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Most of the poems in the volume pedantizes the quality of controlled energy, Gunn seeks. The poems are about motorcycle gangs, music, bohemian life style and freedom of expression. In ‘On the Move’ the problem is more psychological than social or cultural. Here the will is the machine that derives the body into action the body itself is an instrument that seeks an identity. The poem emphasizes the urgency of will and discipline. Here the poet metaphorically transform motorcycle in a haunting image of will and expression. Gunn has said about this poem,” On the Move is the poem where I most expanded my range.” The poem incorporates the notion of movement as a means of self – discovery in the same way that ‘On the Road’ does. The poet is in the north California where he watches a gang of motorcyclists roaring along the highway scaring a ‘flight of birds across the field’:

On moves with an uncertain violence  
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense  
Or the dull thunder of appropriate words .{ S.M- 11 }

The boys have no apparent purpose in the conventional sense but certainly the wheels pressing in an uncertain direction have a sense of purpose though not determined by conventions and norms. The ‘blue joy scuffling in the bushes’ indicates that the boys have an instinctual purpose. Man is at loss with them because man’s rational and intellectual wavering does not allow him a movement like this. Birds, however, act on instinct where as man’s latent instinct is vitiated by his intellect.

The poem ‘The Nature of An Action’ presents a man who has assimilated the ideas of living well finds them crushing and too hard for the spirit. They do not allow a free outlet of natural impulses. The poet has used common place imagery like ‘heavy footed chairs’, ‘a glass bell loaded with wax grapes and pears’, ‘polishing table’ etc.... to show the weight of cultural norms. The protagonist feels :

Each gesture that my habit taught one feel  
Down to the boards and make an obstacle. [S.M. – 13 ]

He moves like a pendulum from one option to other. He is unable to make a choice which would solve his existential dilemmas. He is deprived of will and vigour to change the course of action to his will.

The poem “The Unsettled Motorcyclist’s Vision of His Death” is a plea for will and action. Here the protagonist makes a deliberate choice of death .Gunn presents surreal fusion between nature

the machine. The motorcyclist riding across the wide country side in rain is quite content with what he has chosen to be. He is not in the least concerned whether he will lose or win .He becomes one with nature. His motorcycle, the symbol of sophistication and material advancement, sinks in the marshy water, but not his will. His real self still fights with it, free of all predicaments. In ‘Merlin in the Cave’ we have a warlock who is able to transform himself at will into plant and animal. He should be able to tell what man and nature have in common. He is the victim of his own intellectual pursuit. It is the same absolute prison when he is born into it and when he builds it again for himself on the study floor. He has no choice but to seek a synthesis of his nature, the soul and mind to make life meaningful . Merlin realizes the inadequacy of the absolute self and resolves to find meaning in every action :

But I must act , and make

The meaning in each movement that I take

Rook , bee , you are the whole and not a part

This is an end , and yet another start .

In the poem ‘Market at Truks’, he once again celebrate the irrational and the violent as means of one’s identity. His military uniform symbolizes his tough will and energy. He is endowed with no social responsibility. He is free to act and determine his own being.

Gunn, throughout, “The Sense of Movement” is searching for a firm and demonstrable identity for man. Man must not expect purpose and destination in each action. He must have courage to take risk. He, no doubt, is chained and a sufferer, still he has will and energy to choose his own course of action.

## **REFERENCES**

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