are shown to be equal partners with equal rights.'[1] In English law a double standard, as between husband and wife, concerning the grounds on which each could sue for divorce remained till 1923. Now that one breakthrough implied in the divorce saying has been belatedly recognized (albeit inversely), perhaps we can begin to grasp the wider implications for us, now, of Jesus's refusal to accept the form of what was not, in his day as in ours, just a 'religious' structure but also a crucial social and political structure. We might also take seriously two other sayings: Jesus's rejection of the excuse 'I have just got married and so am unable to come' (Luke 14, 20), and his enigmatic comment about the kingdom: 'For when they rise from the dead, men and women do not marry' (Mark 12, 25).

[1]Paul Hoffmann, Jesus's saying about divorce and its interpretation, *Concilium* V. 6, p. 53.

Rational Man on the Dark Margin

by Adrian Edwards, C.S.Sp.

The lady in Muriel Spark's latest novel, eagerly looking out for her murderer, was surely an anthropologist manquée. For one element in the anthropologist's complex fate is the dialectical compulsion to achieve the synthesis of contraries. The anthropologist's charter—the cohesiveness and interpretability of all the works of social man—is part of the legacy of the Enlightenment surely; yet this volume[1] suggests that it is in the very area where the hidden and the hateful come nearest to receiving the guilty approval of social man that anthropologists can do their finest work, marked by that passionate rationality and clear-eyed empathy which do at times reward pains-taking research and patient reading. It is true that the best essays are by historians, or by anthropologists using history to gain a wider range; but the historians, Professor Norman Cohn, Mr Peter Brown, Dr Alan Macfarlane, and Mr Keith Thomas, have adopted the anthropological approach, which examines the interplay of ideology and institution, rather than work in the historian's tradition of the placing of men in their milieu.

This collection, then, dedicated to exploring the dark margin of society's self-consciousness, is intended as a commemoration of Professor Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*.[2] Now this is one of the classics of anthropology in more than one sense. The ease of style depends on the extreme clarity of the

[1]*Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations* edited by Mary Douglas, Tavistock Publishers Ltd. A.S.A. Monographs 9, pp. xxviii, 387, London 1970. 63s. (£3.15).
[2]First printed Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937.

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underlying thought, and this in turn is the fruit of the prolonged, patient absorbing of an enormous mass of material. When one recalls that it was published only two years after Malinowski's *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, that coagulation of abundant but unshaped material and promising but undeveloped theories, one must the more marvel at the way Evans-Pritchard wove into a comprehensive whole indigenous texts, items of his personal observation, exact description of institutions, and an authentically structural analysis of socially-determined modes of thought. This is surely the authentic quality of a classic, the reconstruction of reality such that the mind of many readers must have felt on finishing it a keen joy at its harmonic richness. But no praise by fellow professionals can surpass the censure of that African, who, lent it by Professor Gluckman in far-off Barotseland, remarked: 'It is terrible. This man knows what witchcraft is, but does not believe in it.'

Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande is, then, a classic. Moreover, it is unusual among classics, in that it emerged full grown, without a previous period of tentative experiment—one can see this, if one looks at books published in the twenties, which, for instance, contrast the good witch-doctor with the bad witch, without recognizing how frequently in African societies the gamekeeper is also a bit of a poacher. More than this, it was a classic which did not close, but rather opened, a golden age. Indeed, it could be said that anthropologists have refrained from mining the whole of its riches —it was only in the later sixties that British anthropology seemed ready for a systematic, rather than episodic, approach to the problems of social cognition.[1]

Dr Mary Douglas in her Introduction points out, quite rightly, how the interest which Professor Evans-Pritchard was showing in the early thirties in Levy-Bruhl and Pareto was to bear fruit in *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. (One recalls the episode which occurred in Azande séances: 'When a witchdoctor has shot at a person he may walk up to him and theatrically remove his shaft, generally from the forehead when the missile is a black beetle. The man himself says that a witch-doctor has extracted a missile of witchcraft from his body. Other people think the witch-doctor has shot him because he is a witch. Everybody interprets such actions as he pleases. They are not important.'[2]) It was surely through this awareness of the intellectual (in the scholastic sense) dimension of human social life—that it must in any given grouping seek to be, not simply a functioning, but a *meaningful* whole, which provides meanings for its segments and individual members—that Evans-

[1]For a special case in point, namely the sociology of joking see a fascinating article by Mary Douglas, 'The social control of cognition; some factors in joke perception', in *Man*, September 1968, pp. 361-376, and from a rather different viewpoint, Abner Cohen, 'Political Anthropology; the analysis of the symbolism of power relations', in *Man*, June 1969, pp. 215-236.

[2]*Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, p. 179.

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Pritchard saved British anthropology from the empiricism to which the combined influences of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown would have committed it.

Naturally enough, this empiricism is always trickling back, and Dr Douglas is right in saying that social anthropologists have only drawn on a certain range of *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, notably the passages which explain why the common sense and technical knowledge of the Azande does not lead them to scepticism about witches, how action against witchcraft is socially controlled, and the relations between witchcraft and situations of egalitarian competition. Practically no subsequent writer has commented on the elements of drama and even entertainment in the quest for and treatment of witches.[1] Even in *Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations* the fluidity and ragged edges of systems of witch beliefs seems to surprise some of the contributors a little—but this is something which is very clear from the Azande material.

Yet I am less than happy with the case that Dr Douglas brings against her fellow-anthropologists. Perhaps it is simply thick-wittedness on my part; but it seems to me that not only does she contradict herself, but she is also contradicted by the evidence of several of the essays in this book. She states rightly that anthropologists (particularly in the former British Central Africa) have outlined a three-stage theory of witchcraft and its social context. Stage I: pre-colonial society, when fears of witches were not only controlled by the forces of over-all social stability, but could actually contribute to it, both by blowing off deep-rooted frustrations by the catharsis of accusation and ordeal, and by blasting away strained social relationships, and giving opportunities for social readjustments. Stage 2: early colonialism, with a disturbed society, and witchcraft fears becoming the thermometer of social pathology. Stage 3: (hoped for) reintegration of society on a new basis, consequent decline of witchcraft beliefs. Mrs Douglas describes the fundamental element in this hypothesis—'an increase of witchcraft accusations occurs as a symptom of disorder' as 'superbly untestable'.[2] But then is this not the character of almost all the illuminating insights which anthropology has to offer, that they are generalizations which produce a meaningful echo, when applied to particular societies, but which are capable only in a very limited degree of legal or statistical investigation?[3] She then claims that the evidence for Stage I is in fact based on the investigation of societies in British Colonial Africa between 1940 and 1960. But these societies, on the three-stage theory, should have been in Stage 2, at which witchcraft achieves a pathological exuberance. Instead of being content to make this point and

[1]See the whole of chapter I of Part Two of *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic:* 'How witch-doctors conduct a seance'.

[2]P. xx.

[3]For a statement of this point of view see Rodney Needham's introduction to *Primitive Classification* by E. Durkheim and M. Mauss, Routledge Paperback, 1970, pp. xlii to xliv.

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pass on, Dr Douglas then tries to find some sort of loophole for the argument she has just criticized by suggesting that these societies had already adjusted to the conditions of colonial rule. Her next step is to argue that this adjustment was illusory, and would have been seen to be such if anthropological research had been pushed as much in the Pacific area as it was in Africa, since these years saw the flowering of innumerable cargo-cults in Melanesia and New Guinea.[1] Having started out by criticizing[2] a theory of equilibrium, which was explicitly slanted to pre-colonial days, Mrs Douglas has then claimed that African societies of the later colonial period provided evidence for it.[3] She then offers an explanation of how they came to do so. Finally, she argues that the evidence of equilibrium was insufficient, and would not have gone unchallenged, if all available evidence had been considered. What once depressed me now makes me happy; I am not as intelligent as Dr Douglas, and hence do not feel the need to fight every step of every conceivable intellectual battle.

It must be said that several of her contributors accept the assumptions which she challenges. Dr Alison Redmayne points out that the internationally reputed diviner Chikanga lived in a period 'of political and social unrest, especially in Rumpi District, where resistance to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was particularly strong. The strikingly unusual idea—that Chikanga's mission was to cleanse Africa may have been a reflection of the language of nationalism—Northern Nyasaland (*sic*) is an area with a long history of witch-cleansing movements, diviners, prophets, and separatist sects.'[4]

On the other side of Africa, Dr Edwin Ardener traces convincingly evidence for the three-stage process among the Bakweri of the Cameroons, but gives a final twist—the arrival of Stage 3 is ascribed to successful anti-witchcraft techniques. Similarly, the contributors who write on European witchcraft do use similar hypotheses of growth and decline of witchcraft fears over a period of time.[5]

[1]M. Douglas, introduction to *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, p. xxiii.

[2]See also her contribution to *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa*, edited by John Middleton and E. H. Winter, London 1963.

[3]To quote her actual words, witchcraft 'should have been at Stage 2 and well out of control when it was being observed in Africa in the 1940-1960 period—precisely the time it was felt to slot so well into the homeostatic functional theory' (Introduction, p. xxi). Mrs Douglas was not herself a propagandist of 'the homeostatic functional theory', but considers that those who used it ignored the contrast between their working theory and their overall scheme. Surely she is herself over-simplifying in failing sufficiently to recognize how much the fieldwork undertaken in what were then Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland under the leadership of Professor Gluckman did to break the hold of naive equilibrium functionalism.

[4]In *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, p. 120.

[5]Dr Ardener's five-phase sequence covers a period of more than a hundred years among the Bakweri. Mr Thomas and Dr Macfarlane consider a slightly shorter period in the county of Essex. Mr Brown and Professor Cohn cover hundreds of years and several countries. One wonders if the turning of attention to witchcraft by the inquisitors, to which Norman Cohn draws our notice, was due to the final extinction of Catharism in precisely the same period, the second quarter of the fourteenth century. And what was the rôle of the friars in building up syntheses of fear in which the suspicions of the simple and the paranoia of the learned could find common ground? Less, perhaps, than the production of the *Malleus Maleficarum* suggests. However, Dr Brain in his paper on the Bangwa gives an example of modern missionary activity providing ideological support for a new pattern of witchcraft beliefs.

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When Dr Douglas offers us some fresh reflections of her own on the sociology of witchcraft accusations, she does propose testable hypotheses. She notes two main patterns, the witch as an outsider, and the witch as an internal enemy, and then suggests further divisions within this latter category. I must say that I have some reserves here; for instance she includes in her category of the witch as a dangerous deviant the Essex witches of the 16th century, but looking at the essays by Macfarlane and Thomas in this volume it appears that the deviants were rather the people whose accusations of witchcraft reflected, at the psychological level, guilt at refusing the traditional aid to the poorer villagers.

Passing to wider issues, Mrs Douglas rightly (and indeed, too politely) rejects Professor Trevor-Roper's extraordinary idea that had it not been for the Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe might have passed directly from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. Had orthodox Christianity seriously weakened its hold on Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, the substitute might well have been a mélange of astrology and neo-Platonism.

A final significant point from the Introduction should be quoted, the editor's discussion of the sort of society unlikely to have witchcraft fears. Dr Douglas suggests 'the people least likely to believe in witches are those whose level of social interaction is so low and so irregular that they have little need of social definition. But this is not the only way to control witch beliefs. Another is by means of a highly ordered system of ascribed rôles.'[1] Later on, she makes a similar point: 'Where social interaction is intense and ill-defined, there we may expect to find witchcraft beliefs. Where human relations are sparse and diffuse, or where rôles are very fully ascribed, we would not expect to find witchcraft beliefs.'[2] She then notes that Dr Malcom Ruel's account of the Banyang of the Cameroons provides a partial exception, since theirs is a highly competitive society, but witchcraft accusations are very rarely made. But this exception is more apparent than real. Not only is Banyang country sparsely settled, but Banyang ideology takes it for granted that everybody has a spirit familiar, or rather some element of personality which can assume animal form. If everybody is guilty, then nobody is guilty.

Under the stimulus of the articles by Dr Brain, Professor Pitt-Rivers and Dr Ruel, all of whom discuss the question of the extra-corporal, but non-spiritual, activities of some portion of the personality, I would like to add this rider to what Mrs Douglas has said: witchcraft is least likely to be found when the ideology of personality is either not formulated at all, or when it is stated in very formalized terms, or when it is regarded as completely unknowable. Evidently this is in a way tautologous, since the doctrine of personality must be closely consistent with the social structure in which it occurs. But

[1]Introduction, pp. xxxiii.
[2]Pp. xxxv.

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the fact that, in certain societies, there are people who are not by the standard of the society mentally ill, but who think it possible that they are at least potentially witches, coupled with doctrines of unconscious witchcraft, and belief in were-animals, suggests that we post-Freudians are nearer in sympathy to witch-fearers than were the best minds of the world into which Miss Jean Brodie was born.

Dr Douglas directs readers particularly to Dr Lienhardt's paper which was not in fact written for the symposium that generated this book. It is certainly worth reading, though it is not really on witchcraft as its title 'The Situation of Death: An Aspect of Anuak Philosophy' indicates. Its essential point is that the collective representation of death in a society can relate to the ecology, and more centrally, to the sharpness of boundaries, and the degree of competitiveness which the ecology permits or favours. Several variables enter into play, and one hopes that there will be testing of Dr Lienhardt's suggestions in different ethnographic areas.

For myself, I found the most helpful of the essays that by Dr Esther Goody on witchcraft among the Gonja of northern Ghana. Male witchcraft is not punished, provided it occurs within the framework of political activity; female witchcraft is always criminal. Mrs Goody concludes after very thorough discussion that Gonja witchcraft is always a manifestation of aggression, and that aggression is never permitted to women. Dr Beidelman in an epilogue to the book points out that aggression is always culturally standardized, and that we always have to give a cultural definition of it. This is true, but one needs surely also to question the assumption that the doings of the local political establishment are always accepted as legitimate, as distinct from inevitable, by the under-dogs.

For most non-specialist readers the most interesting part of this book will be the four studies of witchcraft in European communities. Peter Brown shows how sorcery fears of the fourth century operated in situations of competition among marginal men. This did not as yet coalesce with the expanding Christian community which possessed in diabolical activity a complete explanation for evil, which was projected outside mankind. Hence, no need for witchcraft accusations. Moreover, the Christians up to the fourth century were recruited from the most socially formless elements of the population, who had found social form precisely in building up the church. The official Christian psychology, as represented by St Augustine (who, if an exceptional man, was also, as a bishop, exceptionally open to the attitudes and psychology of the *plebs sancta christiana*), was of human personality and human sinfulness alike as unfathomable abysses. By the end of the sixth century, in Byzantium, in the Rome of St Gregory the Great (whose warning that a nun, eating a lettuce over which grace had not been said, might easily swallow a devil lurking on the leaves,[1] suggests to me a delightful

[1]P. 31 (Mr Brown gives the exact reference for anybody interested in checking).

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sense of humour), in Merovingian Gaul, and in Visigothic Spain, a new pattern has emerged. Rigidity characterizes the social structure, baptism has become general. Anti-semitism begins to take the form of driving Jewish communities into exile. It is now the Jew who is the non-Christian *par excellence*, and therefore the ally of the sorcerer, who is now sought for inside the Christian community.

But, it would seem, the appalling potentialities of these ideas were not to unfold for several centuries. Professor Cohn takes up the thread at the beginning of the eleventh century, in a Western Europe devoid of most of what we would call civilization, and also of such distressing by-products as heresy hunts, witchfinding, and organized, formal anti-semitism. He sketches an outline of how, as the medieval world-picture became more defined, so too did the figures of its monsters, the heretic, the Jew, the witch, linked together not only by social reprobation, but also by a Satanocentric ideology of compacts with the devil and nameless orgies (forthwith named, in the best Sunday newspaper fashion). Norman Cohn recognizes the slow, seemingly haphazard nature of this growth, and does not venture on any direct explanation for the extraordinary proliferation of witchhunts from the late fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century. He does note that English witch beliefs seem to have been little marked by the elaborate mythology of Satanism found on the Continent.

The essays by Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas give us a picture of sixteenth-century Essex witchcraft. I should not like to give the impression that my lack of compete satisfaction with the argument implied a lack of admiration for their scholarship. They show convincingly that the typical occasion for the accusation of witchcraft was illness or misfortune following a refusal of aid to a poorer neighbour. For the rise of witchcraft fears from 1560 on, the Reformation seems to get most of the blame; for their decline, two explanations are offered: the filtering down of the new ideas of the seventeeth century, and the acceptance of new, institutional means of providing relief, which replaced the informal kindnesses of the village community.

But if confession and holy water and the sign of the cross had restrained English withcraft fears, why did not they do the same for the Catholics of, say, Lorraine and the Rhineland? I feel that the explanation that men had lost confidence in these means on the Continent earlier rather unsatisfactory. Conceivably, there is a connection between the anxieties about personal salvation which characterized Catholics as well as Protestants in this period (one thinks of St Francis de Sales or Father Surin or the author of the *Imitation*), the witch mania, the attitude of horror towards mental illness, and a whole set of changes by which class boundaries became more sharply defined while those defining the local community became less marked. If this is so, the Reformation might have

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accelerated changes in these directions, and have given these changes a sharper edge by the removal of some mediating institutions; it would have been more part of a whole enormous process than its trigger, however. This process would have been the rise of individualism, or whatever one likes to call it, with all manner of facets, one of which was the transition from a more externalized concept of guilt associated with certain images (one thinks of the morality plays) whose relation with the mediating and reconciling institutions of the society was fairly defined, to a more internal sense of guilt, integrated rather with the self-awareness of the individual. In the two centuries or more of transition, guilt would get out of hand, and so would witchcraft fears. This all sounds very vague, and therefore anthropologically unsatisfying. Could one suggest that individualism would enter the consciousness of individuals not directly by economic change, or even by explicit ideological commitments, but rather by changes in the organization of particular households, and in the pattern of relations between households in a neighbourhood? For instance, I have from my vague general knowledge of the period the impression that the households of Tudor gentlemen and noblemen had much higher numbers of retainers than those of late Stuart times, and that the subordination of retainers became during this period much more clearly defined. If this were so, then there might have been changes in involvement in local affairs—the Tudor squire may have been much more involved in patron-client relationships, and hence in all sorts of village rows, than his Georgian counterpart.

But all this is unsubstantial hypothesis. Better to draw attention to a fascinating paper by Julian Pitt-Rivers showing how the *nagual*, or were-being, of the Central American Indians, in origin an aspect of the ideology of personality, was reinterpreted by the Spanish conquerors and missionaries in terms of their own ideology of evil, and how this was imposed on top of the pre-conquest idea. And in a more general paper I. M. Lewis suggests how a spirit-possession cult can provide a more satisfactory way of dealing with social strains than witchcraft charges. But then this book is extraordinarily rich,[1] and has something strangely impressive, as though it vindicated again the power of man's reason to face bravely, and judge accurately, that which is most horrible and pathetic in himself.

[1]Two of the remaining studies may be mentioned: Dr Jones' attempt to find correlations between land shortage and witchcraft fears in Eastern Nigeria, and Dr Willis' suggestion that anti-witchcraft movements are much nearer to millenial movements and revolutionary situations than has been recognized.

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