

(3) Does Shah oppose "Guruism" and pursue a scholarly acceptable course of projection? The Pakistani Professor I. H. Qureshi, Vice-Chancellor of Karachi University, Sufi scholar and President of the Institute of Central and West Asian Studies, says:

"There is an increasing tendency in the Western world to adopt extravagant religious beliefs from Oriental sources, generally called guruism, because such beliefs are usually ascribed to some 'Master.' Thousands of people now follow these cults, and their proliferation and absurdities have given rise to real concern among genuinely thinking people. It is thus of the greatest importance to realise that Idries Shah is selecting and publishing materials of real authenticity and high literary merit, and that he has been struggling against the fantasies and absurdities of 'guru-ism' for years. It is a good thing to have an active representative of Eastern thought in the West whose mind is free of such

absurdities, and who possesses sufficient intellectual calibre to be able to communicate with, and to command the respect of, scholars, literati, and other persons of serious intent."³

These extracts are from the *estschrift* edited by Professor L. F. Rushbrook Williams in honour of Idries Shah and of Jalaluddin Rumi's 700th anniversary, authoritatively answering the fundamental questions I have mentioned (and very many others). It is not only published by E. P. Dutton, Inc., of New York, as your article implies, but also by Octagon Press in association with Jonathan Cape of London.

There is no need to be an Orientalist to perceive Shah's pre-eminence in the Sufi field, whether by attestation (over a hundred scholars collaborated with or encouraged the *estschrift*) or by first-hand study of his many and widely acclaimed works.

DAVID PENDLEBURY

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Mr Elwell-Sutton will be replying to these and other letters next month.

³ Professor I. H. Qureshi, *Sufi Studies*, "Projecting Sufi Thought in an Appropriate Context", p. 27.

AUTHORS

Ian McEwan's first book of stories, *First Love, Last Rites*, has recently been published by Jonathan Cape....

Philippe Ariès is a distinguished historian and a frequent contributor to that excellent Paris periodical *Contrepoint*, where this article first appeared. He is the author of *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime* (Plon, 1960, new edition 1974), published in England under the title *Centuries of Childhood* (Cape, 1972). His book *Western Attitudes toward Death* was published last year by the Johns Hopkins University Press....

Douglas Johnson is Professor of French History at University College, London. His books include *France and the Dreyfus Affair* (1966), *The French Revolution* (1970) and *A Concise History of France* (Thames & Hudson, 1971)....

Elie Kedourie is Professor of Politics at the London School of Economics, and Editor of *Middle Eastern Studies*. He is the author of *Nationalism* (1960), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971) and *Arabic Political Memoirs* (Frank Cass, 1974)....

J. P. Stern is Professor of German at University College, London. His books include *On Realism* (Routledge, 1973), *Idylls and Realities* (Methuen, 1972) and *Hitler: the Führer and the People* (Fontana, 1975)....

John Wain is Professor of Poetry, University of Oxford; his Oxford lectures will form part of a book to be called *Professing Poetry*. He has recently

been awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for his biography *Samuel Johnson* (Macmillan, 1974)....

Clive James is TV critic for *The Observer*. A collection of his literary criticism, *The Metropolitan Critic*, was published last year by Faber....

Maurice Cranston is Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. His numerous books include *John Locke* (1957), *Rousseau's Social Contract* (1964), *Politics and Ethics* (1972) and *The Mask of Politics* (Allen Lane, 1973)....

Edward Lucie-Smith's books on art criticism include *Movements in Art since 1945* (1969), *Eroticism in Western Art*, and *Symbolist Art* (Thames & Hudson, 1972). His autobiography, *The Burnt Child*, has recently been published by Gollancz....

Constantine FitzGibbon, who served as an Intelligence Officer in the U.S. Army during the War, contributed an article on "The 'Ultra' Secret" to the March 1975 issue of *ENCOUNTER*. His books include *Red Hand: The Ulster Colony* (Michael Joseph, 1971), *A Concise History of Germany* (Thames & Hudson, 1972) and *The Life and Times of Eamon de Valera* (Gill & Macmillan, 1973)....

Brian Glanville is football correspondent for the *Sunday Times*. His most recent novel is *The Comic* (Secker & Warburg, 1974)....

Westminster

DAMP SQUIBS: *The cheekiest of Parliamentary guides is published today. It is Andrew Roth's The MPs' Chart, which gives a potted biography and assessment of outlook and idiosyncrasy of each MP, with a word sketch to help those whose business depends on MP-spotting.*

Such abbreviated judgements of character are inevitably superficial and subjective. It is not adding greatly to the sum of human knowledge to reduce Clement Freud's Weltanschauung to "rightish showbiz gastronome-politico". Some of the sketches are so uncomplimentary as to be nearly libellous.

MPs objected to being described as "bent" in previous editions, and there was talk of legal action. So Mr Roth now describes those with bad postures as "stooped". To avoid misunderstandings by rating MPs as "gay", the chart has substituted such words as "genial" or "jovial." "Damp" has been introduced to tag those who are not quite "wet."

Mrs Thatcher, described in previous editions as "cold-water English rose", is now characterized in an incongruous metaphor as "stainless steel Dresden china."

William Price, Parliamentary Secretary to the Privy Council, was somewhat taken aback to see his entry. The first reaction to his brief description, "released imbecile", was: "I'll have to see Lord Goodman about this."

But, upon reflection, Mr Price, who is described in another column as "headline-catcher" and "quick-witted", came up with a more charitable explanation.

The MPs' Chart trims pungent descriptions to the bare grammatical essentials, but in this case brevity has proved the soul of some unintentional wit. This particular passage means that Mr Price once released an imbecile, and not that he is a released imbecile.

Apparently, about six years ago, Mr Price secured the release of a young male constituent from Broadmoor, as well as £5000 compensation from the Home Office.

THE TIMES/EVENING STANDARD

London

CLICHÉS: Mrs Thatcher will bring about a sharp change of direction. And had better, whatever happens, bring about a sharp change in her prose style. Don Quixote's heart could not have sunk lower than did mine [Bernard Levin writes] at her Eastbourne speech if he had seen his Dulcinea making love with a windmill. "Workers and shirkers"; "liberty and licence"; does she not smell the stale odour of such clichés? If she cannot keep them out of her mind, can she not find even new ways of putting them? Who on earth is writing her speeches?

THE TIMES

London

PENNY-WISE: A reader objects to the use of the word "pea" for that miserable little coin in our

present currency. Surely he does not want it designated by the noble title of "penny."

The penny was a splendid coin, large and of some substance, whose name has been in use since the Middle Ages for a piece of worth-while money and which has taken its place in many of our rhymes and proverbs.

The farthing-sized, insignificant, base-metal token we have been forced to accept merits no more than an initial, and a derogatory one at that.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Salt Lake City

LIBRARY OF TOMORROW: At the "library of tomorrow", a person can read comic books, make posters and recordings, heat up a meal or watch colour television. When he is finished, he can go home with the latest dime-store novel, the No. 1-selling popular record, a Rembrandt reproduction or a sculpture replica.

The library of tomorrow is open today in suburban Salt Lake City—and it also has books.

"The philosophy of library service has really changed", said Guy Schuurman, director of the Whitmore branch of the Salt Lake County library system. "Libraries used to be for little old ladies who wanted to nose through books", said Mr. Schuurman, a 43-year-old Dutchman who did the basic design for the \$1.4-million library as well as formulating its innovative policies. "Now they're centers where all of the information resources and services of the community can be pooled into a network to improve the quality of life."

Whitmore inaugurated its library in mid-November with an open house that an administrator called a three-ring circus. Indeed, there was a clown to entertain the children.

The library has so far been a success. More than 49,000 persons visited it in December, usually a slow month for libraries. By contrast, the larger main branch of the Salt Lake City Public Library had 13,050 visitors.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

VEDGE: Sometimes our language is its own worst enemy. There is something particularly unsatisfactory about the word "vegetable"—an ungainly mushiness that exactly expresses how most British cooks treat any root or green-leaved plant they lay their hands on. Outside a famous line of Marvell's, the word is useless to poets, and in slang is a contemptuous or compassionate description of a person bereft of most human faculties. Contrast the respectful envy conveyed by the French phrase "*gros légume*", and then imagine calling Sir Arnold Weinstock or Sir Donald Stokes a "big vegetable."

THE TIMES

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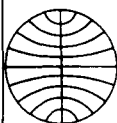
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