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EDITORIAL

THE announcement that the Players' Club is to be allowed to have the use of Moyses Hall has been received with great satisfaction throughout the student body. Mr. Amaron, whose efforts to bring about a settlement of the misunderstanding were untiring, deserves the gratitude of all who have the interest of college dramatics at heart. It now remains for the club to prove itself worthy of its new home.

Permission to use the hall, however, has not been granted unconditionally. A committee composed of the heads of the English, French and Classics departments has been appointed with undefined powers of supervision and censorship. So long as this committee acts in a purely advisory capacity, and does not seek to limit the freedom of what is primarily an independent and spontaneous undergraduate activity, we feel that the present settlement is all that could be desired. Indeed, we are of the opinion that the same or a similar committee might even more profitably exert its influence upon the Red and White Revue. There is not very much doubt but that the Players' Club may be relied upon to present something that will reflect credit upon the university; there is considerable doubt whether the same can be said of the Revue.

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THE Fortnightly was afraid that the projected Labour Club would never get beyond the stage of suggesting and rejecting. But the Club lives and is very active. Already it has held four meetings, at which a visitor from abroad, a trade-unionist, an M.P., and a parson have spoken.

The Commercial Club is thought by many to be a valuable feature of college life because it brings business men before the students. We hold that the Labour Club is similar in that it brings to the university both men who work with their hands and men whose lives are spent on behalf of the welfare of their class. Any organization which brings to college people a sense of real, friendly life is to be commended. Students and scholars are too apt to forget that their comfortable pursuits are dependent on a vast substratum of harsh activity. They are also apt to make of their various sciences an academic philosophy of deductions. This is particularly the case with sociologists and economists. Life and art may occasionally be divorced, but life and the study of life never.

* * * *

THE Daily is to be congratulated upon its original efforts to increase the gaiety of undergraduates and enliven the dying days of a rather dull term. The series of interviews published one day last week in which "several representative male members of the undergraduate body" gave their opinion of what constitutes the ideal girl is especially commendable in that it shows some of our more prominent student pundits in a human and slightly ridiculous light. The populace was distinctly amused to find that instead of treating the question as a joke to be answered in the same spirit, they all, with one exception, discoursed learnedly and gravely, with an air of boyish experience, upon a "question which has perplexed the civilized world since its inception". (sic)

Taking them by and large, the characteristics attributed to the ideal girl would necessitate a being fearfully and wonderfully made, particularly if the quotation from the "Song of Songs" given by one of those questioned is to be accepted with devout literalness. She should be "fairly beautiful", and yet "should be able to wear clothes". She "should have a fair

amount of so-called pep", which however must not interfere with her ability to shimmer like "a dew-laden bud in a misty light—moist but firm". She is buoyant—perhaps because "her breasts are like a pair of fawns"; "she is healthy and participates in athletics" and has "a neck like the tower of David, built for an arsenal". Although she only weighs 125 pounds, "she is stout enough at heart to meet adversity with a grin". She is a girl of the Mauve Decade—but "Should she be able to ccook? I'll say she should!"

The pious purpose of the Daily in featuring this symposium is not only to provide amusement for its readers but to assist "any of the feminine sex who are imbued with the urge for self-improvement". Such naive and tender faith in the perfectability of woman is a pleasant indication that our college youth remains unsophisticated in spite of co-education. For our part, we have long ago given up the attempt to teach women anything.

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McGill Week

McGILL is situated in the midst of a large industrial town, like a pearl in an oyster. The simile is instructive for McGill. For a pearl grows and develops just in so far as it refuses to be assimilated by its murky surroundings. If the little speck of alien matter in the oyster, which is the beginning of all pearls, were to make itself palatable—were to meet the oyster half way, so to speak—there would be no thing of beauty created; the oyster itself would be content, but it would contribute nothing to humanity more permanent than a *hors d'oeuvre*. This is true of all Universities that find themselves embedded in our populous manufacturing districts. So long as the standard of values in commerce and industry remains what it is, so long as the piling up of material wealth continues to be the aim and end of all endeavour, for just so long must the unassimilated University, with its different standards, find itself antagonistic to its environment. It must live in a state of intellectual warfare with the world about it, and be ever on its guard against compromise with commercialism, which is the worst of treasons.

To all who hold this conception of a University, "McGill Week" at the Palace Theatre must have come as an unpleasant shock. Here was the McGill Mandolin and Banjo Club, an undergraduate society, hiring itself out, with official permission, to perform on the stage of a local cinema at the rate of \$150 for the week. The nature of the performance is admirably disclosed by the account given in the Daily of Nov. 29th.

Yesterday the Mandolin and Banjo Club proved its mettle when it appeared for the first time this year at the Palace Theatre. The twang of the mandolins and banjos, the soft music of the violins, the saxophone of Lou Dobrofsky and the gentle accompaniment of the two pianos, made the orchestra among the best amateurs heard yet. It is in a distinct class by itself. As Pickleman said, "The music is of the highest grade possible." The scarlet red of McGill sweaters in contrast with the dark blue trousers as worn by the members made them look like McGill men should look.

The stirring college hymn "Hail Alma Mater" is sung first; the McGill yell following this immediately, and then the following songs are sung:—"Moonlight in the Ganges", "Blue Room",

"Cherie," "Indian Love Call," "Breezing Along with the Breeze", and "On the Riviera". The McGill yell concluded the performance.

The decorations are very simple but effective. The stage is artistically set. At the back, a huge MCGILL in white on a scarlet background, and on one side a banner with ARTS '28 and SCIENCE '28 on the other are set.

Along the walls, banners with ARTS, MEDICINE, SCIENCE and COMMERCE, are placed. Huge MCGILL banners are placed in profusion along the sides of the entrance, and the ticket-sellers box is surrounded with MCGILL pennants.

"This year is the greatest year in the history of the Mandolin and Banjo Club", Gerald Pickleman, president, said in an interview on Saturday.

The films which accompanied the McGill yells, the singing of *Hail, Alma Mater* and the jazz songs of the men who were thus giving the public a view of McGill's student activities, were *The Prince of Tempters*, a "powerful screen drama" adapted from one of E. Phillips Oppenheim's masterpieces, and a comic film which (appropriately enough) depended for its success on the capacity of the audience to enjoy watching travellers being seasick. Out of these elements was concocted McGill Week.

We shall not stop to argue with those who maintain that such a performance does not detract from the reputation of McGill. In our opinion the incident was a great misfortune and a grave symptom. It could not have occurred without raising a storm of protest if McGill were not already dangerously imbued with the commercial spirit. In the present instance not a word has been said by way of criticism. The Students' Council, it is true, had the good sense to refuse their patronage to the venture of the Mandolin Club, but they gave it permission to appear upon the stage, and thus cannot escape their share of the blame. For no worse an offense the Rooters' Band last year came in for very severe censure. The Fortnightly publishes this article in the hope that by bringing the matter to light a public opinion may be created which will safeguard the University from similar *mésalliances* in the future.

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The Mock Parliament

SOMETHING is wrong with McGill or with the Mock Parliament. Whereas a few years ago it was quite common to have from one to two hundred men attending a debate, and to have speakers from all sections of the House taking an active part in the proceedings, today the numbers are reduced to an average of forty or fifty, and the floor is largely monopolized by the holders of the front benches. Despite the fact that the men who compete in intercollegiate debates are chosen from the Mock, and despite the possibility of a trip to England next summer for a McGill team, less and less interest is being taken in the meetings. If something is not done very soon to remedy the situation, we may expect to find the debates reduced to an acrimonious dialogue between the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition, with the Speaker and the Clerk of the House as unwilling listeners.

We incline to the view that the fault lies chiefly in the current misconception of the nature of a mock parliament. It is assumed by most students that a mock parliament is intended to be a mockery of parliament. As a result, most of the speeches are burlesques, and sorry ones at that. Extreme exaggeration passes for humour, and there is a marked ten-

dency—amongst certain debaters particularly—to indulge in every dirty *double entendre* which a vulgar ingenuity can suggest. It is impossible, in this sort of atmosphere, to arouse that keen interest in the subject matter of the debate which is the only certain way of drawing crowds to the meetings and of stimulating the individual speaker to his best endeavours. The student who is anxious to learn to speak in public finds no inspiration in these meetings, where there are no standards expected of him and nothing seems really to matter.

A mock parliament is not a mockery of parliament; it is a copy of parliament. It should reproduce as nearly as possible the conditions existing in a real—perhaps one should say ideal—House of Commons. This does not mean that the Mock at McGill should debate nothing but questions of national importance; that the speakers should appear with masses of statistics and should conduct themselves with a boring solemnity. There is room for wit, satire, sarcasm, for an occasional touch of vulgarity even, in a House of Commons, as well as for cold logic and a business-like straightforwardness. But it does mean that the Mock should be treated a great deal more seriously than it is at present; that it should choose subjects of general interest to undergraduates, and debate them with as much care, consideration and ceremony as if its decisions were going to become law on the following day. A division in the Mock ought to reflect very fairly the undergraduate opinion of McGill.

We venture to offer some suggestions to the executive. Let the meetings be held regularly, and on no account postpone them—not even for hockey matches. Insist on an adequate degree of ceremony in all the proceedings; it would be well to maintain the tradition that the leaders of both parties should dress for the debate. Prevent the Daily from cheapening the character of the meeting by forbidding the publication of flippant interviews with members of the government. And lastly, do not be afraid of introducing bills dealing with lively topics; there is no reason why the Scarlet Key Society, or Socialism, or Compulsory Lectures, should not be freely discussed.

New Names

I THINK we should give new names,
To the stars.
What does Venus mean
Or Mars ?

The tall pines on the hill
Have seen no blood.
Beneath them no men and maids
Have woo'd.

Who would read old myths
By this lake,
Where the wild duck paddle forth
At daybreak?

I am more moved by the lake sheen
When night is come,
Than by all the tales of Babylon
Or Rome.

Look—the moon's path is broken
By rippling bars.
I think we should give new names
To the stars.

James Branch Cabell

D. C. Adam

IN the literature of modern America James Branch Cabell holds a unique place. In the work of such men as Dreiser, Lewis Anderson, we find a hint of youthfulness, a groping for the expression of the true genius of America. Mr. Cabell, however, writes of a small world of his imagination, regarding the world of reality with a slightly irritated amusement. Considering literature as a medium of escape from the too insistent realities of life, he strives to "write perfectly of beautiful happenings." Romance, "the first and loveliest daughter of human vanity," is his chosen province. Mr. Cabell is a "romantic" dreamer. He has no illusions, however, about his dreaming; a doubter who wishes he were able to believe in them but cannot quite do so. Sceptical without cynicism, he tempers irony with sentimentality, pitying the objects of his laughter.

The better portion of Mr. Cabell's work takes place in the imaginary land of Poictesme, a "happy, harmless Fable-land" which is bounded by Avalon and Phaeacia and the Sea-coast Bohemia... and on the west by the Hesperides." The remainder of his novels have as their scene an almost equally imaginary Virginia. Influenced, no doubt, by his early career as a genealogist, his central characters are each descendants of Dom Manuel, the Redeemer, the first Count of Poictesme. All his fiction is but a continuation of the life of Manuel and is grouped under the general title of Biography. He likens this perpetually reincarnated life to "an itinerant comedian that with each generation assumes the garb of a new body, and upon a new stage enacts a variant of yesterday's drama." This is, in its essentials, but a piece of machinery by which the general similarity of all his main characters is accounted for. Mr. Cabell does not cover a wide field in his studies of the human animal. He has created no really outstanding character, nor has he attempted to do so. That monstrous clever fellow, Jurgen, for instance; it is not in Jurgen, himself, that we are interested but in his dreams and aspirations. He is not presented to us as a character with just the right human proportions, but as a brilliant puppet endowed with the dreams and disillusionments of his author.

The main theme of Mr. Cabell's works is essentially the same; the somewhat bewildered dreamer seeking he knows not quite what. This is summed up by Mr. Cabell, himself, in "*The Lineage of Lichfield*" when he writes:—"The first act is the imagining of the place where contentment exists and may be come to; and the second act reveals the striving toward, and the third act the falling short of, that shining goal, or else (the difference here being negligible) the attaining of it to discover that happiness, after all, abides a thought farther down the logged, rocky, clogged, befogged heartbreaking road, if anywhere." Manuel and Jurgen and Florian, Charteris and Kennaston and Townsend are all victims of a species of nympholepsy. They strive after some unforgettable loveliness, to find in the end but disillusion, unsatisfied yearnings. The symbols of these visions of perfection take form in Helen of Troy or Melior or her sister, the legended Melusine, and such other visions of fair women as have stirred the poetic imagination through the ages. This striving after perfection in female guise is drawn from the

T.T.

part of medieval chivalry known as 'domnei', or woman-worship.

Mr. Cabell is fond of gestures. His heroes are sentimental and cynical in turn, and the fusion of these two qualities results in the sort of gesture of which he is so fond. The address of Jurgen to the God of his grandmother is a case in point. It is the gesture, in a tone of tender disbelief, of a disillusioned dreamer who wishes to continue his dreams. The gesture is closely bound up with the idea of Gallantry which Mr. Cabell speaks of as "the acceptance of the pleasures of life leisurely, and its inconveniences with a shrug; as well as that; among other requisites, the gallant person will always consider the world with a smile of toleration, and his own doings with a smile of honest amusement, and Heaven with a smile which is not distrustful. . . ."

In *Beyond Life*, the prologue to the Biography, Mr. Cabell, through the mouth of Charteris, attempts to discover why man strives at the arts, particularly that of letters. He finds it to be a manifestation of what he terms the "romantic demiurge," the attempt to veil the harsh, and often ugly, realities of existence with a rosy haze of the imagination. "No one," he writes, "on the preferable side of Bedlam wishes to be reminded of what we are in actuality, even were it possible, by any disastrous miracle, ever to dispel the mist which romance has evoked about all human doings". From the first early cave drawings of puny man "browbeating a frightened dinosaur" to the more modern novel of the happy ending and the virginal hero he perceives evidences of this delusion. Religion and love, patriotism and optimism, these again Mr. Cabell sees as but romantic delusions with which man bedrugs himself.

The characters of his novels, all 'figures of earth,' are prey to these illusions, and, eventually, they recognize them as such. This realization brings with it a regretful pessimism, which they share with their author, and they continue dissatisfied and a little bewildered, failing to quite live up to what dreams remain to them. Manuel attempting to find satisfaction in a life of achievement, Florian de Puyssange in search of beauty and holiness, Jurgen seeking rational justice, Kennaston endeavouring to escape modern existence; all are left in bewilderment and sometimes disillusion, yet still clinging to the thought that man, after all, has some bright destiny.

Domnei and *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck* present Mr. Cabell's idealized version of things as they ought to be. They are essentially sentimental novels, and are barely saved by their author's artistry and faint traces of his irony from mawkishness. The love of Perion and Mellicent, like that of Tristram and Iseult, never wavers under all the difficulties in its path and the rather conventional happy ending leaves the romance still intact.

The novels of Poictesme are more mature expressions of Mr. Cabell's genius. Here he uses his wide knowledge of legend and mythology to create a glittering background for the gestures and disillusionments of his Gargantuan puppets, Manuel and Jurgen and Florian. Mr. Cabell casts the "oblique light of comedy" on these heroes and laughs sympathetically at their vagaries and illusions. In these, more than in the novels of contemporary Virginia, he takes occasion to satirise American life. The Philistine, Mrs. Grundy, their queen, and the uplifter come in for their share of ridicule. In this, Mr.

Mencken, the most vociferous, and Mr. Cabell, the most delicate, of modern American writers meet on common ground. Perhaps this is the real cause of their mutual admiration.

"The literary artist plays: and the sole end of his endeavour is to divert himself", he writes in *Straws and Prayer-Books*. The objects of his playing are "common-sense and piety and death". In these three things he sees the essential comedy. But there is one other object of Mr. Cabell's playing, the vetoed subject of sex. He sees the essential comedy in the relations of the sexes, not only in its more spiritual and idealistic aspects but also in its more earthly manifestations. He sees no reason why this should not be interpreted in the light of comedy with any other human trait. The sturdy moralists are of course aroused at this, and hence the famous prosecution of *Jurgen*. So *Jurgen* takes its position beside the Bible (when run by an enterprising newspaper in serial form), *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, and *Petronius*, which works had already been obliged to tarry for a while in the legal corridors.

As "art is, in its last terms, an evasion of the distasteful," and as Mr. Cabell has no strong predilection for the world as it is, he finds himself obliged to create "other worlds, whose orderings are different, and to his mind more approvable" in which to be about his playing.

"For life in my country does not engross us utterly, we dreamers waste there at loose ends, waste futilely. . . . So we struggle, for a tiny, dear-bought while, into other and fairer seeming lands in search of—we know not what."

As a means of further escape he places a great deal of stress on style and on the general structure of his novels. Each part of his work is linked to the other parts to form a neatly constructed literary edifice, having none of the ragged edges of nature. Mr. Cabell's style is essentially artificial. It is reminiscent of the stylistic archaisms of Lamb, the polished wit of Congreve, the paradoxes and inversions of Wilde. He is fond of repetition, which he generally uses effectively, but a few pet phrases of his occur perhaps a little too often.

Mr. Cabell is capable at times of very beautiful passages of prose, which, though having a slight trend toward that variety known as purple, rank with any prose yet produced in America. A fine example of this is Horvendile's speech to Etarre in *The Cream of the Jest* and his latest prose poem *The Music from Behind the Moon*.

The qualities that Mr. Cabell 'desiderates' in literary art are "distinction, and clarity, and beauty, and tenderness, and truth and urbanity". To achieve these qualities the literary artist must toil incessantly in revising, in seeking the correct phrase or adjective. "You change every word that has been written", says Townsend in *The Cords of Vanity*, "for a better one, and do it leisurely, rolling in the mouth as it were, the flavour of every possible synonym, before decision. . . ." And again, "a man writes admirable prose not at all for the sake of having it read, but for the more sensible reason that he enjoys playing solitaire"; another Cabellian gesture.

The fantastic, half playful notions that Mr. Cabell holds in regard to the universe are too complicated and varied to be gone into here. The same may be said for the diverse and often obscure allegory and symbolism which enrich his mythological novels.

The Gallows Bird

1
A WILD bird sang upon a day,
(Ye prudent princes hear my lay),
The lithest song that ever was wrung
From thrush's throat or linnet's lung
In April's way.

2
Whenas the young queen riding heard
That song, she bade one snare the bird,
And cage it fast and clip its wing
That all the court might hear him sing,
Such was her word.

3
But never a note of song he would,
Nor take one peck at the dainty food
Which serving men and princes brought
To banish from his brain the thought
Of a green wood.

4
They brought him goodly wine and grain
And honey sweet, but all in vain.
Tell me a charm, to wring that note
The young queen cried from her jewelled throat
To her chamberlain.

5
This is the gallows bird, quoth he,
That singeth his chaste song verily
Only such time as he is fed
Upon the flesh of the newly dead,
Fruit of the gallows tree.

6
Then forge a chain, the young queen cried
A silver chain, that he may bide
On yonder tree, and eat his fill
Of dainty fare upon the hill,
Where the last traitor died.

7
In chamber and in bower that night
Each lady lying with her knight
Heard such a quiring sweet and rare
And merry song uprising where
The gallows stood upright.

8
He sang from sundown unto dawn
Of sunlight shimmering on ripe corn,
Of sunbeams seen through coloured glass,
Of sun-brown bracken and dew-bright grass
When day is born.

9
And then on a sudden beneath his wing
Nestled his beak and ceased to sing,
And never a note of golden song
Came from his throat the whole day long,
Nor carolling.

10
Then cried the young queen fretfully,
If any man known as traitor be,
Lo bind him now both hand and foot,
And let the good tree bring forth fruit
Of minstrelsy.

11
What time the bird had once again
Devoured his fill from that small brain
He fashioned a poem strange and new,
And carolled it the long night through
In Love's disdain.

12
And then on a sudden when dawn drew nigh,
And smaller fowl began to fly,
He ceased to chaunt his doleful lay,
Nor many a night nor many a day
Made any cry.

13
Yea, though they pruned the gallows tree
That it might flourish fruitfully,
Nobody heard the gallows bird
Warble a chord or utter a word
Of poesy.

14
But once upon a certain night,
When the moon was a pool of crystal light,
I heard him rattle a silver chain,
Singing the while this grim refrain
From the gallows height.

15
I am weary weary of pecking the eyes
From the carcasses of human flies,
Bring me the wasp of golden sting,
And butterflies, they of the coloured wing
And proud device.

16
What time they hang from the gallows tree
Fruit of the flower of chivalry,
What time they hang from the branches down
Silken dress and ermine gown,
I will make melody.

17
I have eaten my surfeit ten times ten
Of hungry and ill-conditioned men,
What day the good tree fruiting bear
Princes and ladies, daintier fare,
Will I sing again.

Philip Page

Flame and Fountain

SEEKING a symbol, I return again
To flame and fountain shewing heart and brain:
Sensitive, lonely, and in every wind
Veering and wavering, neither harsh nor kind,
But bright or feeble, tall or nō,
As the winds vary and the seasons go.

A red torch burning in the utter black:
What but the heart atoning for the lack
Of many things it must lament—
Kindness and understanding, wonderment?
And what at last more bitterly burnt out
To leave such wreckage in the fired redoubt?

And ah, how cold, how pitiful and pale
The fountain rises and assumes her veil!
Ghostly in the ghostly afternoon she stands
And lifts unwearied, ineffectual hands,
As if to pluck an answer from the air
To the eternal Why that all must share. *and*

The heart of man the intelligence:
This pondering on the why and how and whence,
And ever springing like a fountain's plume
Whitely and icily against the gloom;
And that as hot, as wavering, as fire,
Kindled for comfort, burning to desire.

A. J. M. Smith

JAZZ A Plea for Tolerance

Carroll Davis

THERE seems to be a suspicion lurking in the minds of undergraduates that critical writing which is not radical lacks vitality. Undoubtedly, this can be attributed to the influence of American commentators on the drama, literature, music, or any of the major arts. Their "stuff" is not only easily procurable, it is inevitable; and its chief characteristic is a cynical smartness that sometimes verges on insolence. When undergraduates adopt this style they are bound to offend someone. If we could but remember that dogmatic utterances are unbecoming to extreme youth, and that age, experience, wisdom, and maturity breed tolerance, we might expose ourselves less frequently to the apathy of better balanced and better informed minds, and might hope for their intelligent interest.

To become somewhat specific, there is the subject of music. It is, and always has been, an art over which opinions clash. Today Wagner is accepted as a master; a scant forty years ago, he was considered a revolutionary and was tough food for tender throats to swallow. This is the kind of subject that should not be approached in too assured a manner; there is too much scope for controversy.

In a recent issue of the Fortnightly an article appeared under the heading: *The Lively Arts Myth*. Jazz music was one of the things it deprecated; indeed, it disposed of it in the manner that dyed-in-the-wool classicists are wont to adopt—with a shrug, and the assertion that it simply does not merit serious consideration. Messrs. Whiteman and Gershwin were mentioned, but only as exponents of jazz who were making themselves ridiculous by taking it seriously. And yet, there are critics, who have made music a life study, who are quick to admit that the position which jazz will eventually occupy is indeterminable from this distance—at least, to them. Conceded that jazz may not rank with the music of the old Masters, surely it is worth while and surely Gershwin and Whiteman are not so ridiculous, if jazz, properly interpreted, can become a truly artistic endeavour.

Let us look, first, to the genesis of jazz. The name, born in New Orleans' cabarets, was gradually accepted by the public to describe a type of music more regular in rhythm than ragtime, its predecessor. Ragtime was syncopated, the syncopation being effected by a shortening of the accepted notes. Jazz, on the other hand, was not only syncopated, but was regular in rhythm, and required a new use of instruments. At first, the jazz orchestra was composed of men who had a natural ear for faking; in other words, of players who invented their own parts as they went along. In this period, the clarinet and the trombone were the essential instruments; later, the muted trumpet added an effect of sharpness, while the saxophone brought out a slurred quality now necessary to proper dance music. The possibilities of the banjo were not developed until Whiteman entered the field; he realized that it was the instrument ideally suited to the keeping of regular dance rhythm, and he made it the basis of the jazz orchestra. By using these instruments in a new way, jazz players obtained effects heretofore unknown to the public, effects

which could not be perfectly expressed in terms of notation, but merely sufficiently indicated for the player to follow. This indefinite quality which jazz players give to their music is that which sets it apart from the other forms of the art. All jazz is necessarily written in common tempo; that is to say, four beats to the measure. By slurring the note written, playing it slightly ahead of its true theoretical position, jazz accentuates the weak notes of the bar, 2 and 4, and introduces a violent, but never monotonous, effect.

This rhythm, negroid in origin, is America's own contribution to the fund of rhythmic forms. Until the birth of the Blues, we relied on continental methods when we attempted to create, and with indifferent success. Our composers, although erudite and industrious, were never quite at home in the ballet, the opera, or the fugue; they have added nothing in this respect, because our mental rhythm, temperament, and thought, are not European. But we can safely say that, with the introduction of this particular rhythmic quality, differing radically from anything our grandparents knew, we have, at last, a musical form of our own.

Jazz music, by nature, requires a new and different treatment and instrumentation. Herein lies the main reason for its criticism; our pedants would have it conform to the conventional standards of the classics. It is in a sense, a revival of the old art of improvisation; but the medium is not the same. Jazz has, thus far, for its specific purpose, the modern dance; and the European dancing public has succumbed to it. To them, it is foreign and intriguing. This adoption obviously demonstrates its superiority as dance music; just as we admit, in practice, the pre-eminence of their symphony and opera. If the jazz dance has a vulgar reputation, we can answer that the schottische, the waltz, and the two-step, at the time of their inception, had also.

Jazz has as its motif the movement of American life. It is still in a crude state; but so is the life it expresses. Both can be refined immeasurably. New York life, for example, is not staid and puritanical; rather is it pulsing and incontinent. Its music then, if it be an accurate representation of its surroundings, will be vibrant and torrential. The cacophony of trumpets and the alternate triumphant crowing and plaintive sobbing of saxophones will express this spirit. Jazz, therefore, is free and is incapable of constraint by the iron-bound rules applicable to the sonata and the rondo. It has all the elements of music: harmony, rhythm, and melody. Is it necessary to force these elements into accepted form before the result can be considered an art? Bach broke all the rules existent in his day; Wagner was a musical outcast until late in his life. Is it not possible that our composers—Gershwin, Kern, Carpenter and the rest—will, in time, rise above their present limitations and develop a totally new form more expressive of modern life than the accepted foreign product?

Our intellectuals, probably, will not accept the new idiom until continental maestros have endorsed it. But, already the evidence is strong that writers of symphony have begun to think seriously of the effect that jazz might exert on modern works. Stravinsky, the Russian genius, has employed jazz freely in his symphony wherever he required it. The Metropolitan has produced a jazz opera. Damrosch has sponsored its use. And it is becoming generally recognized that, while it has not enough variety for

a long symphony, it can be the subject of shorter works. With its wealth of new rhythms and instrumental effects it cannot help but give additional colour to serious music. This alone is an achievement, and is sufficient reason for its being classed as an art form.

In the face of these facts, then, is the sincerity of Whiteman and Gershwin so absurd? Perhaps so; but it may be well to remember that, at one time, Christopher Columbus held certain beliefs which made him an object of scorn throughout the civilized world.

Contemporary Poetry

A. J. M. Smith

OUR age is an age of change, and of a change that is taking place with a rapidity unknown in any other epoch. Science has altered not only the character of our everyday life, but has had its influence on the philosophies by which we interpret that life. If the Victorian Age was one of solid, gradual progress from precedent to precedent, with a growing confidence in the applications of science and in the stabilizing effect of business, our own age has known the disaster which is bound to occur when a respectable philosophy makes terms with an acquisitive society. In our case, however, the problem has been vastly complicated by the sudden acceleration of the change which had hitherto only been gradually making itself felt. In less than three decades came the motor car, the steam turbine, the aeroplane, the telegraph and wireless, and the electric light. The result was that the standard of living was very quickly raised, business corporations were formed to exploit the new discoveries, and the whole world contracted almost visibly under the tightening bands of closer communications. Things moved faster, and we had to move with them.

It is not, however, only in the realm of everyday life and commonplace death that progress has been suddenly accelerated. Our way of living has changed; so too have our religious and philosophical ideas. Science, again, has been the catalyst. The discovery that the atom is not a single, solid whole, but a miniature solar system in itself; the principle of relativity which affirms the curvature of space and the limitations of the universe; the anthropological discoveries systematized by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, which traces Christian creed and ritual back through folk lore to the Pagan rites of the older civilizations and finally to those of savagery: all these have had their influence upon contemporary thought. Our universe is a different one from that of our grandfathers, nor can our religious beliefs be the same. The whole movement, indeed, is a movement away from an erroneous but comfortable stability, towards a more truthful and sincere but certainly less comfortable state of flux. Ideas are changing, and therefore manners and morals are changing. It is not surprising, then, to find that the arts, which are an intensification of life and thought, are likewise in a state of flux. Those who attended the concert given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra a few weeks ago will have noticed the influence of our changing age upon music, while Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Vorticism and half a dozen other isms indicate its effect upon painting. Contemporary poetry reflects it as clearly as any other art.

Poetry today must be the result of the impingement of modern conditions upon the personality and temperament of the poet. Some have been awakened to a burning enthusiasm by the spectacle of a new era; others are deeply disturbed by the civilization of a machine-made age. Some have heard music in the factory whistle; others have turned aside into solitude that they might the better hearken to the still small voice.

But however much contemporary poets may differ in their estimate of the value of our civilization, the peculiar conditions of the time have forced them all to seek a new and more direct expression, to perfect a finer technique. In a preface to James Stephens' "Collected Poems" published but the other day, occurs the following excellent summary of the situation: "The world interest today differs notably from that which gave it enthusiasm in the past, for, within the last thirty years, the tempo of the whole world has been enormously accelerated. It is still accelerating, and the technique that we inherited, in whatever art, from a leisured society is not equal to the demands that are now made upon it, and which demands are still incoherent if not unconscious. We must evolve a new technique, or we must continue to compose and paint and write in the only form that can deal with an interim situation, or with speed—the lyrical form. We are at the beginning of an era, and who creates a new world must create a new art to express it."

Here we have an explanation of why there is being written what has been called, and what may very conveniently be called, "The New Poetry". It remains to ask, What is the new poetry and wherein does it differ from the old? The difference is not solely one of form, for though some contemporary poetry is written in vers libre, by far the greater amount infused with the new spirit is written in the traditional metres and with the traditional rhyme schemes. It is not solely one of diction, though this, indeed, is an extremely important question: the deems, forsooths, methinks, the inversions for the sake of a rhyme, the high sounding pomposities and all the rhetorical excesses which make so much Victorian poetry seem overdressed and slightly vulgar—all these have been ruthlessly removed from the diction of contemporary poetry. The result was, in the words of Louis Untermeyer, that people made the discovery that to enjoy poetry it was not necessary to have at their elbow a dictionary of strange words and classical references; they were no longer required to be acquainted with the details of the love affairs of the minor Greek deities. Life was to be their glossary, not literature. The new work spoke to them in their own language, and the difference between the new poetry and that from which it is a reaction, though most obvious as a change in form, is something at once deeper and more fundamental, as Miss Harriet Monroe has put it, "The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life; it would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness found in all classics not of the first order. It is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent than most poetry of the Victorian period and much work of earlier periods. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity—an ideal which implies an individual, unsteretyped rhymn."

Now this contemporary poetry is divided by the war into two clearly marked epochs. In the earlier

it was the work of the poets to overthrow an effete and decadent diction, and to bring the subject matter of poetry out of the library and the afternoon-tea salon into the open air, dealing in the language of present-day speech with subjects of living interest. This is the task that W. B. Yeats, John Masefield, Robert Frost, E.A. Robinson and Carl Sandburg have performed, each in his own manner, so successfully. But besides this there has been a turning back to the Seventeenth Century, a renewed interest in the poems of John Donne, an attempt to recapture and exploit in a new way the poetics of the Metaphysical poets. Rupert Brooke was one of the pioneers in this movement. Such a poem as "Dining Room Tea" describes a trance-like state of super-consciousness that is akin to the Platonic ecstasy described by Donne in his poem, "The Ecstasy." From Donne to Brooke, and from Brooke to Eliot: it is a long stretch, but the curve is continuous. An advantage which the very latest poets of this school have had over their predecessors is that they have been able to make use of the various psychological theories of the subconscious, and to forge from them what is almost a new form of expression—a form which has found so far its culmination in the prose of James Joyce and the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Poets, such as Eliot, the Sitwells, Wallace Stevens, E.E. Cummings, whose widely divergent characteristics may be all included in the term ultra-modern, have been hurled into poetry under the compulsion of a bitter and poignant disillusionment, and they have, —most of them—turned aside from the world, concerned themselves with abstruse questions of technique, probing with the best instruments they can forge the wounds in their own subconsciousness. It is perhaps dangerous to group the poets I have just named together in this way. Certainly, however, they are all poets of disillusion. Eliot and Cummings have delved deeply into the subconscious; while Edith Sitwell and Wallace Stevens have constructed their own artificial, beautiful and cubist world; and they have all emphasised the importance of form.

This preoccupation with form has led some critics to see in the works of the ultra-moderns the symptoms of a deep decadence. The dislike exhibited by these poets, they say, for didacticism, for the moral aim has led them to take the safe course, and to keep not only morality but meaning out of their poems. If you read some of Eliot's Sweeney poems, or Edith Sitwell's *Bucolic Comedies* you may at first think that there is a good deal in the charge. If, however, you have had any experience as a reader of poetry, and you come to the test with an open mind, I think you will find it easier to admit that there is beauty in such poetry than to discover in it a logical meaning. More than once someone has spoken to me of a poem. "I don't understand altogether what it means—but I like it; it sounds well; there is beauty in it." Perhaps they were only being polite. But if that is the case, the fact that such a remark is considered to be a compliment rather than an insult shows that even in the popular mind Beauty, (that is, Form,) is considered to be more important than the idea or the logical meaning, (that is, than Subject Matter). In other words, though most people loudly disclaim it, in their hearts they really think that what you say is less important than how you say it. A fallacy, of course, but if they did not think thus when wishing to be complimentary they would say: "I don't

think there is any *beauty* in your poem, but I understand and admire its *sentiments* very much." This, however, would be considered an affront.

Now this popular idea that Form is more important than Content, of course, is just as absurd as the professorial conception of the supreme importance of right-thinking and the comparative insignificance of right-expression; and, as a matter of fact the discussion of the relative value of Form and Subject Matter is one that should never have arisen; because, in poetry, at least, these two things should be merged into one—a single and complete artistic whole—Form, the Body and Content, the Soul: the one, but the visible manifestation of the other.

But what, then, are we to say when the beauty of a poem appeals to us, while its meaning is somehow hidden? Simply that our faculty of aesthetic appreciation is more fully developed than our understanding—that we are become, God help us!—by natural right, a member of that despised sect—the Aesthetes.

College Spirit

SUFFER the little children
To come unto me,
Said the Big Business Man
As he endowed a University.

Let the coming generation
Have the proper education.

Our boys and girls must be taught
Right ideas from the start:
There is a great danger
In independent thought—
We'll have none of it here,
No fear!

We shall instruct our students in
The value of discipline:
Esprit de corps
Won the war,
Did it not?

We shall preach the divine right
Of Capital to its dividends,
For here economics begins
And ends;

And our students shall grow God-fearing,
That is, respectful of money,
And learn to distrust Scott Nearing,
And think Poets funny:

So suffer the innocent children
To come unto me,
Said the Big Business Man
Cunningly,
While Higher Education
And High Finance
Capered hand in hand
In a ritual dance.

Vincent Starr