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	Page
THE "U. S. A." CINEMA—PHILIPPE SOUPAULT	65
IN THE ORCHARD—VIRGINIA WOOLF	70
THE BARE BODIES—GLENWAY WESCOTT	72
THE FOUNTAIN OF ETERNAL YOUTH—WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS	73
MOTION PICTURE DYNAMICS—ROBERT ALDEN SANBORN	78
MOTION PICTURE "STILLS"	(facing) 80, 81, 96, 97
KABNIS—JEAN TOOMER	83
THE BRAIN AT THE WHEEL—MATTHEW JOSEPHSON	95
MEMPHIS JOHNNY—MALCOLM COWLEY	97
THE POET ASSASSINATED—GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE	99
OVERTURE—ISIDORE SCHNEIDER	111
BOOK REVIEWS:	
THE PROBLEM OF SPACE—EDWARD NAGLE	115
JACOB'S ROOM	118
THE VEGETABLE	119
THE GENIUS OF AMERICA	119
CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE ONE ACT PLAY	120
COMMENT—WILL BRAY	122
A NOTE ON SCULPTURAL KINETICS—SLATER BROWN	124

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THE "U. S. A." CINEMA

Just when the eyes of Frenchmen were tiring of the eternal sameness of the realistic drama—"slices of life"—when only the music halls could touch for a moment our poor hearts dried up by poetry, the cinema was born.

But soon the disillusionment was stronger than one could have imagined.

The films were lamentable, insignificant, and boring. They were not even stupid enough to cry over; the scenario writers wished at all costs to reach the people, that public which is thrilled by melodramas and sentimental comedies. Consequently the intelligent directors in order to cause tears to gush forth, planted little blue flowers in the gelatine of the film.

The result was to be expected. All the spectators began to cry, but of laughter. One saw a little girl stolen by wicked gypsies and recovered accidentally by her family, a poor mother and her dozen children, beaten by a brutal and intoxicated husband, and revenged at last by the demon rum and delirium tremens. As the old sad song has it: "It was lovely but it was sad, the fireman wept into his helmet."

All possibilities were exhausted.

The ennui of evenings which trail like the smoke of cigarettes and which stretch the arms to sleep took flower in the ardent life led by the younger people, my friends.

We walked in the cold and deserted streets looking for an accident, a chance meeting, life. To distract ourselves we had to harness our imaginations to sensational dreams. The newspapers, which are even more brightly colored than maps, diverted us for a moment. For a few cents one travelled the whole world over and was present at marvellous and bloody dramas which illuminated for an instant certain points of the globe. We thirsted, thirsted terribly, for this strange strong life, this life that we drank like milk.

One Jacques Vaché, the strongest among us, cried: "I should also be a trapper or a thief or a searcher or a hunter or a miner or a sheep-shearer!"

One day we saw great long bill-posters stretched along the sign-boards like serpents. At each corner of the street a man, his face

covered with a red handkerchief, threatened the peaceful passers-by with a revolver. We heard galloping horses, chugging motors, screams and death-rattles. We dashed into the movie houses and realized that all was changed. The smile of Pearl White appeared on the screen, that almost ferocious smile announcing the upheaval of the new world.

We began to understand finally that the cinema was not a perfected mechanical toy, but the terrible and magnificent flag of life. The little dark halls where we sat became the arena of our laughter, our rage and our great expressions of pride.

We did not understand what was happening. We lived swiftly, passionately. It was a beautiful period. Without doubt, many other elements contributed to its beauty, but the American movie was one of its fairest graces.

I have kept my memories of these films, which even today I find delightful to recall. For my pleasure I call to mind the following:

THE MAN WITH CLEAR EYES—(William Hart)

This man who runs and fights, halts at times in the clearings or on the high hills. At the edge of forests he throws a glance of scorn upon the plains. To cradle anyone in his arms or wring the neck of his enemy. Hatred is perhaps the only reason for existence for all men with clear eyes.

But this man is too frank. He does not know the joys of leading a double life.

It is much more delightful to shake hands with one's enemy than to strangle him.

The fights and clinches will always amuse us.

Someone is going to die.

Whose turn is it?

WITHIN THE LAW

The eyes of madwomen and their drunkenness are as butterflies.

This woman who drinks knows only the light smoke of her desires. I love this gritting of teeth, these pale rages and this sudden anger.

A correct gentleman brings you roses. Tear them apart with your two white hands, my mad darling, and throw them into the basket. You are going to kill somebody and

you hesitate. Open your huge eyes since your hand does not tremble.

This film is ridiculous and sentimental.

Why is this madwoman so beautiful? We shall go again to see "Within the Law," eh, Andre Breton.

But we did not yet know Charlie Chaplin.

At that time we were not astonished at the restricted place accorded to *Charlot*, as he is called in France, but all of a sudden we began to comprehend the significance of his role. Charlie Chaplin has really freed the moving pictures from the morons. This was easy for him because he is a poet. Poetry is a more violent acid than any other known acid. Its presence ruins the richest, the most powerful combinations, demands totally new beginnings.

The films of Charlie Chaplin do not escape this rule, and we have the impression that since "A Dog's Life" the most celebrated or intelligent directors have only been able to mark time or stay in the same place. No one has ever fairly judged the superb trick of Chaplin that we poets call poetry.

In his first films, Charlot was nothing more than a marvellous actor. As time went on, he became the author of dramas which were entitled, "A Night in a Music Hall," "The Immigrant," "The Floorwalker," "Shoulder Arms," and "A Dog's Life."

Why not admit that these films are and will remain the only dramas of this dramatic period? Without fear of stating a paradox, how not write that his laughter is more tragic, more poignant than the spectacle of death itself? I imagine that I have suffered more from laughter than from sorrow, which is self-indulgent, and, after all, consoling.

A few films of Charlie Chaplin have remained fast in my memory, and in thinking of them I have been led to write the following lines:

"A Dog's Life"—(Charlie Chaplin)

At five o'clock in the morning or the evening, the smoke that fills the saloons takes you by the throat, you sleep in the light of the stars.

But time passes. There is no longer a second to lose. Tobacco. At the street corners we cross the shadows; the pushcart peddlers are at the curb. We had better run: hands in pockets we stare at the sign. Café, Bar. At the door we hear the tin mechanical piano. The odour of alcohol sets the couples dancing.

They are here.

At the edge of the tables, at the edge of lips, cigarettes are consumed: a new star sings an old sad song.

You may turn your head.

The sun is laid upon a tree and his reflections in the window panes are bursts of laughter. A story as gay as a French paint shop.

"THE IMMIGRANT"—(Charlie Chaplin)

The tossing of the ship and boredom rock the days to sleep. Enough of these promenades on deck: ever since our departure, the sea is colorless. Neither dice nor cards can make us forget the city we are approaching: life is at stake.

The rain receives us in these deserted streets. Birds and hopes are far off. In every city the inside of restaurants is warm. You think no more; you look at the faces of the diners, or out through the doorway, at the light. Do you realize that you will have to go out and pay the bill? Does not the present moment suffice? There is nothing left to do but laugh at all this anxiety.

And we laugh sadly like hunchbacks.

With a stroke of his cane, such a smiling magician was he, Charlie Chaplin was able to give an extraordinary vigor, an incredible superiority, to the American movies. All the films which came out of the Los Angeles studios were successful. There were long rides on horseback without a word being spoken, without a useless gesture, sensational abductions. There were films of Douglas Fairbanks, of Rio Jim and of Tom Mix. There were complicated stories of banks, words, of gold mines. An immense silent office, and the head of a man armed with a cigar. He thinks and his thought becomes the whole United States, all America, the whole world. Near this head a telephone ringing quietly unites man with the universe. Does not this mute bell-ringing in the cinema present all the tragic desuetude of a horn playing in the quiet forests of our romantic Alfred de Vigny? Doors open and are closed, and red men, strong men, women desperately fine or frivolous enter and leave with misfortune or happiness in their hands.

The "U. S. A." cinema has thrown light on all the beauty of our time, all the mystery of modern mechanics. But the light it has projected was so simple, so natural, so little affected that it was hardly noticed. It was however one of the greatest and most important artistic discoveries. Everything was revivified with a single stroke.

This novel beauty, discovered so easily, so naturally, was accompanied by a technical perfection hitherto unknown. The directors in America understand all the drama that is hidden in a keyhole, in a hand, in a drop of water.

The influence of this new power made itself felt immediately. I thoroughly believe that all French poetry underwent a profound transformation therefrom. The theatre, little by little, more slowly, it is true, is being transformed by contact with the movies. It will be noticed, in looking backward, that since the appearance of the first films made in the United States, an evolution has begun: I am certain that painting, which is always a little behind poetry, will yet learn to know the conditions imposed by the cinema.

It must be stated, however, that at the present time, the "U. S. A." cinema, although it has preserved all its charm, has made no further progress. It remains itself, but at the same stage. We can no longer be astonished and it is difficult to distinguish the revival of the 1920 productions from those of 1923. This is no cause for disillusionment. But neither must we deceive ourselves. Americans quick of comprehension have accorded great success to the German film, "THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI." Without doubt this film is very different from preceding productions, but though it bewildered for a moment, it marks a decisive move backwards. The Los Angeles directors above all need take lessons from no one. Whatever may be said, they are greater than the author of "THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI," who really employed all the processes of the theatre.

The worst film of Charles Ray or of Jack Pickford is much superior to "THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI."

The most important thing is not to go back on one's tracks and look at things the wrong way. The theatre which will revive some day is as far from the cinema as poetry from music. Everything in its place, everything in its time, says the motto. The movies must not go aground on the rocks of "art" and of an antiquated novelty. After such an effort it is natural and right that for several months or even years, the "U. S. A." cinema take cognizance of the ground it has covered.

In reality I believe that at the present time we can only ask Los Angeles to continue to be the city of singular dreams and of tormenting realities.

The "U. S. A." cinema remains and will remain the "biggest in the world," as we say in French.

PHILIPPE SOUPAULT

IN THE ORCHARD

Miranda slept in the orchard, lying in a long chair beneath the apple-tree. Her book had fallen into the grass, and her finger still seemed to point at the sentence "Ce pays est vraiment un des coins du monde où le rire des filles éclate le mieux . . ." as if she had fallen asleep just there. The opals on her finger flushed green, flushed rosy, and again flushed orange as the sun, oozing through the apple-trees, filled them. Then, when the breeze blew, her purple dress rippled like a flower attached to a stalk; the grasses nodded; and the white butterfly came blowing this way and that just above her face.

Four feet in the air over her head the apples hung. Suddenly there was a shrill clamour as if they were gongs of cracked brass beaten violently, irregularly, and brutally. It was only the school-children saying the multiplication table in unison, stopped by the teacher, scolded, and beginning to say the multiplication table over again. But this clamour passed four feet above Miranda's head, went through the apple boughs, and, striking against the cowman's little boy who was picking blackberries in the hedge when he should have been at school, made him tear his thumb on the thorns.

Next there was a solitary cry—sad, human, brutal. Old Parsley was, indeed, blind drunk.

Then the very topmost leaves of the apple-tree, flat like little fish against the blue, thirty feet above the earth, chimed with a pensive and lugubrious note. It was the organ in the church playing one of Hymns Ancient and Modern. The sound floated out and was cut into atoms by a flock of field-fares flying at an enormous speed—somewhere or other. Miranda lay asleep thirty feet beneath.

Then above the apple-tree and the pear-tree two hundred feet above Miranda lying asleep in the orchard bells thudded, intermittent, sullen, didactic, for six poor women of the parish were being churched and the Rector was returning thanks to heaven.

And above that with a sharp squeak the golden feather of the church tower turned from south to east. The wind had changed. Above everything else it droned, above the woods, the meadows, the hills, miles above Miranda lying in the orchard asleep. It swept on, eyeless, brainless, meeting nothing that could stand against it, until,

wheeling the other way, it turned south again. Miles below, in a space as big as the eye of a needle, Miranda stood upright and cried aloud: "Oh, I shall be late for tea!"

Miranda slept in the orchard—or perhaps she was not asleep, for her lips moved very slightly as if they were saying, "Ce pays est vraiment un des coins du monde . . . où le rire des filles . . . éclate . . . éclate . . . éclate . . ." and then she smiled and let her body sink all its weight on to the enormous earth which rises, she thought, to carry me on its back as if I were a leaf, or a queen (here the children said the multiplication table), or, Miranda went on, I might be lying on the top of a cliff with the gulls screaming above me. The higher they fly, she continued, as the teacher scolded the children and rapped Jimmy over the knuckles till they bled, the deeper they look into the sea—into the sea, she repeated, and her fingers relaxed and her lips closed gently as if she were floating on the sea, and then, when the shout of the drunken man sounded overhead, she drew breath with an extraordinary ecstasy, for she thought that she heard life itself crying out from a rough tongue in a scarlet mouth, from the wind, from the bells, from the curved green leaves of the cabbages.

Naturally she was being married when the organ played the tune from Hymns Ancient and Modern, and, when the bells rang after the six poor women had been churched, the sullen intermittent thud made her think that the very earth shook with the hoofs of the horse that was galloping towards her ("Ah, I have only to wait!" she sighed), and it seemed to her that everything had already begun moving, crying, riding, flying round her, across her, towards her in a pattern.

Mary is chopping the wood, she thought; Pearman is herding the cows; the carts are coming up from the meadows; the rider—and she traced out the lines that the men, the carts, the birds, and the rider made over the countryside until they all seemed driven out, round, and across by the beat of her own heart.

Miles up in the air the wind changed; the golden feather of the church tower squeaked; and Miranda jumped up and cried: "Oh, I shall be late for tea!"

Miranda slept in the orchard, or was she asleep or was she not asleep? Her purple dress stretched between the two apple-trees. There were twenty-four apple-trees in the orchard, some slanting slightly, others growing straight with a rush up the trunk which spread wide into branches and formed into round red or yellow drops. Each apple-tree had sufficient space. The sky exactly fitted the leaves.

When the breeze blew, the line of the boughs against the wall slanted slightly and then returned. A wagtail flew diagonally from one corner to another. Cautiously hopping, a thrush advanced towards a fallen apple; from the other wall a sparrow fluttered just above the grass. The uprush of the trees was tied down by these movements; the whole was compacted by the orchard walls. For miles beneath the earth was clamped together; rippled on the surface with wavering air; and across the corner of the orchard the blue-green was slit by a purple streak. The wind changing, one bunch of apples was tossed so high that it blotted out two cows in the meadow ("Oh, I shall be late for tea!" cried Miranda), and the apples hung straight across the wall again.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

THE BARE BODIES

Simple as a snake
to the eye, but curious
in motions. . . .

In this a savage peace
of foothills piled
as green melons,
of rivers walked
by snipe

they start up
from the blue-topped
grass, the girl
a straightened crescent,
the man a wedge, marked
with curled hair
like corn-silk—

alone timorous,
by a cry startled,
where the mares' manes
blow out like lace,
where the bird sleeps.

GLENWAY WESCOTT

THE FOUNTAIN OF ETERNAL YOUTH

History, history! We fools, what do we know or care? History begins for us with murder and enslavement, not with discovery. No, we are not Indians but we are men of their world. The blood means nothing; the spirit, the ghost of the land moves in the blood, moves the blood. It is we who ran to the shore naked, we who cried, "Heavenly Man!" These are the inhabitants of our souls, our murdered souls that lie . . . agh. Listen! I tell you it was lucky for Spain the first ship put its men ashore where it did. If the Italian had landed in Florida, one twist of the helm north, or among the islands a hair more to the south; among the Yemasses with their sharpened bones and fishspines, or among the Caribs with their poisoned darts—it might have begun differently.

When in the later year Ponce found his plantations going under for lack of slaves—no more to be trapped in Puerto Rico, *rico!* all ruined—he sought and obtained a royal patent to find more in the surrounding islands. He was granted the right to hunt out and to take the Caribs; the Caribs whom The Great Maker had dropped through a hole in the sky among their islands; they whose souls lived in their bodies, many souls in one body; they who fought their enemies, ate them; whose gods lived, Mabouya, in the forest, Oumekon, by the sea—there were other gods—

His ship came into Guadeloup—the great sulphur cone back of the water. He had arrived straight from Spain, hot foot after niggers. Having much soiled linen aboard from the long trip he ordered his laundresses ashore, with a body of troops to guard them, where a stream could be observed coming down to the sea.

It was a paradise. A stream of splashing water, the luxuriant foliage. A gorge, a veritable tunnel led upstream between cliffwalls covered by thick vines in flower attended by ensanguined hummingbirds which darted about from cup to cup in the green light. But the soul of the Carib was on the alert among the leaves. It was too late.

Fierce and implacable we kill them but their souls dominate us. Our men, our blood but their spirit is master. It enters us, it defeats us, it imposes itself. We are moderns—madmen at Paris—all lacking in a

ground sense of cleanliness. It is the Caribs leaping out, facing the arquebusques, thinking it thunder, looking up at the sky: No rain! No clouds! Then the second volley. Their comrades bleeding, dead. Kill! Not a Spaniard but they stretched out in the streambed. Hagh, I can hear the laundresses squeal on the shore—run hither and thither. The devils had them safe. Let old Ponce sit up in his hammock on the poop of his ship. Let him send other boats ashore. The Indians have grabbed up the women. Three naked savages shot through the chest from behind before they could gain the forest rolled over and gripped the females they had been carrying by the throat with their teeth. Worth being a laundress to be carried off that way, eh? Nice psychologic study, those women. And the damned bloodhound, Berrescien. Ponce had got his belly full. They outflanked him in canoes, ridiculed his strategy, took his chainshot in the chest and came back for more. They drove him off, so much so that they made him forget his dog, the precious Berrescien, of whom he thought more, that and his hidalgan pride, than—a population. The hound had been left behind in their scared flight. They saw him, they in the retreating boats, leap from the woods in pursuit of a flying Carib. Listen to this. The Indian swam out, the Spaniards in the boats turned back for the beast. The dog was steadily gaining on his victim. But, O Soul of the New World, the man had his bow and arrow with him as he swam. Tell that to Wilson. He stopped, turned, raised his body half out of the water, treading it, and put a bolt into the damned hound's throat—whom sharks swallowed. Then to shore, not forgetting—leaping to safety—to turn and spit back the swallowed chainshot, a derisive yell at the Christians.

They had the women and the dog. They left what they had defeated to—us.

If men inherit souls this is the color of mine. We are, too, the others. Think of them: The main islands were thickly populated with a peaceful folk when Christ-over found them. But the orgy of blood which followed, no man has written. We are the slaughterers. It is the tortured soul of our world. Indians have no souls: that was it. That was what they said. But they knew they lied—the blood-smell proof. Ponce had been with the discoverer on his second trip. He became a planter. Sugar cane was imported from the Canaries, maize was adopted from the Indian souls. But revenues dwindled where none would work save in the traffic in girls: nine years old, reads the Italian journal. Slaves. The Indians having no souls knew what

freedom means. The Spaniards killed their kings, betrayed, raped, murdered their women and children; hounded them into the mountains. Ponce with wife and children in the *Casa Blanca* was one of the blood thirstiest. They took them in droves, forced them to labor. It was impossible to them—not having been born to baptism. How maddening it is to the spirit to hear—: Bands of them went into the forests, their forests, and hanged themselves to the trees. What else? Islands —paradise. Surrounded by seas. On all sides "heavenly man" bent on murder. Self privilege. Two women and one man on a raft had gotten one hundred and fifty miles out to sea—such seamen were they —then luck again went against the Indian. Captured and back to slavery. Caravels crept along the shore by night. Next morning when women and children came down to the shore to fish—fine figures, straight black hair, high cheek-bones, a language—they caught them, made them walk in bands, cut them down if they fainted, slashed off breasts, arms—women, children. Gut souls—

Thus the whole free population was brought into slavery or killed off. Aboujoubo, greatest chief in the island of San Ion, retreated in anguish to a rocky height. Ponce, now Governor, since he dare not economically murder everyone, sallies out and is received by a native queen, girls dancing, gives one a gold crucifix, legend says. Two years later finds her under a bush, both hands hacked off. Belly hurt he digs a shallow grave with his sword for her and shoves the gold symbol into his wallet. He exchanges names with a chief, sacred symbol of Indian faith and friendship. Hounds him out later: I am Juan Ponce de Leon! says the savage, standing before his followers—hanged nevertheless. The hound, Berrescien, gone ahead into a rocky place comes spinning back, tumbling down, knocking against rocks, a gash in his forehead. Ponce defeated, embittered has the dog stretched upon a litter of leaves and branches and carried to the ship.

Do these things die? Men who do not know what lives are themselves dead. In the heart there are living Indians once slaughtered and defrauded—Indians that live also in subtler ways: Ponce at fifty-two was rich, the murderous campaigns of his youth had subjugated the island—allayed his lust of common murder. The island was, in any case, mostly conquered.

An old Indian woman among his slaves, began to tell him of an island, Bimini, a paradise of fragrant groves, of all fruits. And in the center of it a fountain of clearest water of virtue to make old men young. Think of that! Picture to yourself the significance of that—

as revenge, as irony, as the trail of departing loveliness, *fata morgana*. Yet the real, the thing destroyed turning back with a smile. Think of the Spaniard listening. Gold. Gold. Riches—And figure to yourself the exquisite justice of it: an old woman, loose tongued—loose sword—the book, her soul already half out of her with sorrow: abandoned by a Carib who had fled back to his home having found Borequien greatly overrated. Her children enslaved—

The man, fifty-two, listened. Something has escaped him. At that moment rich, idle, he was relieved of his governorship. Vessels, three. He fitted them up at his own cost. Men enough, eager to serve the old master, rushed to his banner. Let the new governor complain that he was taking away too many able soldiers. Ponce smiled. Men whose terms of service had expired do as they please.

Por donde va la mar
Vayan las arenas—

They sailed north. It was March. In the wind, what? Beauty the eternal. White sands and fragrant woods, fruits, riches, truth! The sea, the home of permanence, drew them on into its endless distances. Again the new! Do you feel it? The murderer the enslaver, the terror striker, the destroyer of beauty, drawn on by beauty across the glancing tropical seas—before Drake, before the galleons. The rhythm of the waves, birds, fish, seaweed as on the first voyage. They even put in at Guanahani for water—Columbus' first land-fall; then populous, inviting; now desolate, defeated, murdered—unpeopled.

March! Spring! to the north. The argosy of the New World! In search of eternal youth. In search of the island of Bimini—an old woman's tale. The destroyer. Admonished that he had done enough still there floated a third world to discover: no end—away from the beginning—tail chaser

A carne de lobo
Diente de perro

he could not halt—no end. Curious that Amino—the boy of Palos who watched Columbus prepare his vessels for the first voyage and went on the second—should be his pilot. Sea scud. The same piloted Cortez to Mexico.

Let them go. They found nothing but a row of white islands called The Martyrs, a catch of turtles, Las Tortugas, a sandy coastline, a devil of a current that shoved them about and devilish Indians who

drove them back from the watering places—flamingoes, pelicans, egrets, herons—Rousseau has it. Thickets with striped leaves, ferns emerging from the dark, palms, the heat, the moon, the stars the sun in a pool of swampwater. Fish fly. In the water seals—back to Cuba.

Old now, heavy at heart over the death of his bloody pet, Ponce retired to his Casa Blanca and sulked for three years. Then came the news of Cortez triumph and the wealth of Montezuma.

Ponce—

de Leon
en nombre y podesta

—the victor, now defeated, must stir again. Back to Florida thinking to find on the continent, he only then found that he had discovered, another Tehuantepec.

But this time the Yamasses put an arrow into his thigh at the first landing—and let out his fountain. They flocked to the beach, jeered him as he was lifted to the shoulders of his men and carried away. Dead.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

MOTION PICTURE DYNAMICS

I have heard directors express hearty satisfaction in a fine lighting, the natural beauty of a location, the smoothness of a sequence leading up to a climax, a moving bit of emotional acting, the faultless realism of a costly set, and I have watched them labor endlessly to achieve these high spots. The qualities they consider so admirable all pertain to other arts, as, the lighting effect to still photography, the eye for natural beauty to landscape painting, the smoothness of the sequence to literature, and the verisimilitude of the set to stage carpentry. But I do not remember that I have heard one of them call attention to those rare and significant effects that belong organically to the art of the motion picture, and to no other art. Nor have I known these men, with a few exceptions, to strive for such effects.

The most consistent exceptions are to be found in the class of directors who improvise pictures of pure action, such as comedies and serials. They have, most of them crudely, sensed the peculiar possibilities and limitations of the new medium. Perhaps for that reason alone their products command the greatest popularity, and also the approval of the most discriminating.

First, Charles Chaplin. In actual practice Chaplin does not load himself with a staff of scenario writers. In their place he keeps on hand a small retinue of comedy "gag" men, writers and producers of vaudeville acts, vaudeville sketch artists, men who know all the "business" that ever got a laugh, in other words, not writers so much as experts in getting impromptu comedy effects. He generally has one man to act as recording scenarist whose duty is to follow the sequence of the action and make a brief of it, a work that any competent stenographer, familiar with motion picture technique, is able to perform. Once in a while this man may make a suggestion for new business but it is not listened to with a tenth of the attention given to the pat and slangy criticisms that fall from the lips of one of the several professional comedians who are always about.

Some day I hope that Chaplin will sit down in his easiest chair with the mouth of a dictaphone before him to do his part in blazing a clear trail over the tangled uneven ground of motion picture technique. I doubt if anyone, certainly none of our leading directors, is so well

equipped with a practical and rationalized background of experience in applying the integral principles of the art, as Chaplin.

I should like to make a few extracts from a recent article of Chaplin's in one of the popular family magazines: (The italics are mine.)

"The reason why so many people like the news weeklies and educational films better than the feature plays is because they present people who are busy doing things. I am not interested in the opening of a park by the mayor in some town where I hope never to be, but the whole circumstance carries with it that conviction of life which so many photoplays lack entirely."

"Likewise many people think that the film comedies are better than the dramas. If they are right it is unquestionably due to the fact that *the comedies have paid less attention to plot and trite moralizing than the dramas.* The comedy has had more invention and it has had more theatrical 'business.' *It has also known from the beginning that speed and quick movement of objects is essential to the motion picture.* The film demands speed, not necessarily in the terms of quick movement but in a combination of circumstances, one happening directly after another."

By "business" Charlie means, as he explains in another paragraph, "that certain something the performer does in a scene that is entertaining apart from its connection in the building up of the story." The director of a feature play is not so free to invent new business because he is held just as accountable by his superiors to the specifications of the scenario as a building contractor is bound by the architect to the blue print of the plans. The "speed and quick movement" are lost in the careful preparation of the "shooting" script. You cannot think in terms of speed unless you have had considerable training in producing it in action. And most scenario writers have not.

In the last sentence of this pregnant paragraph Chaplin is approaching a discussion of motion picture dynamics. The sentence is so full of meat that I should like to add a footnote on its significance. The "speed and quick movement" which can be found in no other art than the motion picture is a subtle and complex thing. It can be produced not by a single moving object, by some effect, for instance, so elementary as a race between an automobile and a train, or by a sequence of unrelated movements, but only by so dividing and joining the movements in the scenes that they play into or against one another. This is a problem that mechanical engineers are perfectly familiar with, in the construction of a bridge combining enduring safety with

airy grace, or an office building like the Woolworth in New York City which is also a monument of abiding beauty.

"We of the films," writes Chaplin, "have not gone ahead as our public has. . . . The public is not tired of old faces. It is tired of the old face *in the old material.* It would have an even greater apathy for new faces in the old material."

"Most of the people who make pictures, it seems to me, *make the mistake of wanting too much plot.* The scenario writer and director build and rebuild, criss-cross and dove-tail and lay so many pipes in preparation for the plot or a situation that when the time for it arrives there is an anticlimax."

"*I feel sure that it is better to begin with a casual or general idea.* In my own work I have found that an elaborate plot is not necessary,—just a slim structure or a sequence of scenes that will enable me to create a great deal of action and business that will entertain the audience apart from the story that is to be developed. *A plot is of no importance to me unless it does suggest these opportunities.*"

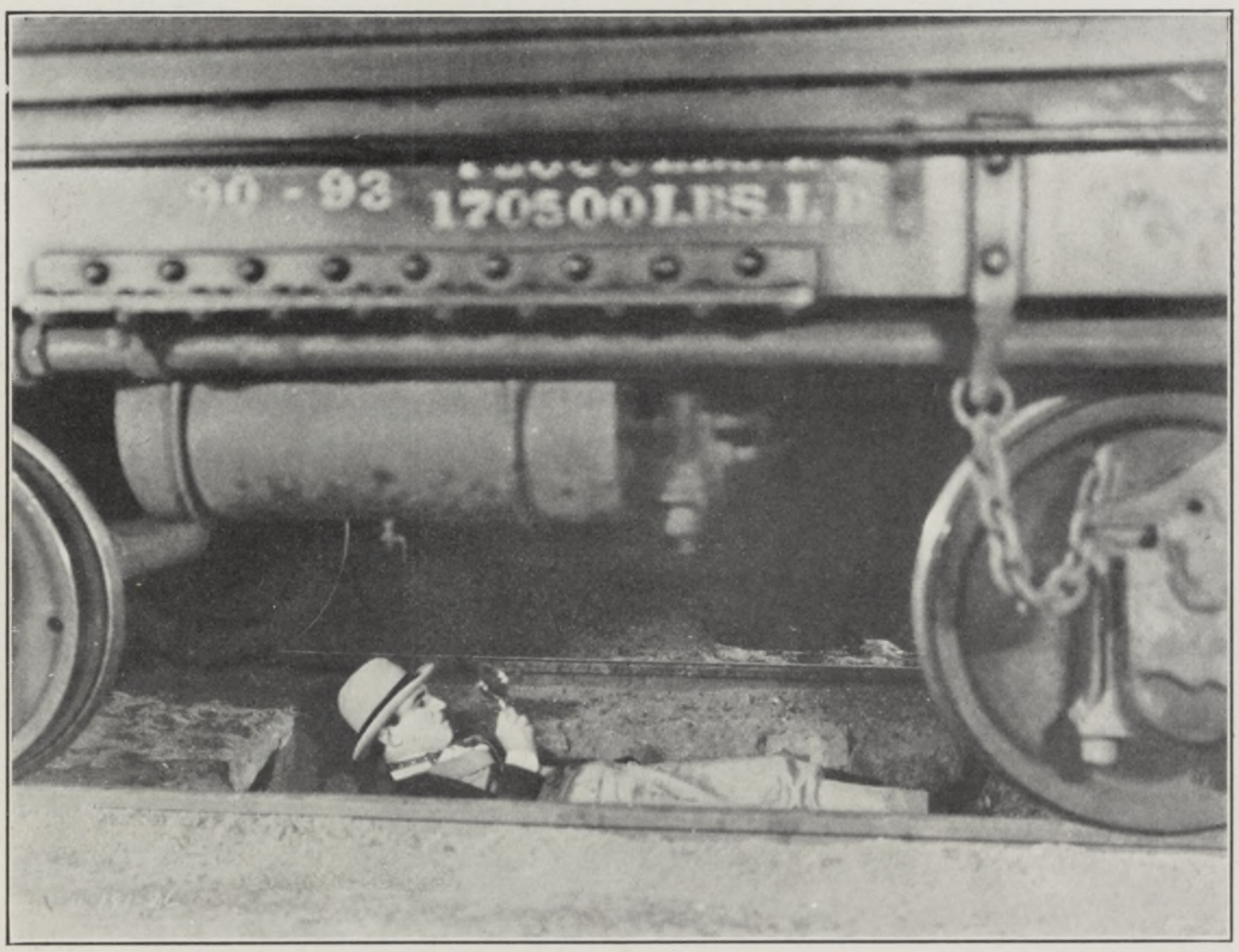
"In my original plan for 'The Kid' I had some indication of the nice feeling for comradeship which resulted in the picture but there was no idea of parenthood or of any of the things which made the appeal when the picture was finished. *These things developed as we began to work and naturally grew out of what we were doing.* They were not merely accidents *because they were inherent in the material with which we began.*" (Why does no one try the experiment of making a tragedy as Chaplin makes a comedy?)

* * *

There are spontaneous and distinctive elements of the motion picture, that appeared when that art was boisterously young. A friend and I once journeyed by surface line and elevated far out into the drab environs of Brooklyn in search of a chapter of one of J. P. McGowan's motion picture serials. McGowan's first popular success, "The Girl and the Game," released in 1915, was one of the most exciting serials ever made, and one of the best motion pictures ever produced from the standpoint of a critic of the art. It established McGowan as a master of the railroad scene, and for several years thereafter his serials were localized in and about the railroad, mainly centering on the yards and tracks where tough sweaty men shifted trains and loaded and unloaded grain and timber.

His method in all of his best work was that of an improvisor, and in that respect he was like Chaplin. His scenario generally found its

CORINNE GRIFFITH AND FRANK MAYO IN "SIX DAYS"



RAY GRIFFITH IN "RED LIGHTS"

From "Greed" (Goldwyn), set by von Stroheim

way into the waste basket after he had framed a rough working draft, based on a few suggestions in the script, some character, situation, or scene along the iron rails, in a locomotive cab, behind a water tank, something that promised an abundance of rapid and exciting action.

This method is well described by Chaplin in his recent article: "We would start out with a company made up as a policeman, a sailor, a big man, a girl, a nursemaid, or any other perfectly familiar and labelled characters. We had no particular idea of what we were going to do, and we would go to the park and *just sort of let a picture happen.*"

The serial chapter which my friend and I travelled miles of dull streets to see was full of compensating excitements. The characters dashed out of places and in again, men grappled, tumbled off freight cars, and rolled down embankments. And there was one bit we long remembered as our full reward.

The dramatic value of it consisted in this: that in making a scene wherein a swift motor launch was to race in to a dock, barely slacken to allow some men to leap into the pit, and then, describing a beautiful arc, speed out to sea, McGowan timed the action to take place just the right moment previous to the expected entrance into the distance of a huge coastwise steamship. The result was pronounced and unforgettable. The swift arc cut by the launch was contrasted with the slowly-drawn direct line of motion of the larger boat. The arc completed, the smaller craft sped away, passing under the threatening bow of the great liner. Force was applied to force, two movements of contrasting beauty struck edges. Here was motion picture dynamics.

Again where Chaplin shows us in "The Immigrant" the steerage crowd all on deck straining their eyes through the morning mist to glimpse the Statue of Liberty which to them means liberty and fraternity and wealth, and then in the next scene after a long shot of the statue, shows us the swift action of the immigration officials in roping off the immigrants and herding them into a corner to their utter misery, we have another fine example of a dynamic technique. Drama is here made by a studied ironic joining of scenes which are cut at exactly the right places to accentuate the struggle involved between an impossible dream and the harsh reality of life in an industrial democracy.

In another sequence of the same picture he contrives by a most adroit parallelism of movement to give his audience a sharp sense

of the dramatic value of contrast. He shows a scene in the steerage where a tin plate of stew is carried by the motion of the ship across the table to himself and back to another hungry immigrant, a solemn, black-bearded moujik. Each man has barely time to dip out a spoonful of the food. He cuts to a scene on deck showing Edna Purviance as an immigrant girl caring for her dying mother. The mother is struggling, for her daughter's sake, to keep up an appearance of improvement.

He returns to the hilariously amusing scene in the steerage and then, after a few of the metronomic movements of the plate, just as it slides down the width of the table to himself, he cuts back to the tragic scene on deck. The eye follows the motion of the plate, the direction of which is picked up by the sinking form of the old woman as she is gently lowered backward upon the hatchway by her daughter. Thus the humor of the one scene is organically related by visual motion to the tragedy of the other and a dramatic emphasis produced by the abrupt transition of sympathy.

The fact to be emphasized is that for the most part these true principles are to be found in the comedies, serials, and westerns of the early days. And it is sheer nonsense to maintain that such effects as I have instanced to prove my thesis belong exclusively to the field of comedy and rapid physical action. They exist there simply because the men who are busy in those fields are more wide awake to the possibilities of their medium and because they have not loaded themselves down with a dead weight of borrowed traditions.

ROBERT ALDEN SANBORN

KABNIS*

Night, soft belly of a pregnant Negress, throbs evenly against the torso of the South. Night throbs a womb-song to the South. Cane- and cotton-fields, pine forests, cypress swamps, saw-mills, and factories are fecund at her touch. Night's womb-song sets them singing. Night winds are the breathing of the unborn child whose calm throbbing in the belly of a Negress sets them somnolently singing. Hear their song.

White-man's land.
Niggers, sing.
Burn, bear black children
Till poor rivers bring
Rest, and sweet glory
In Camp Ground.

Sempter's streets are vacant and still. White paint on the wealthier houses has the chill blue glitter of distant stars. Negro cabins are a purple blur. Broad Street is deserted. Winds stir beneath the corrugated iron canopies and dangle odd bits of rope tied to horse- and mule-gnawed hitching posts. One store window has a light in it. Chesterfield cigarette and Chero-Cola cardboard advertisements are stacked in it. From a side door two men come out. Pause, for a last word and then they say good night. Soon they melt in shadows thicker than they. Way off down the street four figures sway beneath iron awnings which form a sort of corridor that imperfectly echoes and jumbles what they say. A fifth form joins them. They turn into the road that leads to Halsey's workshop. The old building is phosphorescent above deep shade. The figures pass through the double door. Night winds whisper in the eaves. Sing weirdly in the ceiling cracks. Stir curls of shavings on the floor. Halsey lights a candle. A good-sized lumber wagon, wheels off, rests upon the blocks. Kabnis makes a face at it. An unearthly hush is upon the place. No one seems to want to talk. To move, lest the scraping of their feet . . .

Halsey: Come on down this way, folks.

He leads the way. Stella follows. And close after her, Cora, Lewis, and Kabnis. They descend into the Hole. It seems huge,

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* *One of a collection of stories and poems to be published this fall by Boni & Liveright (New York) under title of "Cane."*

limitless in the candle light. The walls are of stone, wonderfully fitted. They have no openings save a small iron-barred window toward the top of each. They are dry and warm. The ground slopes away to the rear of the building and thus leaves the south wall exposed to the sun. The blacksmith's shop is plumb against the right wall. The floor is clay. Shavings have at odd times been matted into it. In the right-hand corner, under the stairs, two good-sized pine mattresses, resting on cardboard, are on either side of a wooden table. On this are several half-burned candles and an oil lamp. Behind the table, an irregular piece of mirror hangs on the wall. A loose something that looks to be a gaudy ball costume dangles from a near-by hook. To the front, a second table holds a lamp and several whiskey glasses. Six rickety chairs are near this table. Two old wagon wheels rest on the floor. To the left, sitting in a high-backed chair which stands upon a low platform, the old man. He is like a bust in black walnut. Gray-bearded. Gray-haired. Prophetic. Immobile. Lewis' eyes are sunk in him. The others, unconcerned, are about to pass on to the front table when Lewis grips Halsey and so turns him that the candle flame shines obliquely on the old man's features.

Lewis: And he rules over—

Kabnis: Th smoke an fire of th forge.

Lewis: Black Vulcan? I wouldnt say so. That forehead. Great woolly beard. Those eyes. A mute John the Baptist of a new religion—or a tongue-tied shadow of an old.

Kabnis: His tongue is tied all right, an I can vouch f that.

Lewis: Has he never talked to you?

Halsey: Kabnis wont give him a chance.

He laughs. The girls laugh. Kabnis winces.

Lewis: What do you call him?

Halsey: Father.

Lewis: Good. Father what?

Kabnis: Father of hell.

Halsey: Father's th only name we have fer him. Come on. Lets sit down an get t th pleasure of the evenin.

Lewis: Father John it is from now on. . . .

Slave boy whom some Christian mistress taught to read the Bible. Black man who saw Jesus in the ricefields, and began preaching to his people. Moses- and Christ-words used for songs. Dead blind father of a muted folk who feel their way upward to a life that crushes or absorbs them. (Speak, Father!) Suppose your eyes could see, old man. (The years hold hands. O Sing!) Suppose your lips. . .

Halsey, does he never talk?

Halsey: Na. But sometimes. Only seldom. Mumbles. Sis says he talks—

Kabnis: I've heard him talk.

Halsey: First I've ever heard of it. You dont give him a chance. Sis says she's made out several words, mostly one—an like as not cause it was "sin."

Kabnis: All those old fogies stutter about sin.

Cora laughs in a loose sort of way. She is a tall, thin, mulatto woman. Her eyes are deep-set behind a pointed nose. Her hair is coarse and bushy. Seeing that Stella also is restless, she takes her arm and the two women move towards the table. They slip into chairs. Halsey follows and lights the lamp. He lays out a pack of cards.

Halsey: Come on, Lewis. Come on, you fellers. Heres lookin at y.

Then, as if suddenly recalling something, he jerks away from the table and starts towards the steps.

Kabnis: Where y goin, Halsey?

Halsey: Where? Where y think? That oak beam in th wagon—

Kabnis: Come ere. Come ere. Sit down. What in hell's wrong with you fellers? You with your wagon. Lewis with his Father John. This aint th time fer foolin with wagons. Daytime's bad enough f that. Ere, sit down. Ere, Lewis, you too sit down. Have a drink. Thats right. Drink corn licker, love th girls, an listen t th old man mumblin sin.

Stella: Usall is brought up t hate sin worse than death—

Halsey: Th nigger hates th sight of a black woman worse than death. Sorry t mix y up this way, Lewis. But y see how tis.

Lewis' skin is tight and glowing over the fine bones of his face. His lips tremble. His nostrils quiver. The others notice this and smile knowingly at each other. Drinks and smokes are passed around. They pay no neverminds to him. A real party is being worked up. Then Lewis opens his eyes and looks at them. Their smiles disperse in hot-cold tremors. Kabnis chokes his laugh. It sputters, gurgles. His eyes flicker and turn away. He tries to pass the thing off by taking a long drink which he makes considerable fuss over. He is drawn back to Lewis. Seeing Lewis' gaze still upon him, he scowls.

Kabnis: Whatsha lookin at me for? Y want t know who I am? Well, I'm Ralph Kabnis—lot of good its goin t do y. Well? Whatsha keep lookin for? I'm Ralph Kabnis. Aint that enough f y? Want th

whole family history? Its none of your godam business, anyway. Keep off me. Do y hear? Keep off me. Look at Cora. Aint she pretty enough t look at? Look at Halsey, or Stella. Clover ought t be here an you could look at her. An love her. Thats what you need. I know—

Lewis: Ralph Kabnis gets satisfied that way?

Kabnis: Satisfied? Say, quit your kiddin. Here, look at that old man there. See him? He's satisfied. Do I look like him? When I'm dead I dont expect t be satisfied. Is that enough f y, with your godam nosin, or do you want more? Well, y wont get it, understand?

Lewis: The old man as symbol, flesh, and spirit of the past, what do you think he would say if he could see you? You look at him, Kabnis.

Kabnis: Just like any done-up preacher is what he looks t me. Jam some false teeth in his mouth and crank him, an youd have God Almighty spit in torrents all around th floor. Oh, hell, an he reminds me of that black cockroach over yonder. An besides, he aint my past. My ancestors were Southern blue-bloods—

Lewis: And black.

Kabnis: Aint much difference between blue an black.

Lewis: Enough to draw a denial from you. Cant hold them, can you? Master; slave. Soil; and the overarching heavens. Dusk; dawn. They fight and bastardize you. The sun tint of your cheeks, flame of the great season's multi-colored leaves, tarnished, burned. Split, shredded: easily burned. No use . . .

His gaze shifts to Stella. Stella's face draws back, her breasts come towards him.

Stella: I aint got nothin f y, mister. Taint no use t look at me.

Halsey: Youre a queer feller, Lewis, I swear y are. Told y so, didnt I, girls? Just take him easy though, an he'll be ridin just th same as any Georgia mule, eh, Lewis? (Laughs.)

Stella: I'm goin t tell y somethin, mister. It aint t you, t th Mister Lewis what noses about. Its t somethin different, I dunno what. That old man there—maybe its him—is like m father used t look. He used t sing. An when he could sing no mo, they'd allus come f him an carry him t church an there he'd sit, befo th pulpit, aswayin an aleadin every song. A white man took m mother an it broke th old man's heart. He died; an then I didnt care what become of me, an I dont now. I dont care now. Dont get it in y head I'm some sentimental Susie askin for yo sop. Nassur. But theres somethin t yo th others aint got. Boars an kids an fools—thats all I've known. Boars when their fever's up. When

their fever's up they come t me. Halsey asks me over when he's off th job. Kabnis—it ud be a sin t play with him. He takes it out in talk.

Halsey knows that he has trifled with her. At odd things he has been inwardly penitent before her tasking him. But now he wants to hurt her. He turns to Lewis.

Halsey: Lewis, I got a little licker in me, an thats true. True's what I said. True. But th stuff just seems t wake me up and make my mind a man of me. Listen. You know a lot, queer as hell as y are, an I want t ask y some questions. Theyre too high fer them, Stella an Cora and Kabnis, so we'll just excuse em. A chat between ourselves. (Turns to the others.) You-all cant listen in on this. Twont interest y. So just leave th table t this gen'lemun an myself. Go long now.

Kabnis gets up, pompous in his robe, grotesquely so, and makes as if to go through a grand march with Stella. She shoves him off, roughly, and in a mood swings her body to the steps. Kabnis grabs Cora and parades around, passing the old man, to whom he bows in mock-curtsy. He sweeps by the table, snatches the licker bottle, and then he and Cora sprawl on the mattresses. She meets his weak approaches after the manner she thinks Stella would use.

Halsey contemptuously watches them until he is sure that they are settled.

Halsey: This aint th sort o thing f me, Lewis, when I got work upstairs. Nassur. You an me has got things t do. Wastin time on common low-down women—say, Lewis, look at her now—Stella—aint she a picture? Common wench—na she aint, Lewis. You know she aint. I'm only tryin t fool y. I used t love that girl. Yassur. An sometimes when th moon is thick an I hear dogs up th valley barkin an some old woman fetches out her song, an th winds seem like th Lord made them fer t fetch an carry th smell o pine an cane, an there aint no big job on foot, I sometimes get t thinkin that I still do. But I want t talk t y, Lewis, queer as y are. Theres lots I want t ask y, Lewis. Been askin y t come around. Couldnt get y. Cant get in much tnight. (He glances at the others. His mind fastens on Kabnis.) Say, tell me this, whats on your mind t say on that feller there? Kabnis' name. One queer bird ought t know another, seems like t me.

Kabnis: Talkin bout me. I know. I'm the topic of conversation everywhere theres talk about this town. Girls an fellers. White folks as well. An if its me youre talkin bout, guess I got a right t listen in. Whats sayin? Whats sayin bout his royal guts, the Duke? Whats sayin, eh?

Halsey (to Lewis): We'll take it up another time.

Kabnis: No nother time bout it. Now. I'm here now an talkin's just begun. I was born an bred in a family of orators, thats what I was.

Halsey: Preachers.

Kabnis: Na. Preachers hell. I didnt say wind-busters. Y misapprehended me. Y understand what that means, dont y? All right then, y misapprehended me. I didnt say preachers. I said orators. ORATORS. Born one an I'll die one. You understand me, Lewis. (He turns to Halsey and begins shaking his finger in his face.) An as f you, youre all right f choppin things from blocks of wood. I was good at that th day I ducked th cradle. An since then, I've been shapin words after a design that branded here. Know whats here? M soul. Ever heard o that? Th hell y have. Been shapin words t fit m soul. Never told y that before, did I? Thought I couldnt talk. I'll tell y. I've been shapin words; ah, but sometimes theyre beautiful an golden an have a taste that makes them fine t roll over with y tongue. Your tongue aint fit f nothin but t roll an lick hog-meat.

Stella and Cora come up to the table.

Halsey: Give him a shove there, will y Stel?

Stella jams Kabnis in a chair. Kabnis springs up.

Kabnis: Cant keep a good man down. Those words I was tellin y about, they wont fit int th mold thats branded on m soul. Rhyme, y see? Poet, too. Bad rhyme. Bad poet. Somethin else youve learned tnight. Lewis dont know it all, an I'm atellin y. Ugh. Th form thats burned int my soul is some twisted awful thing that crept in from a dream, a godam nightmare, an wont stay still unless I feed it. An it lives on words. Not beautiful words. God Almighty no. Misshapen, split-gut, tortured, twisted words. Layman was feedin it back there that day you thought I ran out fearin things. White folks feed it cause their looks are words. Niggers, black niggers feed it cause theyre evil and their looks are words. Yaller niggers feed it. This whole damn bloated purple country feeds it cause its goin down t hell in a holy avalanche of words. I want t feed th soul—I know what that is; th preachers dont —but I've got t feed it. I wish t God some lynchin white man ud stick his knife through it an pin it to a tree. An pin it to a tree. You hear me? Thats a wish f y, you little snot-nosed pups who've been makin fun of me, an fakin that I'm weak. Me, Ralph Kabnis weak. Ha.

Halsey: Thats right, old man. There, there. Here, so much exertion merits a fittin reward. Help him t be seated, Cora.

Halsey gives him a swig of shine. Cora glides up, seats him, and

then plumps herself down on his lap, squeezing his head into her breasts. Kabnis mutters. Tries to break loose. Curses. Cora almost stifles him. He goes limp and gives up. Cora toys with him. Ruffles his hair. Braids it. Parts it in the middle. Stella smiles contemptuously. And then a sudden anger sweeps her. She would like to lash Cora from the place. She'd like to take Kabnis to some distant pine grove and nurse and mother him. Her eyes flash. A quick tensioning throws her breasts and neck into a poised strain. She starts towards them. Halsey grabs her arm and pulls her to him. She struggles. Halsey pins her arms and kisses her. She settles, spurting like a pine-knot afire.

Lewis finds himself completely cut out. The glowing within him subsides. It is followed by a dead chill. Kabnis, Carrie, Stella, Halsey, Cora, the old man, the cellar, and the work-shop, the southern town descend upon him. Their pain is too intense. He cannot stand it. He bolts from the table. Leaps up the stairs. Plunges through the work-shop and out into the night.

* * *

The cellar swims in a pale phosphorescence. The table, the chairs, the figure of the old man are amœba-like shadows which move about and float in it. In the corner under the steps, close to the floor, a solid blackness. A sound comes from it. A forcible yawn. Part of the blackness detaches itself so that it may be seen against the grayness of the wall. It moves forward and then seems to be clothing itself in odd dangling bits of shadow. The voice of Halsey, vibrant and deepened, calls.

Halsey: Kabnis. Cora. Stella.

He gets no response. He wants to get them up, to get on the job. He is intolerant of their sleepiness.

Halsey: Kabnis! Stella! Cora!

Gutturals, jerky and impeded, tell that he is shaking them.

Halsey: Come now, up with you.

Kabnis (sleepily and still more or less intoxicated): Whats th big idea? What in hell—

Halsey: Work. But never you mind about that. Up with you.

Cora: Oooooo! Look here, mister, I aint used t bein thrown int th street befo day.

Stella: Any bunk whats worked is worth in wages moren this. But come on. Taint no use t arger.

Kabnis: I'll arger. Its preposterous—

The girls interrupt him with none too pleasant laughs.

Kabnis: Thats what I said. Know what it means, dont y? All right, then. I said its preposterous t root an artist out o bed at this ungodly hour, when there aint no use t it. You can start your damned old work. Nobody's stoppin y. But what we got t get up for? Fraid somebody'll see th girls leavin? Some sport, you are. I hand it t y.

Halsey: Up you get, all th same.

Kabnis: Oh, th hell you say.

Halsey: Well, son, seeing that I'm th kind-hearted father, I'll give y chance t open your eyes. But up y get when I come down.

Outside, darkness has given way to the impalpable grayness of dawn. This early morning light, seeping through the four barred cellar windows is the color of the stony walls. It seems to be an emanation from them. Halsey's coals throw out a rich warm glow. He sets them on the floor, a safe distance from the beds.

Halsey: No foolin now. Come. Up with you.

Other than a soft rustling, there is no sound as the girls slip into their clothes. Kabnis still lies in bed.

Stella (to Halsey): Reckon y could spare us a light?

Halsey strikes a match, lights a cigarette, and then bends over and touches flame to the two candles on the table between the beds. Kabnis asks for a cigarette. Halsey hands him his and takes a fresh one for himself. The girls, before the mirror, are doing up their hair. It is bushy hair that has gone through some straightening process. Character, however, has not all been ironed out. As they kneel there, heavy-eyed and dusky, and throwing grotesque moving shadows on the wall, they are two princesses in Africa going through the early morning ablutions of their pagan prayers. Finished, they come forward to stretch their hands and warm them over the glowing coals. Red dusk of a Georgia sunset, their heavy, coal-lit faces. . . Kabnis suddenly recalls something.

Kabnis: Th old man talked last night.

Stella: An so did you.

Halsey: In your dreams.

Kabnis: I tell y, he did. I know what I'm talkin about. I'll tell y what he said. Wait now, lemme see.

Halsey: Look out, brother, th old man'll be getting int you by way o dreams. Come, Stel, ready? Cora? Coffee an eggs f both of you.

Halsey goes upstairs.

Stella: Getting generous, aint he?

She blows the candles out. Says nothing to Kabnis. Then she and Cora follow after Halsey. Kabnis, left to himself, tries to rise. He has slept in his robe. His robe trips him. Finally, he manages to stand up. He starts across the floor. Half-way to the old man, he falls and lies quite still. Perhaps an hour passes. Light of a new sun is about to filter through the windows. Kabnis slowly rises to support upon his elbows. He looks hard, and internally gathers himself together. The side face of Father John is in the direct line of his eyes. He scowls at him. No one is around. Words gush from Kabnis.

Kabnis: You sit there like a black hound spiked to an ivory pedestal. An all night long I heard you murmurin that devilish word. They thought I didnt hear y, but I did. Mumblin, feedin that ornery thing thats livin on my insides. Father John. Father of Satan, more likely. What does it mean t you? Youre dead already. Death. What does it mean t you? To you who died way back there in th 'sixties. What are y throwin it in my throat for? Whats it goin t get y? A good smashin in th mouth, thats what. My fist'll sink int y black mush face clear t y guts—if y got any. Dont believe y have. Never seen signs of none. Death. Death. Sin an Death. All night long y mumbled death. (He forgets the old man as his mind begins to play with the word and its associations.) Death . . . these clammy floors . . . just like th place they used t stow away th worn-out, no-count niggers in th days of slavery . . . that was long ago; not so long ago . . . no windows (he rises higher on his elbows to verify this assertion. He looks around, and, seeing no one but the old man, calls.) Halsey! Halsey! Gone an left me. Just like a nigger. I thought he was a nigger all th time. Now I know it. Ditch y when it comes right down t it. Damn him anyway. Godam him. (He looks and re-sees the old man.) Eh, you? T hell with you too. What do I care whether you can see or hear? You know what hell is cause youve been there. Its a feelin an its ragin in my soul in a way that'll pop out of me an run you through, an scorch y, an burn an rip your soul. Your soul. Ha. Nigger soul. A gin soul that gets drunk on a preacher's words. An screams. An shouts. God Almighty, how I hate that shoutin. Where's th beauty in that? Give a buzzard a windpipe an I'll bet a dollar t a dime th buzzard ud beat y to it. Aint surprisin th white folks hate y so. When you had eyes, did you ever see th beauty of th world? Tell me that. Th hell y did. Now dont tell me. I know y didnt. You couldnt have. Oh, I'm drunk an just as good as dead, but no eyes that have seen beauty ever lose their sight. You aint got no sight. If you had, drunk as I am, I hope Christ will kill me if I couldnt see it. Your eyes are

dull and watery, like fish eyes. Fish eyes are dead eyes. Youre an old man, a dead fish man, an black at that. Theyve put y here t die, damn fool y are not t know it. Do y know how many feet youre under ground? I'll tell y. Twenty. An do y think you'll ever see th light of day again, even if you wasnt blind? Do y think youre out of slavery? Huh? Youre where they used t throw th worked-out, no-count slaves. On a damp clammy floor of a dark scum-hole. An they called that an infirmary. Th sons-a-bitches. Why I can already see you toppled off that stool an stretched out on th floor beside me—not beside me, damn you, by yourself, with th flies buzzin an lickin God knows what they'd find on a dirty, black, foul-breathed mouth like yours . . .

Some one is coming down the stairs. Carrie, bringing food for the old man. She is lovely in her fresh energy of the morning, in the calm untested confidence and nascent maternity which rise from the purpose of her present mission. She walks to within a few paces of Kabnis.

Carrie K.: Brother says come up now, brother Ralph.

Kabnis: Brother doesnt know what he's talkin bout.

Carrie K.: Yes he does, Ralph. He needs you on th wagon.

Kabnis: He wants me on th wagon, eh? Does he think some wooden thing can lift me up? Ask him that.

Carrie K.: He told me t help y.

Kabnis: And how would you help me, child, dear sweet little sister?

She moves forward as if to aid him.

Carrie K.: I'm not a child, as I've more than once told you, brother Ralph, an as I'll show you now.

Kabnis: Wait, Carrie. No, thats right. Youre not a child. But twont do t lift me bodily. You dont understand. But its th soul of me that needs th risin.

Carrie K.: Youre a bad brother an just wont listen t me when I'm tellin y t go t church.

Kabnis doesnt hear her. He breaks down and talks to himself.

Kabnis: Great God Almighty, a soul like mine cant pin itself onto a wagon wheel an satisfy itself in spinnin round. Iron prongs an hickory sticks, an God knows what all . . . all right for Halsey . . . use him. Me? I get my life down in this scum-hole. Th old man an me—

Carrie K.: Has he been talkin?

Kabnis: Huh? Who? Him? No. Dont need to. I talk. An when I really talk, it pays th best of them t listen. Th old man is a

good listener. He's deaf; but he's a good listener. An I can talk t him. Tell him anything.

Carrie K.: He's deaf and blind, but I reckon he hears, an sees too, from th things I've heard.

Kabnis: No. Cant. Cant I tell you. How's he do it?

Carrie K.: Dunno, except I've heard that th souls of old folks have a way of seein things.

Kabnis: An I've heard them call that superstition.

The old man begins to shake his head slowly. Carrie and Kabnis watch him anxiously. He mumbles. With a grave motion his head nods up and down. And then, on one of the down-swings—

Father John (remarkably clear and with great conviction): Sin.

He repeats this word several times, always on the downward nodding. Surprised, indignant, Kabnis forgets that Carrie is with him.

Kabnis: Sin! Shut up. What do you know about sin, you old black bastard. Shut up, an stop that swayin an noddin your head.

Father John: Sin.

Kabnis tries to get up.

Kabnis: Didnt I tell y t shut up?

Carrie steps forward to help him. Kabnis is violently shocked at her touch. He springs back.

Kabnis: Carrie! What . . how . . Baby, you shouldnt be down here. Ralph says things. Doesnt mean to. But Carrie, he doesnt know what he's talkin about. Couldnt know. It was only a preacher's sin they knew in those old days, an that wasnt sin at all. Mind me, th only sin is whats done against th soul. Th whole world is a conspiracy t sin, especially in America, an against me. I'm th victim of their sin. I'm what sin is. Does he look like me? Have you ever heard him say th things youve heard me say? He couldnt if he had th Holy Ghost t help him. Dont look shocked, little sweetheart, you hurt me.

Father John: Sin.

Kabnis: Aw, shut up, old man.

Carrie K.: Leave him be. He wants t say somethin. (She turns to the old man.) What is it, Father?

Kabnis: Whatsha talkin t that old deaf man for? Come away frøm him.

Carrie K: What is it, Father?

The old man's lips begin to work. Words are formed incoherently. Finally he manages to articulate—

Father John: Th sin whats fixed . . . (hesitates.)

Carrie K. (restraining a comment from Kabnis): Go on, Father.

Father John: . . . upon th white folks—

Kabnis: Suppose youre talkin about that bastard race thats roamin round th country. It looks like sin, if thats what y mean. Give us somethin new an up t date.

Father John:—f tellin Jesus—lies. O th sin th white folks 'mitted when they made th Bible lie.

Boom. Boom. BOOM! Thuds on the floor above. The old man sinks back into his stony silence. Carrie is wet-eyed. Kabnis, contemptuous.

Kabnis: So thats your sin. All these years t tell us that th white folks made th Bible lie. Well, I'll be damned. Lewis ought t have been here. You old black fakir—

Carrie K.: Brother Ralph, is that your best Amen?

She turns him to her and takes his hot cheeks in her firm cool hands. Her palms draw the fever out. With its passing, Kabnis crumples. He sinks to his knees before her, ashamed, exhausted. His eyes squeeze tight. Carrie presses his face tenderly against her. The suffocation of her fresh starched dress feels good to him. Carrie is about to lift her hands in prayer, when Halsey, at the head of the stairs, calls down.

Halsey: Well, well. Whats up? Aint you ever comin? Come on. Whats up down there? Take you all mornin t sleep off a pint? Youre weakenin, man, youre weakenin. Th axle an th beam's all ready waitin f y. Come on.

Kabnis rises and is going doggedly towards the steps. Carrie notices his robe. She catches up to him, points to it, and helps him take it off. He hangs it, with an exaggerated ceremony, on its nail in the corner. He looks down on the tousled beds. His lips curl bitterly. Turning, he stumbles over the bucket of dead coals. He savagely jerks it from the floor. And then, seeing Carrie's eyes upon him, he swings the pail carelessly and with eyes downcast and swollen, trudges upstairs to the work-shop. Carrie's gaze follows him till he is gone. Then she goes to the old man and slips to her knees before him. Her lips murmur, "Jesus, come."

Light streaks through the iron-barred cellar window. Within its soft circle, the figures of Carrie and Father John.

Outside, the sun arises from its cradle in the tree-tops of the forest. Shadows of pines are dreams the sun shakes from its eyes. The sun arises. Gold-glowing child, it steps into the sky and sends a birth-song slanting down gray dust streets and sleepy windows of the southern town.

JEAN TOOMER

THE BRAIN AT THE WHEEL

To the man who knows

To the man who cares

To the man of taste

To the man of refinement

To the man with vision

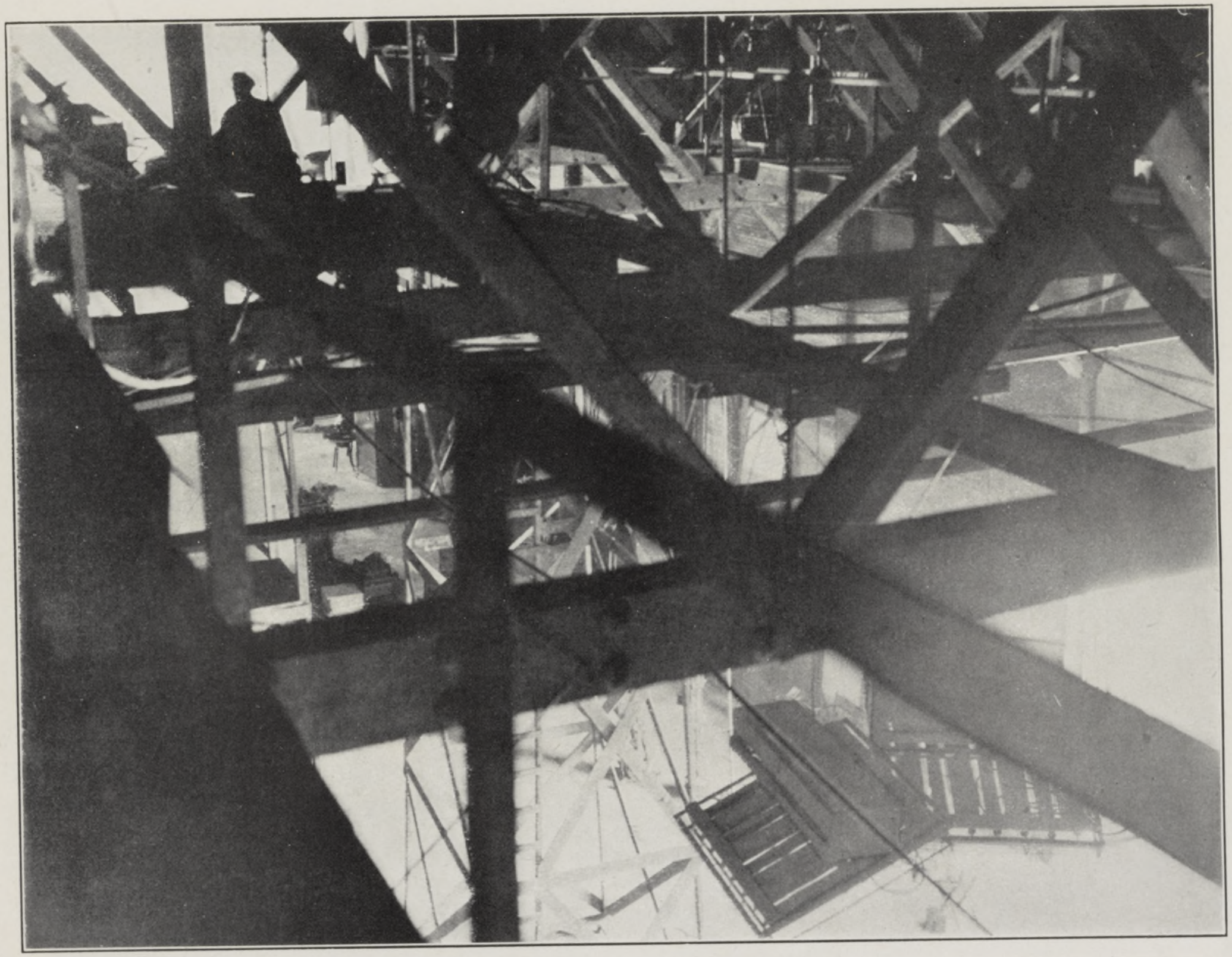
To the man of the finer type and temperament of attire.

* * *

DO YOU FEAR THE DARK

As your Aboriginal Ancestors did? From their leafy dwellings in the primordial trees they peered ever anxiously into a profound darkness teeming with imaginary terrors.

But take the Lamp with the Clamp, clamp it on the mirror, clamp it on the table, clamp it on the bed, clamp it on the chair, or anywhere.



FROM "SOULS FOR SALE," GOLDWYN STUDIOS

We bring

THE GIFT BEAUTIFUL

The Gift Supreme

What? What is to be?
Roses or worms? Or roses and worms?
Or is it seafood, snails, eels, mussels, clams and scallops?

* * *

With the brain at the wheel
the eye on the road
and the hand to the left
pleasant be your progress
explorer, producer, stoic, after your fashion.
Change
CHANGE
to what speed? to what underwear?
Here is a town, here a mill:
nothing surprises you old horse-face.
Guzzle-guzzle goes the siren;
and the world will learn to admire and applaud your concern
about the parts, your firmness with employes, and your
justice to your friends.
Your pride will not be overridden
Your faith will go unmortified.

MATTHEW JOSEPHSON

FRANK MAYO AND BARBARA CASTLETON IN "SOULS FOR SALE"

MEMPHIS JOHNNY

They carry him off in a one-horse hack
and he won't be thinking of coming back.

They CARry him off in a ONE-horse hack
and he WON'T be thinking of COMing back.

May GOD have mercy uPON his soul
they DUMP his bones in a SIX-foot hole.

They SHOVel dirt on his SULlen eyes
and DIRT clump-clumping aGAINST his thighs.

The DIRT clumps down, the pebbles drum on his belly
(o morsel of sod that covers that hides the left nipple
of his breast and crumbs of gravel seeping, seeping
between the stiff interstices of his limbs)

And WORMS crawl out and WORMS crawl in
and WORMS crawl out and WORMS crawl in

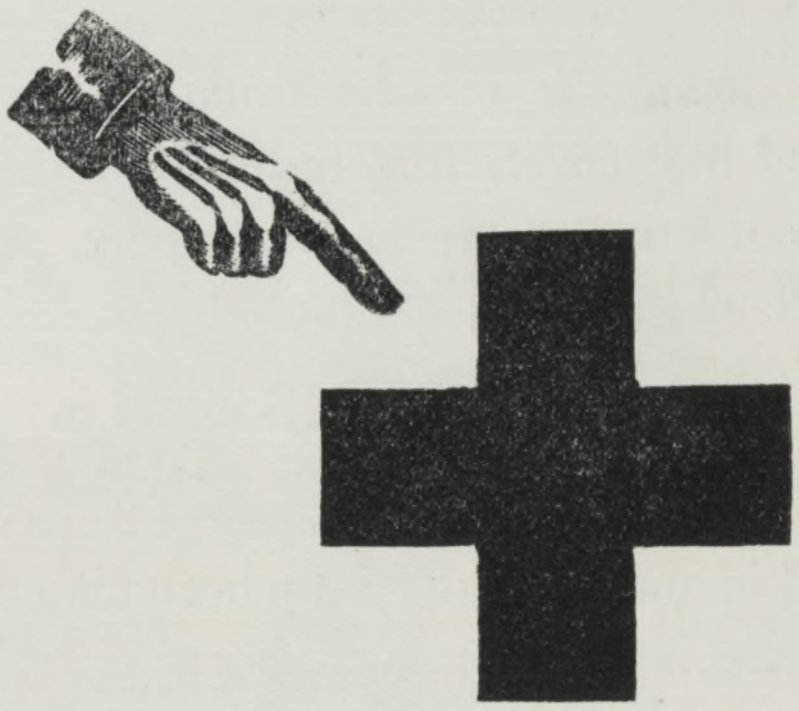
and WORMS crawl in and naturally I am becoming a little hysterical since he is wearing such linen as he never wore and his new black suit from Wanamakers and glass, oak, metal between him and the sod. The worms. I must have been hysterical when I imagined myself beneath the glass and oak and lead with him to clutch his shoulders tightly or continue a pointless conversation round and about

while DIRT clump-clumps aGAINST my thighs
aGAINST my belly and FROZen eyes

and SHOVelsfull of eTERnities
between my fingers and my knees

and worms crawl in and worms crawl out
and round and round and upon and about
our pointless conversation grows
and there she goes
and there she goes and
alldressedupinher SUNdaycloes
and there she goes.

MALCOLM COWLEY



THE POET ASSASSINATED

XII

LOVE

On a spring morning, Croniamantal, following the instructions of the Bird of Benin, reached the Meudon woods and stretched himself out in the shade of a tree whose branches hung very low.

The damsel had not yet arrived. Croniamantal longed for a fountain and his imagination, or perhaps some sorcerer's talent in himself which he had never suspected, caused a limpid water suddenly to flow among the grass.

Croniamantal flung himself down and drank avidly, when he heard the voice of a woman singing far off:

Dondidondaine
'Tis the shepherdess beloved of the king
Who has gone to the fountain
Dondidondaine
In the dewy fields, all blossoming
To the fountain
He will come he will not come
But here comes Croquemitaine
To the fountain
And Hickorydock! advance no further.

CRONIAMANTAL: Dost thou think already of her who sings? Thou laughest dully in this clearing. Dost thou believe that she has been rounded like a round table for the equality of men and weeks? Thou knowest well, the days do not resemble each other.

Croniamantal stands on the tip of his toes to see if he can perceive through the branches the so-beloved who comes.

THE VOICE

Dondidondaine
At the fountain it is very cold
But when will come my Croquemitaine
Dondidondaine
After the winter I shall be less cold.

In the clearing there appeared a young girl, svelte and brunette. Her countenance was sombre and starred with roving eyes like birds of bright plumage. Her sparse but short hair left her neck bare; her hair was tousled and dark, and by the skipping rope which she carried, Croniamantal recognized her to be Tristouse Ballerinette.

CRONIAMANTAL: No further, child with bare arms! I shall come to you myself. Someone has just hushed under the pines and will be able to overhear us . . . Stay with me. My lips are filled with kisses. Here, here. I lay them on thy brow, on thy hair. I caress thy hair with its ancient perfume. I caress thy hairs which intertwine like the worms on the bodies of the dead. O death, o death, hairy with worms. I have kisses on my lips. Here, here they are, on thy hands, on thy neck, on thine eyes, thine eyes. I have lips full of kisses, here, here, burning like a fever, sustained to enchant thee, kisses, mad kisses, on the ear, the temple, the cheek. Feel my embraces, bend under the effort of my arm, be languid, be languid, be languid. I have kisses upon my lips, here, here, mad ones, upon thine eyes, upon thy neck, upon thy brow, upon thy mouth, I longed so to love thee, this spring day when there are no more blossoms on the branches which prepare themselves to bear fruit.

TRISTOUSE: Leave me, go away. Those who move each other are happy, but I do not love you. You frighten me. However, do not despair, o poet. Listen, this is my best advice: Go away!

CRONIAMANTAL: Alas! Alas! To leave again, to wander unto the oceanic limits, through the brush, the evergreen, in the scum, in the mud, the dust, across the forests, the prairies, the plantations, and the very happy gardens.

TRISTOUSE: Go away. Go away, far from the antique perfume of my hair, o thou who belongest to me.

And Croniamantal went off without turning his head once; he could be seen for a long time through the branches, and then his voice could be heard growing fainter and fainter as he disappeared from view.

CRONIAMANTAL: Traveller without a stick, pilgrim without staff and poet without a writing pad, I am more powerless than all other men, I own nothing more and I know nothing . . .

And his voice no longer reached Tristouse Ballerinette who was admiring her image in the pool.

* * *

In the lovely woods, Tristouse promenaded meditating.

TRISTOUSE: My heart is sad without thee, Croniamantal. I

loved thee without knowing it. All is green. All is green above my head and beneath my feet. I have lost him whom I loved. I must search this way and that way, here and yonder. And among them all I shall surely find someone who will please me.

CRONIAMANTAL: Goddess! who art thou? Where is thine eternal form?

TRISTOUSE: Oh, there he is again, handsomer than ever . . . Listen, o poet. I belong to thee, henceforth.

Without looking at Tristouse, Croniamantal bent over the pool.

CRONIAMANTAL: I love fountains, they are beautiful symbols of immortality when they never run dry. This one has never run dry. And I seek a divinity, but I desire her to appear eternal to me. And my fountain has never run dry.

He kneeled and prayed to the fountain, while Tristouse, all in tears, lamented.

TRISTOUSE: O poet, adorest thou the fountain? O Lord, return my lover to me! Come to me! I know such lovely songs.

CRONIAMANTAL: The fountain hath its murmur.

TRISTOUSE: Very well, then! Sleep with thy cold lover, let her drown thee! But if thou livest, thou belongest to me and thou shalt obey me.

She was gone, and throughout the forest of twittering birds, the fountain flowed and murmured, while there arose the voice of Croniamantal who wept and whose tears mingled with the worshipped flood.

CRONIAMANTAL: O fountain! Thou who springest like a staunchless blood. Thou who art cold as marble, but living, transparent and fluid. Thou, ever renewed and ever the same. Thou who makest living thy verdant banks, I love thee. Thou art my unrivalled goddess. Thou quenchest my thirst. Thou purifiest me. Thou murmurest to me thine eternal song which rocks me to sleep in the evenings.

THE FOUNTAIN: At the bottom of my little bed full of an Orient of gems, I hear thee with contentment, o poet whom I have enchanted. I recall Avallon where we might have lived, thou as the King Fisher and I awaiting thee under the appletrees. O islands of appletrees. But I am happy in my precious little bed. These amethysts are sweet to my gaze. This lapis-lazuli is more blue than a fair sky. This malachite represents to me a prairie. Sardonyx, onyx, agate, rock-crystal, you shall scintillate tonight, for I will give a feast in honor of my lover. I shall come alone as befits a virgin. The power of my lover has already been manifested and his gifts are sweet to my

soul. He has given me his eyes all in tears, two adorable fountains, sweet tributaries of my stream.

CRONIAMANTAL: O fecund fountain, thy waters resemble thy hair. Thy flowers are born about thee and we shall love each other always.

Nothing could be heard but the song of birds and the rustling of leaves, and at times the plashing of a bird playing in the water.

A man appeared in the little wood: It was Paponat the Algerian. He approached the fountain dancing.

CRONIAMANTAL: I know you. You are Paponat who studied in the Orient.

PAPONAT: Himself. O poet of the Occident, I come to visit you. I have learned of your enchantment, but I hear that it is not yet too late to converse with you. How humid it is here! It is not at all surprising that your voice is harsh, and you will certainly need a medicament to clear it. I approached you dancing. Is there no way of saving you from the situation in which you have placed yourself.

CRONIAMANTAL: Bah! But tell me who taught you to dance.

PAPONAT: The angels themselves were my dancing masters.

CRONIAMANTAL: The good or the bad angels? But no matter. I have had enough of all the dances, save one which the Greeks call *kordax*.

PAPONAT: You are gay, Croniamantal, we shall be able to amuse ourselves. I am glad I came here. I love gaiety. I am happy!

And Paponat, his bright eyes profoundly whirling, rubbed his hands gleefully.

CRONIAMANTAL: You look like me!

PAPONAT: Not much. I am happy to live, while you die beside the fountain.

CRONIAMANTAL: But the happiness which you proclaim, do you not forget it? and forget mine? You resemble me! The happy man rubs his hands. Smell them. What do they smell like?

PAPONAT: The odour of death.

CRONIAMANTAL: Ha! ha! ha! The happy man has the same odour as death! Rub your hands. What difference between the happy man and the corpse! I am also happy, although I don't want to rub my hands. Be happy, rub your hands. Be happy! again! Now do you know it, the odour of happiness?

PAPONAT: Farewell. If you make no case for the living, there is no way of talking to you.

And as Paponat disappeared into the night where glittered the innumerable eyes of the celestial animals of impalpable flesh, Croniamantal rose suddenly thinking to himself: "Well—enough of Nature and of the memories she evokes. I know enough about that for a long time; we had better return to Paris and try to find that exquisite little Tristouse who loves me madly."

XIII

ENCOUNTERS

Six months passed. For the last five Tristouse Ballerinette had been the mistress of Croniamantal, whom she loved passionately for eight days. In exchange for this love, the lyrical youth had rendered her glorious and immortal forever by celebrating her in marvellous poems.

"I was thought ugly because of my thinness, my large mouth, my bad teeth, my irregular features, my crooked nose. Now I am beautiful and all men tell me so.

"What miracles are born of the love of a poet! But how heavily a poet's love weighs! What sorrows accompany it, what silences to endure! Now that the miracle has been accomplished, I am beautiful and renowned. Croniamantal is ugly, he has wasted his property in a short time, he is poor, lacking in elegance, no longer gay, the slightest of his gestures make him a hundred enemies.

"I love him no longer. I need him no longer, my admirers are enough for me. I shall rid me of him gradually. But that is going to be very annoying. Either I must go away, or he must disappear, so that he doesn't bother me, so that he isn't able to reproach me."

And after eight days, Tristouse became the mistress of Paponat, although still seeing Croniamantal, whom she treated more and more coldly. The less she came to see him, the more desperately he cared for her. When she did not come at all, he spent hours in front of the house she lived in in the hope of seeing her come out, and if by chance she did, he would escape like a thief, fearing that she might accuse him of spying on her.

* * *

It was by running around after Tristouse Ballerinette that Croniamantal continued his literary education.

One day as he was wandering about Paris, he suddenly found himself at the Seine. He crossed a bridge and walked for some time,

when suddenly perceiving before him M. Francois Coppée, Croniamantal regretted that this passerby was dead. But there is nothing against talking with the dead, and the encounter passed off very pleasantly.

"Come," thought Croniamantal, "to a passerby he would appear to be nothing but a passerby, and the very author of the *Passerby*. He is a clever and spiritual rhymester, with some feeling for reality. Let us speak to him about rhyme."

The poet of the *Passerby* was smoking a dark cigarette. He was dressed in black, his visage black; he stood bizarrely on a high stone, and Croniamantal saw quite easily by his pensive air that he was composing verses. He came alongside of him and after having greeted him, said brusquely:

"Dear master, how sombre you seem."

He replied courteously:

"It is because my statue is of bronze. That exposes me constantly to scorn. Thus the other day,

Passing by one day the negro Sam MacVea
Seeing I was the blacker, sat down and muttered: "Yea."

"See how adroit those lines are. Did you notice how well the couplet I just recited for you rhymes for the eye."

"Indeed," said Croniamantal, "for it is pronounced *Sam Mac Vee*, like Shake*speer*."

"Well here is something that comes off better," continued the statue:

Passing by one day the negro Sam MacVea
Christened this tablet with a flask of eau-de-vie.

"There is a bit of refinement that ought to appeal to you. It is the *rime riche*, the perfect rhyme to delight the ear."

"You certainly enlighten me on the rhyme," said Croniamantal. "I am very happy, dear master, to have met you in passing by."

"It is my first success," replied the metallic poet. "But I have just composed a little poem bearing the same title: it is about a gentleman who passes by, *The Passerby*, across the corridor of a railroad coach; he perceives a charming lady with whom, instead of going only to Brussels, he stops at the Dutch frontier:

They passed at least eight days at Rosendael
He tasted the ideal, she the real
In all things, it chanced, their ways differed,
It was from veritable Love they suffered.

"I call your attention to the last two lines, which through rhyming somewhat imperfectly contain a subtle dissonance, which is further emphasized by the fact of their being morbidly feminine rhymes."

"Dear master," exclaimed Croniamantal, "speak to me of vers libre."

"Long live liberty!" cried the statue of bronze.

And having saluted him, Croniamantal went his way looking for Tristouse.

* * *

Some time later, the rich Paponat, proud of being the lover of the renowned Tristouse, and desirous of not losing her for she did him honor, decided to take his mistress for a trip through Central Europe.

"Fine," said Tristouse, "but we must not travel as lovers. We shall travel as two friends, and I shall dress up as a young man; my hair is rather short, and I have often been told that I have the air of a handsome young man."

"Very well," said Paponat, "and since we both are in need of repose we shall make our retreat in Moravia in a convent of Brünn where my uncle, the prior of Crepontois, retired after the expulsion of the monks. It is one of the richest and finest convents in the world. I shall present you as one of my friends, and have no fear, we shall be taken for lovers just the same."

"That suits me," said Tristouse, "for I love to pass for that which I am not. We leave tomorrow."

XV

VOYAGE

Croniamantal went perfectly mad upon hearing of the departure of Tristouse. But at this time he began to become famous, and as his poetical repute waxed so did his vogue as a dramatist.

The theatres played his plays and the crowd applauded his name, but at the same moment the enemies of poets and poetry were increasing in number and growing in audacious hatred.

When he learned of the departure of Tristouse he did not protest, but simply asked the *concierge* if she knew the destination of the voyage.

"All that I know," said the woman, "is that she has gone to Central Europe."

"Very well," said Croniamantal, and returning to his quarters he

gathered up the several thousand francs he still possessed and took the train for Germany at the Gare du Nord.

On the following day, Christmas eve, the train was engulfed in the enormous terminal of Cologne. Croniamantal, carrying a little valise, descended last from his third-class coach.

Outside he saluted the Dome, solitary in the midst of the irregular square which it filled with its bulk. The station heaped its modern mass close to the huge cathedral. Hotels spread their signs in hybrid languages and appeared to hold their respectful distance from the gothic colossus. Croniamantal sniffed the odour of the town for a long time. He seemed to be disappointed.

"She is not here," he said to himself, "my nose would smell her, my nerves would vibrate, my eyes would see her."

He crossed the town, passed the fortifications on foot as if driven by an unknown force along the main road, downstream, on the right bank of the Rhine. And in truth, Tristouse and Paponat had arrived the night before in Cologne, taken an automobile and continued their journey; they had taken the right bank of the Rhine in the direction of Coblenz, and Croniamantal was following their trail.

Christmas eve came. An old prophet of a rabbi from Dollendorf, just as he was venturing upon the bridge which links Bonn with Buel, was repulsed by a violent gust of wind. The snow fell in a great rage. The sound of the gale drowned all the Christmas songs, but the thousand lights of the trees glittered in each house.

The old Jew swore:

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter* . . . I shall never get to *Haenchen* . . . Winter, my old friend, thou canst avail nothing against my old and joyous carcass, let me cross without hindrance this old Rhine which is as drunken as thirty-six drunkards. As to myself, I bend my steps toward the noble tavern frequented by the Borussians only to tipple in company with those white bonnets and at their cost, like a good Christian, although I am a Jew."

The sound of the gale doubled in fury, strange voices made themselves heard. The old rabbi shivered and raised his head crying:

"Donnerkeil! Ui jeh, ch, ch, ch. Eh! Say, up there, you ought to go about your business instead of making life miserable for poor happy devils whose fate sends them abroads on such nights . . . Eh! mothers, are you no longer under the domination of Solomon? . . . Ohey! Ohey! Tseilom Kop! Meicabl! Farwaschen Ponim! Beheime! You want to prevent me from drinking the excellent Moselle wines with the students of Borussia who are only too happy to toast with

me because of my science and my inimitable lyricism, not to mention all my talents for sorcery and prophecy.

"Accursed spirits! know ye that I might have drunk also Rhine wines, not to mention the wines of France. Nor should I have neglected to polish off some champagne in your honor, my old friends! . . . At midnight, the hour when the *Christkindchen* is made, I should have rolled under the table and have slept at least during the brawling . . . But you unchain the winds, you make an infernal uproar during this saintly night which should have been peaceful . . . as to being calm, you seem to be twisting his pigtail up there, sweet ladies . . . To amuse Solomon, no doubt . . . Lilith! Naama! Aguereth! Mahala! Ah! Solomon, for thy pleasure they are going to kill all the poets on this earth.

"Ah Solomon! Solomon! jovial king whose entertainers are the four nocturnal spectres moving from the Orient to the North, thou desirest my death, for I am also a poet like all the Jewish prophets and a prophet like all the poets.

"Farewell drunkenness for tonight . . . Old Rhine, I must turn my back to thee. I am going back to prepare me for death and dictate my last and most lyrical prophecies . . ."

A horrible crash, like a stroke of thunder, burst just then. The old prophet pressed his lips together, lowering his head and looking down; then he bent down and held his ear quite close to the ground. When he straightened up he murmured:

"The earth herself can no longer suffer the unbearable contact with poets."

Then he took his way across the streets of Buel, turning his back on the Rhine. When the rabbi had traversed the railroad track he found himself before a crossing and as he hesitated not knowing which to take, he lifted his head again by chance. He saw before him a young man with a valise coming from Bonn; the old rabbi did not recognize the person and cried to him:

"Are you mad to go out in such weather, sir?"

"I am hurrying to rejoin someone whom I have lost and whose track I am following," replied the stranger.

"What is your profession," cried the Jew.

"I am a poet."

The prophet stamped with his foot and as the young man disappeared he cursed him horribly because of the pity he felt, then lowering his head he went to look at the signposts along the road. Wheezing, he took the road straight ahead of him.

"Happily the wind is fallen . . at least one can walk . . . I had thought at first that he was coming to kill me. But, no, he will probably die even before me, this poet who is not even a Jew. Well, let us go quick and merrily to prepare us a glorious death."

The old rabbi walked faster; with his long cloak he gave the effect of a returned spirit, and some children who were returning from Putzchen after the Christmas Tree party passed him crying with terror, and for a long time they threw stones in the direction in which he had disappeared.

* * *

Croniamantal covered in this way part of Germany and the Austrian Empire; the force that propelled him drew him across Thuringia, Saxony, Bohemia, Moravia, up to Brünn, where he decided to stop.

On the very night of his arrival, he scoured the town. Along the streets surrounding the old palace enormous Swiss guards in breeches and cocked hats, were standing before the doors. They leaned on long canes with crystal heads. Their gold buttons gleamed like the eyes of cats. Croniamantal lost his way; he wandered about for some time in poor streets where shadows passed vividly across drawn blinds. While he was contemplating the sombre mass of the Spielberg, he heard steps close by, and saw three monks pass gesticulating and talking loudly. Croniamantal ran after them and asked them directions.

"You are French," they said; "come with us."

Croniamantal examined them and noticed that they wore above their frocks little beige cloaks that were very elegant. Each one wore a light cane and wore a melon-shaped hat. On the way one of the monks said to Croniamantal:

"You have wandered far from your hotel, we will show you the way if you wish. But if you care to, you may certainly come to the convent with us: you will be well received because you are a foreigner and you can pass the night there."

Croniamantal accepted joyfully, saying:

"I shall be very glad to come, for aren't you brothers to me, who am a poet."

They began to laugh. The oldest, who wore a gold-framed lorgnon and whose belly puffed out of his fashionable waistcoat, raised his arms and cried:

"A poet! Is it possible!"

And the two others, who were thinner, choked with laughter, bending down and holding their bellies as if they had the colic.

"Let us be serious," said the monk with the lorgnon, "we are going to pass through a street inhabited by the Jews."

In the streets, at every step, old women standing like pines in a forest, called them, making signals.

"Let us flee from this stench," said the fat monk, who was a Czech and who was called Father Karel by his companions.

Croniamantal and the monks stopped at last before a great convent door. At the sound of the bell the porter came to let them in.

"My child," said Father Karel, "you are in a unique convent. The monks who inhabit it are all very proper people. We have old archdukes, and even former architects, soldiers, scientists, poets, inventors, a few monks expelled from France, and some lay guests of good breeding. All of them are saints. I, myself, such as you see me, with my lorgnon and my pot-belly, am a saint. I shall show you your room, where you may stay until nine o'clock; then you will hear the bell ring and I shall come to look for you."

The room was round, the bed and the chairs were round; on the chimney piece a skull looked like an old cheese.

Croniamantal stood by the window, under which spread the teeming darkness of a large monastery garden, from which there seemed to rise laughter, sighs, cries of joy, as if a thousand couples were embracing each other. Then a woman's voice in the garden sang a song which Croniamantal had heard before:

Croquemitaine
Wears the rose and the lilac
The King is a-coming
—Hello Germaine
—Croquemitaine
Wilt thou come back again?

And Croniamantal began to sing the rest:

—Hello Germaine
I come to love among thine arms.

Then he heard the voice of Tristouse continuing the couplet.

And voices of men here and there, sang airs that were strange or grave, while the cracked voice of an old man stuttered:

Vexilla regis prodeunt . . .

At this moment Father Karel entered the room, as a bell rang full force.

"Well, my boy! Listening to the sounds of our fine garden? It is full of memories, this earthly paradise. Tychobrahe made love there

with a pretty Jewess who said to him all the time: Chazer,—which means pig in the jargon. I myself, have seen such and such an archduke. . . . Come to dinner."

They arrived in a vast refectory still empty, and the poet examined at his leisure the frescoes which covered the wall.

One was of Noah, dead-drunk on a couch. His son Cham was uncovering his nakedness, that is to say the root of a vine naively and prettily painted whose branches served as a genealogical tree, or something of the sort, for they had painted the names of all the abbés in red letters on all the leaves.

The long table that covered the middle of the hall was spread with a rare sumptuousness. The glasses and decanters were of Bohemian cut-glass, and of the finest red crystal. The superb silver pieces glittered on the whiteness of the cloth strewn with violets.

The monks arrived one by one, their hoods on their heads, arms folded on their breasts. On entering they greeted Croniamantal and took their accustomed places. The table was soon filled and Croniamantal counted fifty-six of them. The Abbé, an Italian with narrow eyes, said grace and the repast began, but Croniamantal anxiously awaited the arrival of Tristouse.

A bouillon was served in which little brains of birds and sweet peas swam . . .

* * *

"Our two French guests have just left," said a French monk who had been the prior of Crepentois. "I could not hold them here: the companion of my nephew was just singing in the garden in his pretty soprano voice. He almost fainted at hearing some one in the convent sing the close of the song. They left just now and took the train, for their automobile was not ready. We shall send it on to them by rail. They did not impart to me the destination of their journey, but I think that the pious children are bound for Marseilles. At least, I think I heard them talk of that town."

Croniamantal, pale as a sheet, rose, then:

"Excuse me, good fathers," he said, "but it was wrong of me to accept your hospitality. I must go away, do not ask me the reason. But I shall keep a fond memory of the simplicity, the gaiety, the liberty that reign here. All that is dear to me to the highest degree, why, why, alas, can I not profit of it?"

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

(Translated from the French by M. J.)

OVERTURE

Change,—
not more nor less.
Not more; surfeit
like a cormorant's ring is about our throats;
whose fishing are we at with our gaping senses?
Even a glutton's stomach turns on a delicacy,
and Satyrs, as we know, are misogynists.
Enlarge our appetites and we will swallow larger morsels,
only to feed as wrily as before;
make our pain less, and we will suffer
impalement in the pin prick,
a flaying in a scratch.
We alter the gauges of our nerves only.

Oh we want change.

Let us know as part of life
the change of death.

The woman who had been a man
being infected with change,
became another man
and sought other changes.

To Transit,
to the leper-green house—

The taste of woman is subtle,
it is the Circe that makes swinish,
it is the madonna that makes drunken

but most, and most subtly,
it is the Penelope that tames,
that makes circulate, child and man,
about the bodies of women.

Transit tasted.

Vertically in bed, her huge hip jerked away like heave of a restless sleeper, Circe lounged against a doorway, enduring her lovers. She was naked and in her loosened black hair she was like a lily on a dark leaf. But her womb, cherished at the hearth of her folded thighs, curled like a dismissed lap dog; like sated animals her eyes played without ferocity; between them her nose darted, with nostrils tremulous as fins; while the porpoises of her cheeks danced. The coil of her throat was sinister. Like doves her breasts strutted; and the ribs circled slowly like outermost ripples. Her body hair, heavy and intricately fertile like a banyan tree inured the gaze of her lovers. She was a pageant of wilderness and man came to her fawning or frenzied.

When Transit saw Circe, he became an elephant and raised himself formally like the materialization of a rectangle; like a canopy that elegantly arches a sedate amour.

Drawing water, at the well, with her head down, her neck bent grandly; and the strain made the skin whiter than amazement; it seemed ready for the fingers of a strangler or the knife of some havenly sacrifice. As she lifted out her pitcher her nurse-like arms waved as at altar tending. Then the madonna dim face appeared, small and casual like a retreating footprint; and they ran after her, gods and men, inebriating themselves with momentum and fixedness; and brewing themselves with a ferment of devotion so that they might dash their lives over her in a wine to dissolve her swoon; they skipped to her like scapegoats that miraculously knew their fate and were elated with their destiny.

The madonna leaned over Transit until her breasts licked him; then her hair shook back and she took out her arms and if her thighs lingered it was in respect to his own irresolution. But he let her go because he had no hope in posterity even if it were born a god out of his drunkenness.

The Fates and Penelope are spinners; the Fates span webs, and then giving each soul an end they watched the unravelling with measured amusement; Penelope spins her web but she alone unravels it.

Her face is a diagram of avouched perfection; her breasts are seals of symmetry; and her web deceives, appearing to be an arbitrament involved by the necessities of the composition.

Impassive as a mountain that determines the shape and moods of the lowlands she silently displays her incalculable household pasturing her lovers on her maids, and alotting orbits to her sons and her husbands.

Heavier than infatuation, more implicating than pity, is her oppressive strength, which is the arranging and inescapable hand of Order that makes a man, a function or a monument.

The gods waived Ulysses for ten years; death itself suggested parodies for an incantation. Goddesses, offered like spoils, with a patrimony in Elysium, a virgin, the still shut fists of whose young breasts held the copious buds of happiness, all merely interrupted Ulysses in his ordained oscillations toward Penelope.

Transit looked steadily away, dissenting from her perfection; avoiding the penetrating monotone of her beauty he raised against her invulnerable order the invincible rebels of creation, but before the battle could be joined, he was caught upon her gaze. He was ignominiously expended on her handmaidens.

Death helps us to see the soul
for it as suddenly renders life a background.

How would you die?

Kindle a woman under me;
it will be no phoenix pyre,
I will burn delectably.

So Transit died.

The change infected man sorrows for Transit, for his unfruitful death.

Taking the blue body he carries it before the people; like an unjustifiable wound he holds it before him, and reviles them; but his anger like the clutch of lightning in a cloud only squeezes out of the throng a rain of disciples.

Before his final change, he makes a last exploration of existence, exposing himself to chance naked even of his will. Hoping to attain an ultimate knowledge, hoping by this strategy to be taken in the drift of life and know by his own flood its destination, he found himself curled in a sidelong eddy, involved in an idyll!

Then having nothing left, he undertakes the final transformation relentlessly urging his will till like clubs it pounds upon his brain. For a time his will keeps his death fresh restraining the anarchy of the cells; it ends in a darkness that swiftly passes a corruption over the flesh.

ISIDORE SCHNEIDER

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PROBLEM OF SPACE

Painter and Space, by Howard Russell Butler. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. $4.00.

Books on painting by painters are published too rarely in these United States to be neglected by those few who discover paintings to be more engrossing than either baseball or bridge.

Mr. Butler sets himself the task of an historical inquiry concerning the technical ways of painters, with paramount emphasis given to the methods used for the reproduction of depth in a painting, the old illusion of the third dimension.

This appears the severest of problems to those who like Mr. Butler have no time, as he informs us in his first chapter, to deal with esthetic theory, disregard the metaphysics of space, attack the problem purely from automatic vision and mathematical certitude, thereby denying in greatest measure the creative accomplishment of the past fifty years and more. His systematic approach does not withhold him from frequent lapses into expressions of taste somewhat disadvantageous to those he omits to study or those to whom he grants a few ambiguous words, Renoir, Cezanne, Picasso and Picabia, comfortably found together, and gathered from a reading of Mr. Wright's "Modern Painting," as a footnote informs us.

A doctor who closes his eyes to the personality of the human being before him is no physician, but a mere statistician in momentous danger of making a false diagnosis. Mr. Butler's refusal of esthetic consideration is a simple subterfuge to which he resorts in order to attack those paintings troublesome to his conception of art, and defend those paintings which meet with his requisites of a painting.

The book begins with an account of the admirable drawings of the Cro-Magnons; then a leap is made to the Greeks. The work of the Egyptians and alien peoples whose artists had the knowledge of no immature scientists to stabilize them are forgotten presumably because they were content to create form on a given two dimensional surface in two dimensions, leaving the third dimension for the three dimensional art, sculpture. We are hurried to a limited view of the

historically great painters of the Renaissance who made use of the third dimension with its imposed limitations, rather completely to the awe and confusion of academicians ever afterwards. We are told their direct heirs, painters of the 16th century, are preferable to the primitives because the problem of space had been solved for them by the geometricians; the recipe had been concocted and a freedom of execution to which we are but now feeling our way was removed for centuries. Cubism, we are told, came from Spain, possibly because Picasso is Spanish, or Gleizes and others lived for a time in Barcelona. But to say that cubism came from the oppression of those who carried the adulation of the Renaissance painters and their admirably limited technique to the point of suffocation would be nearer the truth.

Two chapters as well as a few chosen reproductions are devoted to an orientation of the rules which should be pursued to obtain binocular perspective which is contrasted with monocular perspective, the psychological problem of the double image. Here a real contribution to technique might have been made if the eyesight of individual painters had been studied. It is proverbial that painters have ill eyes. Naturally impossible to learn what sicknesses assailed the eyes of the geniuses of the past, it still might be enlightening to register the optical vision of all living painters at some bureau of research and endeavor a classification of their works accordingly. Who knows how much the sane painter, a distinction Mr. Butler makes, might benefit therefrom—but then, consider the critics' eyes. This distinction of perspective which is so keenly seen by those who desire a slice of nature reproduced on canvas, is unknown to the modern painter whose objective is the creation of a work of art by sifting nature through his mind's eye to place upon a surface the residue, with the ablest tools he has at his disposal, and for his purpose always bending them to the will of his conception, always inventing them where they are lacking. He is not limited to the heritage of the Masters of the European Renaissance, but is heir to the artists of all time—which accounts for the present stimulation received from negro sculpture.

The procedure for the making of a painting, according to this instructor, is as follows: Make as able a drawing from nature as possible. Apply the rigid laws of perspective, as set down by the ablest three dimensional painters of the Renaissance; then color. A bad drawing is often redeemed by color, he adds.

Although several revolutions are related in this "historical scientific complete compendium"—description taken from its paper cover—the revolution created by the camera still in active eruption, as the photo-

graphs of Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, Man Ray and others testify, is yet unfelt. If colored photography is ever perfected (may it soon be), the endeavor to present reality on canvas with atmospheric finish will be denied those painters who hold no esthetic convictions beyond the pursuit of mathematical certainties. Mention of the third dimensional quantity inseparable from color is made, but since Cezanne's pioneering in the domain of color is little more than meaningless to Mr. Butler who is constantly under the delusion that the creators of what he calls "modernistics" were unaware of the axioms he undertakes to demonstrate, a reading of Cezanne's Letters, among other books, would have been enlightening. Naturally the presentation of color made by the abstract painters is dismissed by him with references to "oil cloth" and "wallpaper."

Academicians are not alone in America to deny abstract painting, which sprang into existence when the axioms of cubism were found too severe a restraint. Mr. Craven in the June *Dial* assures us that abstract painting is non-existent because Mr. Roger Fry is certain that no form can be created that does not recall some reality. There is unquestionably more fear and lack of comprehension of the abstract painters' use of their superbly limited technique—limited to the power color has to mould a two dimensional surface into living identity—than of all other painters' initial efforts. This is due to the dull semi-intelligence of the public, who in a democratic era exert their blind demands with a violence previously unknown. It does not prevent the hailing of Picasso as master by those who endeavor to secure a pleasing recipe from him to add to their historical cook book, while panting to keep up with him, and a curious neglect of Gleizes and Kandinsky, both shown in New York last winter, who have made color parent to their conception.

In his preface Mr. Butler takes note that there have been painters since earliest times who did not learn formulæ before painting, but who nevertheless created recognized works of art. They lie outside the systems and *a priori* rules of procedure found in books on the shelves of instructors in the fine arts. A book accounting for these artists and what made it possible for them to impose their art on generations would be a large contribution to the present technical chaos in which the criticism of painting is immersed.

EDWARD NAGLE

Jacob's Room, by Virginia Woolf. New York. Harcourt Brace and Company. $2.00.

The extraordinary beauty of Mrs. Woolf's prose serves to divert the reader, at first glance, from the perfection of the book as a whole. *Jacob's Room* apparently marks a turning point in English prose. In the interest of placing the book with relation to its contemporaries one might outline the foregoing situation as follows: In recent times the problem of human behaviour has been peculiarly fascinating to scientists, and our understanding thereof, thanks to the psychologists, has made great advances. Writers of modern prose, inasmuch as they record human experiences, have attempted to approach experience more closely, to divest it of its layers of familiar illusion through more and more penetrating analysis. This led, in the history of recent English prose, to the autobiographical novel in which vast documents of personal experience were accumulated. It was then discovered how stimulating and impressive detached experiences treated with great boldness and resourcefulness could become. The next step was the novel of dissociated experiences, in which a writer like Dorothy Richardson maintained interest (if she did) purely by the more or less shocking degree of relationship between ideas: i.e., it was absorbing enough to be titillated by the angle at which thoughts are opposed or associated, and thus to follow all the related or unrelated data which the author amassed for her subject, in a perfectly hopeless and bewildered way. Gertrude Stein pursues this tendency to its extreme limits; James Joyce rewards one most, and his *Ulysses* remains an invaluable compendium of such detail.

Mrs. Virginia Woolf, equipped no less brilliantly than her most formidable contemporaries for observing what is occult and disturbing in familiar experience, arrives, however, with a ripe sense of formal organization. Mrs. Woolf's method is to adjust isolated experiences in a subtle relationship, so that within a chapter or a part of her book the character of Jacob Flanders is completely encircled or segregated from all else in the universe. By the indirect method of defining Jacob's environment the succeeding chapters serve to mark the progress of his personality through an objective and hostile world. At the end of the book the personality has been completely caught and moulded. Detail after detail of experience is hurled against him until his figure has been clearly sculpt or blocked out in a strong light. Incidents radiate logically about this single figure. The isolated phenomena which touch his life link themselves into an harmonious ensemble.

Mrs. Woolf has also a remarkable trick of conveying the sense of passage through years or periods of life by means of a few deftly related glimpses presented with admirable restraint. A whole childhood is covered swiftly in a succession of outbreaks, pranks, bad dreams and maternal scoldings.

Her prose, musical and precise, moves with excellent change of pace and direction. So able a master of the sentence is she that it is quite delectable to witness the functioning of her rhetoric. At times, it is true, passages fall definitely into Miltonic blank verse, a practice which one may question importunately among the mighty.

M. J.

The Vegetable, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. $1.50.

Of the various pestilences known to attack vegetable life, the literary, operating through the agency of Mr. F. Scott Fitzgerald, is at once the most distressing and the most negative. The distress is caused by the spectacle of what was once a genuine talent, now reduced to the state where it can find satisfaction in such trifling. It is a commonplace that Mr. Fitgzerald's promise has failed to achieve an acceptable fulfillment. Therefore let the bare statement of this fact suffice. The negative feature is included in the criticism, that in this play the pest sets in before the vegetable is fairly sprouted. Jerry Frost does not come to life. The thin sophisticated disillusion of Mr. Fitzgerald begins, as it were, to eat away at his character before he is created. Hence one finds here nothing more than an attitude edited by means of a dialogue which, at least, is quite appropriate to it. This attitude doubtless springs from a recognition of the poverty of American middle-class life, of its absurd ambitions and its cheap pretense. It is so general, however,—unless informed by some unique thought or emotional power—as to be commonplace. The Vegetable is wholly lacking in qualifying features. And since there are no flashes of prose brilliance or beauty to lift it in any way, one finds it, at best, tedious and trivial; and at its worst, vulgar.

The Genius of America, by Stuart P. Sherman. New York. Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.00.

The Younger Generation to Professor Sherman is represented by Theodore Dreiser, Professor Ludwig Lewisohn, Dr. Joel Spingarn. His case against them is their evident belief that "Beauty is not con-

cerned with truth, or morals or democracy." They are for self-expression at all costs, denial, scepticism, libertinism. Therefore, Professor Sherman fears, the captains of industry will forsake the fine arts as "superfluous things." The real case against such novelists as Dreiser is that they are less concerned with literary perfection than they are in attacking the capitalistic democracy they live in. Professor Sherman's ruffled Captains of Industry are perfectly sensible in being annoyed at them. Whereas Professor Sherman himself errs with them, in seeking rather to defend his environment than to censure them on the grounds of dullness. He finds them "un-American." What is American? What is the "genius" of America? The genius of America, he concludes, after a reverent recollection of Washington, Franklin, Longfellow and Lincoln is "a profound moral idealism." Now, inasmuch as the Founders were people who travelled off in order to find better economic conditions, made war on their motherland in order to go into manufacturing on their own, and continued to make war on their weaker neighbors for the sake of territorial gain, it is rather hard to find the sources of all this moral idealism. The Genius of America is rather for economic organization, and expresses itself in quantity production and national sales. It creates an inspiring enough spectacle in modern times for poets and novelists to ruminate over. It is certainly their business to define, somehow or other, their present environment and to express it, inasmuch as their own lives are enmeshed in it all. But that they should go about crying, "Oh Beautiful, my country!" as Professor Sherman (verbatim) wants them to, is an appalling proposal which offers horrible consequences.

The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play, by Percival Wilde. Boston. Little, Brown and Company, $3.00.

Let us get down to the *business* of one-act-playwriting. For the Keith Circuit. For the Little Theatre down the street. There has been entirely too much sentiment about it. The best plays are written by pupils of Professor Baker at Harvard. On the mechanics of the one-act play, Percival Wilde speaks with an informed ardour. As in the detective story, a la Lewis Carroll, "Begin at the End and go back till you come to the Beginning. Then Start."

A one-act play must have:

1. Introduction
2. Attack
3. Development
4. Crisis
5. Resolution and Ending.

Mr. Wilde gives specimens which are precise and inescapable. The diagrams especially have a high degree of efficiency. This is all perfectly consistent in its adulation of technique, until the veteran one-act-playwright has qualms of conscience about dogmatizing. Indeed, he says, there are broad principles; but playwriting is an "art"—and the artist should not be—will not be—fetished by "laws." He therefore concludes with the sage warning:

"First, last, always, be interesting!"

NEW BOOKS RECEIVED

FAINT PERFUME, by Zona Gale. New York. D. Appleton and Company. $1.75.

THE ADDING MACHINE, by Elmer L. Rice. New York. Doubleday, Page and Company. $1.50.

THE REAL STORY OF A BOOTLEGGER, Anonymous. New York. Boni and Liveright. $2.00.

THE POEMS OF ALICE MEYNELL. Complete Edition. New York. The Macmillan Company. $1.75.

EVAPORATION, a Symposium, by Mark Turbyfill and Samuel Putnam. Winchester, Mass. Modern Review. $1.75.

APRIL TWILIGHTS AND OTHER POEMS, by Willa Cather. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. $1.50.

COMMENT

The spectacle of a modern art which has no longer a "social office" that "might achieve . . . the regeneration of society" deeply troubles our contemporary *The Freeman* (July 25, 1923). "The war . . . not only defeated art but disabled it and cast it helpless into the ditch, while industrialism continues on its triumphant self-devouring way." Art has retreated from reality and, the critic of *The Freeman* maintains, it must remain within the sphere of reality, "it must appeal to the real, and through the real if it is to have any force against the real."

To reason with *The Freeman* as to the nature of *reality* would promptly involve us in the epistemological jungles. By making a pragmatic shift we might better and more generously assume *The Freeman's* view to be that an art or literature which deals with social realities or social problems is nobler than an art or literature to which such matters are incidental. It is an old campaign, begun first, perhaps, by Plato who would banish all the poets since they worked no good for the Republic. By *The Freeman's* measure, then, the following works would be aligned among the noblest contributions to human culture:

Uncle's Tom's Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe
Looking Backward, by Bellamy
A Modern Utopia, by H. G. Wells
Labor, by Emile Zola, etc.
A Doll's House, by Henrik Ibsen
Locksley Hall, by Lord Tennyson, etc.

As to the rest, Paradise Lost, The Divine Comedy, The Song of Songs, The Faerie Queene, Dr. Faustus, Gargantua, Tom Jones, one might by a subtle dialectic expose the modicum of social prophecy contained in them and evade dropping them entirely from the list of notables.

* * *

Intellectuals adapt themselves but ill to the rather remarkable circumstances of American life. I find their resistance and sense of oppression curiously misguided. It leads in the case of Van Wyck Brooks to such a vexing aberration as a study of Henry James written

entirely from the point of view of social psychology and therapeutics—an elaborate consideration of everything relating to Henry James save his writings!

* * *

Nor is it true that the artist in modern times has been cast into the ditch by industrialism. Abhorring Spengler, I find it more plausible to liken this age of mechanism to the Renaissance, by virtue of its vast physical triumphs over nature. We discover and exploit with equal daring and cruelty. Our Drakes and Marco Polos are in the laboratory or at the salesmanager's desk. The Renaissance in England saw the birth of the most agitated and romantic dramatic poetry the world has ever seen. So the painters and poets of the world are now stirred extravagantly by the spectacle of industrial mechanism. Whatever we may think of the social injustice wrought by the machine, it has certainly turned up an amazing store of fresh artistic material; personalities such as Ford and Stinnes, new commodities, new methods of locomotion and divertisement, phenomena which are so illogical, unexpected, uprooting, that it is scarcely reasonable to demand yet a classical poise of modern artists. If they manage not to get bashed by it all, we may acquire for the present a large romanticism which can outleap the nervous *Zeitgeist*, and having a daring and freedom in the quality of its speculation which surpasses that of our scientists and financiers.

* * *

Poetry for August prints The Established Poets alongside of the "youth of today." The experiment offers little save an opportunity for the "established" Mrs. Tietjens to air her rather remarkable observations: (The following should be read aloud in a high falsetto)

"The early work of the arrived poets, on the other hand, suffers from being in certain respects out of style—and it must be admitted that style cannot be ignored, even in poetry. As Sara Teasdale justly said in her letter: 'Nothing is so much out of style as something fifteen or twenty years old!' "

* * *

In that bubbling literary teashop of Mr. Farrar's, *The Bookman*, the correspondance course in "Contemporary American Poetry" continues brightly. Any questions confronting any literary club will be answered promptly by the editor of *The Bookman*. For the sake of the curious, there is an account of his life, and his picture is published in the same issue.

WILL BRAY

A NOTE ON SCULPTURAL KINETICS

It is obvious to anyone of intelligence that the movies at present are in a state bordering on almost complete paralysis. And this unfortunate condition seems due, not so much to the astringent attitude of a public which is notoriously fond of taking its esthetic pleasures through a straw, nor to the timidity of the producers who dare display no imagination beyond certain maternal efforts to direct their sweet pap into the mouth of the public, as it is due to the absurd emphasis every one places on the movies as a medium for drama. For this emphasis has so crippled the motion picture in any natural development toward those forms which are distinctly its own, that its few remaining gestures are largely reflex. In fact, so far as function is concerned, the movie has more than one foot in the grave.

It is indeed a terrifying example of the loss of manhood through disuse. For at its inception the cinema was endowed with that peculiar and unique power of deforming motion which gave it promise of developing a new and formidable art. Yet from the very beginning, this distinctive power to accelerate, retard, or reverse the normal motion of objects has been ignored because only on rare occasions could it be utilized by drama. On the other hand those mechanical accomplishments of the cinema which satisfy the present dramatic idiosyncrasies for realism, grandeur, staccato tensions and rapid scenic change have been developed to an almost inconceivable extent.

As rhythm is, broadly speaking, the progressive deformation of an original theme, so the esthetic function of the movies is not only to reproduce motion but to deform it as well. For just as musical composition develops its themes by repeating them in various keys, tempos, or upon different instruments, wielding the whole into an organic unity, so the movies by repeating the motion of various objects, retarding or accelerating their velocity, playing them against the retarded or accelerated velocity of other objects, reversing the order of their normal motion, would create a sort of symphony of sculptural kinetics whose esthetic value could be as significant as a work by Beethoven or Michel Angelo.

It is not difficult to understand how this symphony could be produced. The world with its rich welter of moving forms provides an infinite content. The canter of horses, the flight of birds, the whirling

fall of a leaf, only await the movies to give their motions an esthetic value. Even that black jungle of machines in which civilization seems to have lost its way, the linotypes, worm gears, the belch of furnaces, all with their intrinsic motions could through the time deforming genius of the movie attain coordination in the firm rhythms of art.

But first of all the movies must be freed from the dramatic tradition. For its esthetic function of deforming motion cannot create drama, it can only intensify certain dramatic situations. So, should it remain where it is today, it would become, not a self-sufficient art like music or painting, but an art subservient to one which has long since gone stale.

That it can be freed is another question. It has perhaps fallen among too many evil companions. Producers to whom movie-drama yields fat dividends are not the bodies to forsake it for the danger of a new art. Nor would the public to whom art must come soft, sweet, and slightly charged with gas. So the whole cost and labor of a long process of experimentation must be borne by individuals. And this, if I may believe the budget of the Famous Players Corp., would be far too expensive a sport for you or me, dear reader.

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