

Letters to the Editor: *Whitman and the Immigrant*

Salut au Monde

SIR:—Quaint contrast between Walt Whitman's ideas and those of his latest editor:

After [Whitman] came the promiscuous influx of immigrants from Europe, some of whom so abused our hospitality that the United States is no longer open to all comers. The American race of which Whitman had high hopes now embraces people from all parts of the globe, many of whom differ widely in political and social ideals from the sturdy pioneer stock he celebrates. Had Whitman lived into the twentieth century he would probably have been grievously disappointed in the types of personality that actually evolved, so different from the type he expected to emerge from a hundred years of American democracy.—*Specimen Days, Democratic Vistas, and Other Prose*, edited by Louise Pound, Professor of English, University of Nebraska (New York, 1935), pp. xxxiii; xxxiv.

Walt Whitman, "Salut au Monde":

You, whoever you are!
 You daughter or son of England!
 You of the mighty Slavic tribes and em-
 pires! you Russ in Russia!
 You dim-descended, black, divine-
 soul'd African, large, fine-headed,
 nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on
 equal terms with me!

You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian!
Saxon! Wallachian! Bulgarian!

You Jew journeying in your old age
through every risk, to stand once on
Syrian ground
You other Jews waiting in all lands for
your Messiah!

You own'd persons, dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!

You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!

I dare not refuse you—the scope of the world, and of time and space, are upon me.

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and
determination around the whole
earth:

I have look'd for equals and lovers, and
found them ready for me in all lands;
I think some divine rapport has equal-
ized me with them.

HOWARD M. JONES.

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Mrs. Govan is not Mrs. Burman

SIR:—AU SECOURS EXCLAMATION
POINT IN YOUR REVIEW CHRISTINE
NOBLE GOVANS BOOK FIVE AT ASH-
FIELD SATURDAY REVIEW YOU SAY
MRS GOVAN IN PRIVATE LIFE IS
MRS BEN LUCIEN BURMAN BEING
BESIEGED WITH WIRES AND LET-
TERS ASKING WHAT DOES THIS
MEAN INTERROGATION POINT
GRATIFYING ATTESTING CIRCULA-
TION SATURDAY REVIEW BUT HIGH-
LY DISTURBING TO ONE WHO FLEES
TO SAHARA TO WORK IN DESERT
TRANQUILLITY HAVE NEVER MET
MRS GOVAN BUT AM INFORMED SHE



"MARVELLOUS, GUSTAVE—IF ONLY I COULD WRITE LIKE THAT!"

IS CHARMING TENNESSEAN MRS BEN LUCIEN BURMAN WHEN SHE IS CALLED THAT WHICH IS RARELY IS ALICE CADDY STOP ALICE CADDY ILLUSTRATED ONE OF CHRISTINE NOBLE GOVANS BOOKS LAST YEAR THOSE PLUMMER CHILDREN PERHAPS BY SOME CURIOUS METAMORPHOSIS HER NAME IS ON THE NEW CHILDS BOOK THOUGH I AM CERTAIN SHE DID NOT ILLUSTRATE IT AS I AM ALWAYS REQUIRED AFTER A HECTIC NIGHT OF SKETCHING TO GO TO THE POST OFFICE AT FIVE OCLOCK IN THE MORNING TO PERSONALLY MAIL HER SKETCHES TO PUBLISHERS AND HAVE BEEN OCCUPIED EXCLUSIVELY IN PAST FEW WEEKS MAKING SUCCESSION OF DAZED SUNRISE TRIPS WITH HER DRAWINGS FOR NEW ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS EDITION OF STEAMBOAT ROUND THE BEND PLEASE PUBLISH SOME SORT OF EXPLANATION CORRECTION ETC SO THAT THE PEACE OF THE DESERT MAY ONCE MORE DESCEND UPON US

BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

Literary Statistics

SIR:—The two lists, each of fifty recommended books, which you took apart for examination in the editorial, "Some Literary Statistics," in the issue of November 9, are indeed a little sad. But the greater list of 1,000 from which they were selected (they are all published in a pamphlet under the title, "Good Reading: a Guide for College Students and Adult Readers . . ." by the National Council of Teachers of English, 211 W. 68th Street, Chicago, Ill.) is worthy of more attention. In the longer list there is no undue emphasis on fiction, the choices are broad and well classified, there are annotations.

and in the case of at least one division, philosophy, the forewords are downright attractive.

It does have its weaknesses, of course. The various annotators exhibit prejudice and in other ways show inexperience in their small but special and important art. The time lag is noticeable. . . . One might cavil further, but the fact is that among lists of this type, "Good Reading" is the best that has so far appeared. As such it has its uses.

I am moved to these remarks because at the moment I am seeking a small, select number of readable books for possible placement in dormitory libraries. I have my personal ideas as to what is readable, and I have at least half a notion what college students prefer. But I ought to be able to check my choices against something more vital than partial, undigested lists, or lists that are conservative and out of date as soon as printed. (The students themselves are furnishing some of the funds for purchase and I can't afford, for my own reputation, to make many mistakes!) In place of anything better, I have used "Good Reading." It has been helpful.

You say that "a careful, not a chance selection of strictly current books should be made for young readers . . ." That is the crux of the question. As Mr. J. Periam Danton, librarian at Colby College, recently has suggested, we ought to have a reviewing medium designed for college book selection. Or if that seems too far in the future as it well may be, we should have at short intervals two or three pages devoted to that purpose in a review such as your own. I believe the feeling grows in college circles that student needs merit such special attention.

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Prophylactic against Hysteria

CHRISTIAN ART. By C. R. Morey. New York: Longmans Green & Co. 1935.

Reviewed by RALPH ADAMS CRAM

NOW when hysteria would seem to have become the accepted motive power for the formation of judgments and the establishing of values, one can always return to Professor Morey as a sufficient corrective in artistic matters, where this same hysterical motivation is curiously prevalent. More than adequately fortified by sound learning, his judgments are always mature, his conclusions based on a very comprehensive sort of insight. This latest book, made up of a series of articles originally published in *Liturgical Arts*, is no exception to the rule.

The type of unreasoning hysteria against which Mr. Morey is an excellent prophylactic, is well expressed in the following quotation from a well-known commentator on the fine arts:

Art is a kind of malice, a kind of venom which thought and feeling eject. . . . Beauty is the absence of the familiar. . . . Art is the salvation of God. Only after being purified in the alembics of creative genius are His works fitted to enter the presence of intelligence. The universe is God's original sin and He is only redeemed through death and transfiguration in the artistic heavens. The august stupidities of the unconscious are rationalized in the brain. . . .

The point would be arguable that this is one of the most foolish statements ever made by a member of that genus metaphorically known as *Homo Sapiens*, but let that pass. In contrast, take the closing paragraph from Mr. Morey's volume:

The academic point of view demoted the intuitive and instinctive in art, whereby in the Middle Ages Christianity's grand theme had found naïve but real expression, and established in its stead the principle of beauty achieved by theory and rules, capable of transmission by pedagogy, and subservient to the absolute and exotic standard of classical antiquity. Thus was artistic perfection divorced from experience, religious or otherwise, and reduced in scale to the intellectual possibilities of its creator. The academic styles that have succeeded each other since the seventeenth century, as a consequence of this curious divorce of beauty from truth, can hardly be classified as Christian art, since they recognize no inspiration higher than the human mind.

Mr. Morey says that "the absence of any survey of medieval art in English" is his justification for putting his essays in book form. This is perhaps hardly fair. It would be possible to name a half-dozen books that are at least adequate approximations, but it is true that none is so compressed into concrete form. It is true also that this very brevity and concise-

ness make the picture he draws both lucid and convincing. Again, in considering the art of painting alone, we have here the most consistent sequence of derivations and developments.

As for art in general, the following is a most admirable analysis:

There is a test of civilizations, or cultural epochs, well known and trusted by the historian of art. It is: what was produced by this or that race, or period, in architecture? Was the collective thought thereof sufficiently fresh, positive, and confident to produce in architecture a new and original style? It is worth pondering that, if exception be made of derivative manners, the two architectures of Europe which may without reservation be called original were produced by classic Greece and medieval France. They were thus produced because they were needed for the expression of two contrasting points of view, so different that the one could in no wise have originated from the other. The one viewed the world with the serenity of intellectual detachment, transforming experience instinctively into ideas. The other never extricated itself enough from circumstance to achieve the coolness of the Greek survey of life; seeking the concrete and the individual, it sought the infinite as well, not with calm logic but with the passionate intuition of faith. The one produced an architecture of reasoned simplicity, adhering to the horizontal, distrustful of unmeasured volume; the other built with complicated stresses and balances, with soaring vaults, and silhouettes that disappear in space.

Is it quite true to say, however, that the only two original styles produced in Europe were the Greek and Gothic, and that the two contrasting points of view that brought them into existence, never merged? As March Philipps has shown in "Form and Color," the two contrasting modes of form and space, of intellect and emotion (Greek and Oriental), did meet and merge in that Byzantine style, the crown of which is Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and that thus a third style was produced, worthy to be called original and worthy to stand with Greek and Gothic. This was also in point of architectural style, a conception of and in, space, as was Gothic, which Worringer rightly calls a spatial art, one, that is, that saw space as freedom, that conceived

this airy volume first, and worked outward until the exterior became simply the enclosing shell. Byzantine architecture never got as far as formulating an exterior equally glorious to what it contained, but Gothic did, and in the end made the outer form of its churches so splendid that we are sometimes led into thinking that this exterior form, composition, and ornament make up the essential element in the style.

Mr. Morey's consideration of the various phases of Byzantine art, particularly mosaic and painting, is very revealing and, so far as I know, the facts are here set down for the first time. There was, first of all, the original pre-iconoclastic

style, static and regimented by ecclesiastical authority, but very noble in its spatial and hieratic quality. During the iconoclastic period (so curiously suggestive of some aspects of the Protestant and Puritan revolutions) art lapsed in the East, and its practitioners, or some of them, sought refuge and employment in the West, so laying the foundations of the art of Christian Europe. After the accession of the Empress Irene and the return of a measure of sanity, a new influence came in from Alexandria, dynamic, vital, and marked by a new quality of absolute beauty.

This is the mosaic art of Hagia Sophia, the almost incredibly beautiful work now slowly being revealed by the Byzantine Institute of America under the direction of Mr. Whittemore. These are the mosaics that took the place of those hacked out by the iconoclasts and probably date from the

tenth century. Happily, Mr. Morey is in error in saying that Kahrie-Djami "is the only church of the great Christian capital that still retains its decoration." The last eighteen months have proven that substantially all the mosaics of Hagia Sophia are still there under their canvas. Photographs that have been privately seen prove beyond question that these are the most astoundingly beautiful mosaics in the world; perhaps even the greatest extant works of Christian art. They are in a category by themselves.

This is a small volume, concise in form, interesting and untechnical. The illustration are most admirably chosen.

Ralph Adams Cram is an architect and author who has written much on art and art in its relation to civilization. Among his many books is "The Catholic Church and Art."



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