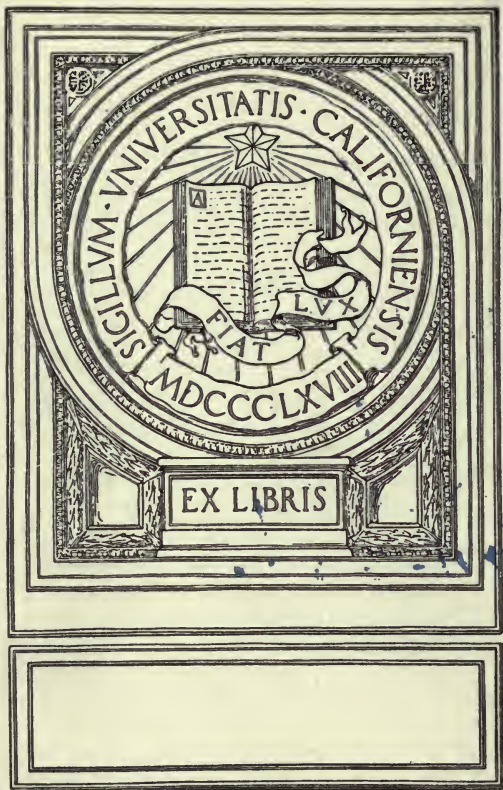



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THE IDEALS AND TENDENCIES  
OF MODERN ART





# The Ideals and Tendencies of Modern Art

BY

EDWARD CLARENCE FARNSWORTH



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**S**TANDING on the beach and facing the broad ocean, one sees the flood tide sweeping toward him in majestic waves each at farthest somewhat nearer than its predecessor. Its supreme effort exhausted, every wave recedes leaving only a wide expanse of empty sand which, to the hasty observer, might indicate the failure of the waters in their mighty task.

That human progress is tidal, that it manifests in waves analogous to those of the ocean which, seemingly free, are yet subject to law, is apparent to the historian; but why so he cannot tell. Nor can he imagine what mysterious, moon-like influence lifts the tidal wave of human endeavor and impels it to swell and recede and swell again on every nearest and farthest shore of the world we inhabit.

To live in the age of Grecian Pericles, or that of the Italian Renaissance, or of the English Elizabethans, was to behold a far-reaching wave of intellectual achievement supreme in its kind. To live in America to-day and note the marvels of mechanical ingenuity constantly appearing, is to experience a great and maybe superlative wave of another kind. Whether or not there now is in sweep, or else in formation amidst the sea of human progress, a wave in some ways similar to those

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historic ones just mentioned, it is our purpose to inquire.

That the surface urge behind the outer and gross expression of material progress is allied with the deeper ones behind spiritual and artistic advancement is not likely. Such domineering and self-sufficient Materialism would gradually crowd from the world the spiritual and the purely artistic. Its imperious crest would quell and humble every other.

Fortunately, Materialism as a whole has its wave limit and its receding, after which a forward movement of another kind is in order. Could we rise to the highest outlook, the steady alternation of the spiritual and the inner or basic material probably would be seen therefrom as the preserver of balance in a world not of angels, but of mortals compounded of fire and clay, of soul and body.

To the spectator on the beach, the advance and retreat of every wave is obvious enough, but to mark such occurrences in the world of human endeavor requires keener observation. Usually the period of subsidence following the exhaustion of a great wave of intellectual effort is not recognized as such by the contemporary observer. In fact, he is prone to mistake falling away for further advance; thus the Alexandrian or critical period succeeding that inspirational age which had produced the Greek dramatist, was, at the time,



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considered superior to the former. In the intellectual firmament Aristotle was the new orb eclipsing that of Plato and darkening with the shadow of doubt the intuitions of the great Idealist, and so preparing the way for that analytical age of reason, so-called, which produced the skepticism, the decadence of Pyrrho.

Who can doubt that the refinements of Virgil were in his day generally considered an advance over the bold simplicity of Homer? Nor is such an estimate surprising. But, aside from what that amounts to, the *Æneid* contains certain excellencies of which both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are devoid, and so to that extent the *Æneid* stands for progress. To be explicit, the meagre mentions of natural beauty scattered through the Homeric poems compare unfavorably with the riches of description abounding in the Virgilian verse. Evidently the Latin poet represented a wave of intellectual effort differing from that of the elder bard, but, all things considered, perhaps of equal volume and reach.

Despite of a certain reversion to the Homeric models, Virgil was an innovator. Now, when seen at close range, often the output of some great innovator seems to render null and void the work of all his predecessors, but, afterward, in the mature and just esteem of the world, he is recognized only as the revealer of truth seen from a new angle.

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It were folly to argue that the rise of mankind from mere savagery has not been along all lines, but it were equally unwise to contend that every departure from the conventional and time-honored is progress. Such departure may be an actual turning back, though not at the time so recognized, for to see with the eye of the future is sight indeed.

That the present era is one of departure from convention is obvious enough, but, for the race, this departure may mean decadence, or it may signify a period of gestation already advanced to the throes of a new birth, and the bringing forth of a humanity the heir of the ages, a humanity wiser and better because of the blunders and shortcomings of countless ancestors.

Examination of this larger matter being aside from our purpose, we would undertake the lesser problem indicated by the departures from the olden lately occurring in the arts of painting, poetry, and music, those sister arts sourced in some parent stem, some underlying unity, as evidenced by their almost equal sensitiveness to the dynamic forces beneath the total of modern world happenings.

It was an ancient belief, one walled and buttressed by a great and profound philosophy, that Sound, Color, and Form, in their original manifestation, were the powers that brought the earth into being and orbbed and kindled the stars above it. Sound was the first

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vibration stirring amidst the dead darkness of ancient night. Color was the fire, and Form was the shaping influence perfecting that divine Archetype, the self-luminous Sphere. Sound, Color, and Form were the original Trinity, in fact the primeval, Creative Word of God.

Dealing with Painting, Poetry and Music, we shall keep well in mind this exposition of their remote origin. In Music, sound is predominant, with form subordinate and also color, but, being vibration, color is sound had we but the ears for it. In Painting, sound cannot of course be considered since it is unapprehensible as such, but color, or else form, holds first or second place according to the viewpoint of the artist. In Poetry, we have first language, seemingly a new element, but language is only sound shaped by form to vowels and consonants and then by it arranged as words which convey ideas to the mind. As Poetry demands the perfection of word painting, the poet should in some degree acquire the artist's eye, so that his language may have the effect of pigments. In Poetry, we shall give to form a secondary place, perhaps disputed by those who think too highly of the conventional shapes into which the art has slowly crystallized.

Putting aside for the moment the various schools of Painting peculiar to modern times, we can broadly divide painters into two classes, those who copy more

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or less mechanically the outward face of nature, or of man, and those who pierce deeper. As the prism divides the white sunlight into the seven spectrum colors, so the prism of the human mind can divide the world and man each into seven components. This uncovering of the world is not like that performed by the pick and the shovel, for, to the prism of the mind, the coarse strata of the world is but another aspect of the material.

According to the genius of the artist, the landscape within the landscape is revealed till the inmost and basic reality is approached. So, seeking the inmost of man, the portrayer of the human face can, according to his genius, throw upon it the hidden light of the soul.

The basic reality existant both in nature and man is "The Thing in Itself" which Kant would have unattainable by human intelligence. However, certain other philosophers have been more sanguine. Human mind is progressive, both in reason and intuition, and to it the seemingly unknowable exists as a constant challenge and stimulus. Let us then beware of setting bounds to man's possibilities, or, what is more in line with our present inquiry, let us not doubt that the artist of the subjective will yet reach his utmost quest.

if I were the author (EC?) Counsel  
I handle it.

## MODERN PAINTING





# MODERN PAINTING

## I

IN examining the ideals and tendencies of modern painting, we shall look first to the French, that versatile and impressionable people, perhaps keener than any other to feel the subtle influences manifesting of late in divers modes of artistic expression.

Because of its reversion to the Greco-Roman, as well as the Italian of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a severe and sculpturesque school of painting obtained in Europe, especially in France, during the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. Opposing this school were the methods of the Dutch masters, whose art had developed through contact with the soil even as had the sturdy bodies which it loved to depict, idealized only by their enveloping light against a background of shadows. This art availed little outside of England, whereas, under the leadership of David, and later of Ingres, the French painters made composition and draughtmanship their chief requisites and, in a desire for correctness and Greek symmetry, they gave to the human form a stiffness as of statuary. This is evidenced by David's "Oath of the Horatii," the "Death of Socrates," "Belisarius," "Rape of the Sabines," and other works

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which earned for him an immense reputation and the admiration of Royalty itself.

Now because, from viewpoints more and more interior, the word form signifies that which deeper and deeper underlies the objective phase of form, it is evident that, in the progress of art, a school of painting, having for ideal the mere dead externals of form, should be succeeded by a school having in view a more subjective, a freer, a vitalized and more truthful phase of form, one which, eschewing the stilted, would express the human face and figure when influenced by the various emotions. So, through Gerard and others, we see the advent of Romanticism, the school at the beginning and head of which Delacroix, with his "Dante and Virgil" and his "Massacre in Scio"—repainted in the manner of Constable—at once placed himself. Thus an effectual and permanent protest against the methods of David and the lesser lights of Classicisms was begun by a school less trammelled than the other, a school discarding, for warm color and its dramatic possibilities, the dry and cold—the earth colors—of its predecessor, but still a school with the human form and face as the central interest; moreover, a school in which rhythm and linear balance, sometime lost to French painting, again appeared. Since the days of Homer, the love of Nature, apart from the interest excited by historical associations with certain scenes, has been of slow



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growth. Only in modern times has appreciation of natural objects existed in any save the few. Even the painters of the modern classical school had apologized for Nature by dressing her up as for some occasion.

As evidenced by the school of Fontainebleau through such a representative as Corot—one of the first to reject, at least in part, those inheritances of Poussain and Claude the supposedly noble and fit in landscape—and also through Millet, who beneath the homely discerned the beautiful, and in the simple and seemingly trivial discovered the sublime, the time had now come when the painter could find outside of man the impulse essential to his work. Still this impulse was not as yet sourced wholly in the landscape, even when stripped by Corot of the disquieting and filled by him with the charm of ideal summer scenery. Nor was the landscape all, though seen by artists freeing themselves from the absurd restraints which outworn convention had hitherto opposed. While finding whatsoever Nature sets before the eye to be suitable for the painter; that, for instance, the hut-crowned hill is as inspiring as if surmounted by a ruined Grecian or Roman temple after the fashion of Claude, and that willows and birches are as worthy of the brush as are oaks and palms, and that rivers are as picturesque as streams and brooks, and peasants as presentable as shepherds and nymphs and fauns and the other acces-

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sories of classical scenery, this school nevertheless deemed animal life, and also man, to be essential to the picture.

Next the landscape pure and simple, aye, for itself alone that enigma, that elusive face of infinite nature which perhaps the English painter Constable and then Corot, the "poet painter," were earliest to see with something of the new vision! And this landscape was to awaken in the modern painter a sense of mystery vast and deep and inclusive as the world itself. How should he interpret, how fix for other eyes some phase of mystery that a hovering shade, or a shaft from the riven clouds, had revealed on forest, on mountain, on valley and plain? How should he fitly transfer to canvas what the changing seasons were bringing to all within the circle of his vision? The lowering, the breaking, the passing storm leaving in its wake the leaping torrent, the swollen river, the lifted ocean! How should he in miniature indicate those? How worthily make stable the delicate tints of daybreak, or the lifting mists upon the morning's shrouded face? How paint effectively the sun's red setting, or the crimson afterglow that pales to orange and to violet ere yet the Night, her brush dipped deep in fire, has touched the blue expanse with myriad points of flame?

This, and more, we deem the problem which, confronting the modern painter, has eventuated in schools

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and cults. This search for the ideal is to some extent beneath every phase of that Realism which, as one aspect of the revolt from Classicism, soon succeeded Romanticism and is its one excuse for being.

Having in mind our definition of form as that which, further and further from the surface, more and more shapes the world to the Divine Likeness, or Archetype, we must consider the Realism peculiar to the school in which Courbet—that sometime follower but final repudiator of David—is prominent, as theoretically, at least, to be a shrinking back, a recession of the wave of progress, though not necessarily the turn of the tide of total advance.

Furthermore, we deem the word realism, as here used, to be misleading since the reality of Nature and her true color scheme are not discoverable by physical sight, however keen through cultivation; neither is Nature reproduced through photographic attention to detail. The history of French Realism proves it to have been opposed to things either literary or symbolic, and, in fact, to have been an anti-intellectual movement wherein the coarse, the lascivious, the bald, the petty, the commonplace, and even the repulsive, were certain of the pitfalls imperiling the path of its votaries. Still, at its worst, French Realism had its office in that it helped to turn the eye of the painter from the antique to contemporary life, and from the petty and the pretty,

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and the stilted and the theatrical, to the natural. Besides it taught him to avoid sentimentality, false idealism, and the glossing over of what is not beauty.

While in Courbet, Realism had for its inception an artist of peculiar limitations as a colorist and otherwise, it had also one of almost retrieving qualities as exemplified, for instance, in his handling of rhythmic line, the absence of which is obvious in Millet. Largely self-taught, not from lack of means and opportunity, but from intense though narrow convictions, coupled with an obstinate self-esteem which to him made his very defects appear like excellencies, Courbet had turned with contempt from teachers whose pupils were perpetrating the sentimental and inane.

Courbet the realist was in no way of the Millet type of French peasant, but rather that antithesis which the scalpel of Zola has dissected so unmercifully. Without that imagination, thought, and poetic fervor, which had lifted Millet above his birth and over those of Barbizon to whom, nevertheless, he was held by love's unbreakable bond, Courbet had chosen Paris as his ideal, though quite incapable of conforming to its polite requirements.

It may be said of Courbet that an insatiable craving for prominence—whether attained through art, or mere personal eccentricity, or some offence against custom—together with an unflagging determination to be the



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center of a worshipping circle, was the mainspring of his life and the energy behind his enormous output of canvases wherein little sense of movement was attained, and whose technique was their chief excellence, and in which the camera had its forerunner. It should not be supposed that the Apostle of Realism could rise to any lofty aim, or, like Millet, await with patience the sure yield of future years, for Realism is of the soil and, with earthward look and impatient voice, it demands a speedy harvest.

Because a phase of materiality, the absolute Realism of Courbet afforded no goal for an art destined to depart more and more from the depicting of form as recognized by the eye. The first painter to make noticeable this peculiar modern tendency was Daumier whose early work as a caricaturist had prepared him for the innovation. It was the misfortune of the caricaturist—turned from his vocation through political reasons—that the serious output of his mature years should be regarded by many as only another phase of his youthful efforts.

Daumier was not a colorist, a successor of Delacroix; indeed his art was a reaction against the prettiness to which contemporary use of color had come. Nevertheless, by constructing his figures first in tone, and then causing his drawing to incorporate and unify both form and shading, he discovered a means of increasing

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volume. Now while this procedure was not in accord with that of Michelangelo in his emphasis of certain parts of the human form, still the influence of the great Italian is felt in Daumier's volumes. Moreover, the light and shadow of Rembrandt were fraught with suggestion to one who actually copied neither master.

Another phase of an art impelled toward the subjective through contact with others moving in like direction, is found in the essentially decorative, two-dimensional art of Impressionism; that foreshadowed by Manet. This painter, who had revolted from academic exactness, was the first to attempt economy and simplicity by obscuring details. In him we see the influence of Courbet to the extent that his subjects were chiefly those tabooed by the inheritors of the Davidian formulas which regarded the dignified and the noble as alone fit for the canvas. On the other hand, Manet's art was not realistic in at least this, that anticipating modern methods it treated its subjects æsthetically rather than pictorially.

As an imaginative painter, Manet found his means of expression neither in the soil, nor in things related thereto, but in the sky, or, more precisely, in light and atmosphere. With these he gave to objects near by, or in the middle distance, or afar off, those correct values which before his day were either unnoticed, or else ignored.

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Manet has said: "The principal person in a picture is the light." Now it is complained that, in his over-attention to atmospheres, Manet never modeled to anything like roundness, and so his figures seem flat and the general impression is that of flatness, a defect—<sup>7</sup> common to his school. Besides it should be noted that, whereas ideas are permanent, pigments fade and with that fading *les values* and *la tache*—those excellencies obtained by obliterating half-tones and obscuring details—will have disappeared, thus making prophetic the words of that real Impressionist Monet, he whose style had been greatly influenced by Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed* and his ice and snow effects and those of sunlight and mist: "Perhaps I sacrifice too much to lightness and brightness, but these are essentials of the landscape."

The *la tache* of Impressionism on the one hand, and the microscopic attention to detail of the genre painter Meissonier on the other, show what a gulf can separate artists of one nation and time. Because when not black from absorption of all sunlight, any natural object refracts at least one of the seven spectrum colors, and because when more than one are refracted, their juxtaposition changes them to a variation of the colors refracted, and because the hues of surrounding objects modify that variation and are in turn modified by it, Impressionism, as illustrated by Monet after he

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had gathered hints from the Turner paintings, attempts the method of the sunlight.

The artist of this school employs only the seven pure spectrum colors and, at times, white and black. These he arranges in such juxtaposition that, seen from the proper angle and distance, they produce to the eye the chromatic tints of the external world, from dazzling white to deepest shadow. Moreover, to be faithful to nature, the Impressionist seizes upon some hour of the sun's progress under skies cloudy or otherwise, and imitates the colors which the sun as painter then spreads upon the landscape.

Impressionism, as exemplified by Monet, owes much to Japanese art, itself impressionistic and eminently suggestive while showing no trace of the Western schools. Native critics claim that the false perspective and extravagant character of Japanese painting, as indicated by Utamaro and continued by Toyokuni and culminating in Yeizan, all of whom have influenced modern French painting, is a decadence originating in crude efforts to reproduce poor prints of European pictures, especially those of the Dutch school. But the real Impressionist of Japan was not one of these, nor was he the prolific Hokusai, familiar to the Western world through his book illustrations, but, in fact, Hiroshige whose atmospheres antedated those of Manet. In this connection let us add that Monet's idea of



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painting a single haystack in differing atmospheres was derived from the Japanese.

Of Monet it has been well said that, while as regards particulars he ignored the face of nature, he secured a desired general effect by painting it, even as did Manet, as if seen through eyes but half open. As result, its parts were emphasized by the blending of details in clusters of light and shade. Thus, it is claimed, the resulting ensemble gives an impression of truth more adequate than by any other means. Impressionistic chiaroscuro, as exemplified by Manet, Monet, and Pissarro, differs to some extent from that of former schools and radically from that of the Dutch masters, since its lights are not concentrated on the central subject, but are distributed somewhat evenly over the entire grouping.

As exemplified by the three masters above mentioned, Impressionism, while anti-intellectual, is also a total severance from outworn traditions of color, form, and value, and in fact it terminated an inadequate past. To the cult, this breaking away meant progress along all lines. Nevertheless, Impressionism must be considered chiefly as the experiment of those who, though never achieving form and linear rhythm, yet cleared away much rubbish of convention, while standing on the shifting line between the old truth and the larger yet to be.

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In certain of its tendencies, Impressionism easily lends itself to mere exaggeration and so becomes a retrograde art. Now when employed by a master, and therefore judiciously, exaggeration heightens expression, but, in the hands of the incompetent, it is a clumsy tool which they are prone to use.

Ignoring the underlying and stable verities of nature, the Impressionist is enamored of the outward in its most fleeting appearance, that of atmosphere, for the landscape, however picturesque, is to him but a body to be clothed after the manner of his school. To center attention on color effects he distorts outlines. Because in a general survey the eye fails to grasp the minutiae of nature, and even its correct outlines, he indicates objects, especially if in motion, by mere splashes of color. If an extremist, he utterly disregards detail so that, aside from atmosphere, the result is something unseen in nature save through the eyes of one who yet prides himself on painting in the open, rather than from memory in the studio. As a school, though by no means as an influence, Impressionism is fast disappearing from the land of its birth.

So enamored were the Impressionists of their discoveries in respect to light and atmosphere, that, as already said, they overlooked, or sacrificed to these, both form and linear rhythm. Thus resulted an art palpably one-sided, but which some progressive genius

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would yet strive to make symmetrical. After many trials, this difficult task was accomplished by Renoir who from Impressionism had grown into a larger view. Linear rhythm he had acquired from Courbet and Delacroix, but only in later years did he wholly triumph over the rigid and angular. Form he ultimately achieved through an arbitrary dispersion of light which caused it to fall as points and spots on the prominent parts of his figures and other objects. Moreover, it was he who, though beginning with the use of black, so prominent in Courbet, afterwards well-nigh discarded it, and so liberated future painters from its traditional use in creating volumes and solidity which now can be produced with pure color. Renoir, the consummation of Impressionism, deserves much more than passing notice, for he had assimilated the teachings of many schools and in him even the art of the far East is represented.

An artist at first influenced by Courbet and Delacroix, but afterward delving deeper into the problem of color than did Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro, was Cézanne. Observing carefully the color gradations undergone by objects when curving away from the direct sunlight, he reproduced their descent from warm to cold, for instance, from yellow to blue, while at the same time he modified that descending scale by allowing for the effect of local color thereon. As

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result, the objects in his pictures preserve their relativity in whatsoever light they are viewed.

While Manet and his school had represented nature in its ephemeral appearances, and without solidity and depth, Cézanne's imitation of the behavior of natural light in chromatic descent on a curving surface, was virtually the creation of form plus the other two desirable qualities absent from Impressionistic art. Moreover, he conveyed the idea of solidity without sacrificing mobility. Daumier had conceived drawing and chiaroscuro simultaneously, but Cézanne was the first painter to make form, chiaroscuro, and color identical, even as united in Nature these appear to the eye.

Comparing Cézanne's best work with that of the masters of the old schools, one discovers that with them drawing was the chief end and color but an ornament, or else an intensifier of dramatic expression. Comparing Cézanne with Renoir, we find that whereas the latter completed and in a way separated each part of a picture, the other subordinated parts to the whole. Moreover, these parts are interrelated, and are treated by a method analagous to that applied to the subject and counter-subject of a fugue. Adverse critics contend that Cézanne's distortion of figures was due to poor eyesight, but his adherents claim this distortion to be deliberate and for the sake of increasing his volumes.



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As a landscape painter, Cézanne never attempted exactness; the subjective in nature was what he strove for. Though bringing the manipulation of light to its logical conclusion, this painter was essentially a delver, a discoverer, and experimenter, one bequeathing to art what would be invaluable to painters of a future day. Indeed, it is claimed that all would-be progressive painting is traceable to him, or else it is sourced in that return to the primitive toward which the Point-Aven school led the way. As for Cézanne, he failed to "realize," that is to say, he never gained absolute fluency in manipulating the vast materials which his deep investigations had revealed to him. And yet no painter has attained more poise in the three dimensions. Alter any portion, however small, and the whole of a Cézanne picture must be conformed to the change.

The Pointillists, or, more precisely, the Neo-Impressionists, whose representatives were Seurat and Signac, thought fit to emphasize the chief end of Impressionism without offering, as had Renoir and Cézanne, a remedy for its deficiencies in respect to form and depth. Since this emphasis was in effect but over-emphasis, we must regard the movement as unprogressive and even decadent, and its output as of only passing interest. The Impressionists saw nature as a series of plains vibrant with light. To imitate this light their surfaces, limited to spectrum colors, consisted of minute round spots

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each absorbing or reflecting color to a degree peculiar to itself. Of these spots, or points, the most luminous may be likened to a musical theme and the others to its variations. As for the Pointillists, they saw nature as a maze of colored spots.

Hence their spotty painting, every spot almost square and usually too large for good results. Each spot was opposed to the next according to a supposedly scientific formula of complementary colors which often actually neutralized each other and so produced a grey effect. Between the spots, whose like were unseparated in Impressionistic surfaces, were white bits of canvas to brighten the total effect. Except for decorative painting seen at a distance, the result was not happy and for reasons too technical for our general survey. Suffice it that the theories of color held by these painters were derived from inaccurate writers. Then again, the cult had peculiar notions in respect to the emotions caused by straight lines at different angles, and they even designated the color appropriate to each line.

Had Seurat, the head and most talented member of the cult, not died young, he might have modified into something valuable to progressive art the Pointillism which the talented but erratic Van Gogh so absurdly perverted in feverish desire for quick results. Unfortunately for the cult, the Dutchman's paintings are usually regarded as representative of their style.

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Pointillism soon reaching that extreme where reaction was inevitable, the Post-Impressionistic or Point-Aven school of illustration and decoration came into being with Gauguin — the painter of peaceful tropical scenes and simple savage life — as its founder and head. The spotty work of the Impressionists and their direct successors, from whose company Gauguin had separated, was now discarded for gorgeous, oriental and barbaric color in broad plains laid on with unmixed pigments and with a stroke learned in part from Van Gogh. Thus the problem of light was thrust aside that a sensuous revel in color might take its place.

Soon, by his immediate circle the primitive and the decorative in Gauguin's work was carried to the absurd limit of resembling the untutored attempts of aboriginal peoples for, like Bergson, the following held that evolution is not always a direct onward movement, that at times it should revert to the primitive and elemental there to gain energy for a more vigorous thrust forward. In opposition to the divisionist methods of the Neo-Impressionists, they, as "Synthesists," used absolute color in large, flat masses even as the Assyrian and Egyptian mural decorators, thus, from absence of line opposition, producing a too static effect. Inasmuch as the cult never pondered over their painting, but, like Van Gogh, worked during the first heat of enthusiasm,

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their merely inspirational efforts often degenerated to the crude outlines and false proportions, in fact the childish attempts, of the cave men. Of the cult, as a whole, it may be said that desire for self-expression, when little or no self exists, leads to results which excite pity, or contempt, or mirth, according to the temperament of the observer.

The barbarian, the Chinese, the Japanese, and what not, of the Gauguinians having rendered an indirect service to progressive art by effecting a break from Impressionism, and the too coldly scientific Neo-Impressionism, painters were now impelled to look in any direction for that inspiration which Matisse — as a colorist the continuation of Gauguin — believed he had found in Arabic and Moorish art. Influenced to some extent by the Spanish painter Goya, Matisse, by distinction the head of the Post-Impressionist movement, deliberately distorted form, including the human figure. This to express some peculiar idea, or for mere novelty — a reason derived from his study of Goya — or else to increase volume as did Daumier before him, or, as in a less pronounced way, Michelangelo had done in his time. Nevertheless, Matisse's figures are more subtle, and generally superior to the flat and wooden of Gauguin.

Matisse, who like Gauguin has been called the wild man, was an iconoclast willing to strip himself of every



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idea derived whether from education or observation. In the interest of what he deemed real art, he would burn all existing galleries of art. To his view, technique was an artificiality, a hindrance rather than a help. He believed that the conventions of civilization have reacted unfavorably on the painter, so that no longer he sees nature as it should be seen by man, and as it still is seen by the child who with open eyes gazes wonderingly around. Though wholly sophisticated, as evidenced by his philosophizing, he would gain the virgin mind, the lost estate of childhood and of the infant race. Now, in the nature of things, this cannot occur; if childishness be expressed by such a man, it will prove the childishness of senile decay that ever approaches imbecility.

Matisse had examined the rude wood carvings of the Africans and the sculptures of both the South Sea Islanders and the Central and South American Indians, and, in their naïve attempts at symmetry, he fancied an excuse for his own distortions of the human form, which Giotto drew so precisely. Eventually, the deficiencies of Matisse were accentuated by imitators devoid of his saving qualities, and so a quick decadence ensued. However, the real Matisse cannot be estimated aside from the influence which the delicate but flat paintings of the ancient Persians exercised upon his art. As a colorist, Matisse had experimented

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with Divisionist methods. Repudiating these, he tendered toward both exaggeration of color and bizarre effects. Still, his colors were as well-poised as those of any predecessor and their use indicated deep reflection, a quality absent from the daubs of the Point-Aven cult.

Painters from Manet to Matisse having supposedly explored every mystery of color, nothing new in this department seemed to remain. On the other hand, the over-emphasis and even distortion of form instigated by Daumier, and quite noticeable in Cézanne, and increasingly so in Gauguin and Matisse, discovered possibilities for an art tending from the purely objective to the purely subjective wherein form, as seen in the world, would no longer be presented.

In their attempts to enlarge volume, and at the same time to impart an idea of subjectivity, the Cubists, of whom Picasso is acknowledged leader, employ eccentric methods. A figure having been blocked out and drawn in, if the whole be cut into squares, parallelograms, and triangles, and then arranged in an arbitrary way allowing certain pieces to overlap and so partially obscure others, results very like Cubism are obtained.

By this arrangement, or rather disarrangement, and also by certain other means, yet to be explained, the Cubist greatly augments volume and also would convey to other minds what the outward symbolizes to his inner artistic consciousness. While the adherents of

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Gauguin found grace in the flow of the rhythmic line common to certain phases of primitive art; the Cubists find strength in angles to which, in way of contrast, they oppose a few curves.

Now mere disarranging of objects of course fails to suggest the subjective. Besides, the little of rhythm discoverable in Matisse having been done away with by the Cubists, their rigid geometrical figures and angles, their absence of color, their formal planes, their primitive bas-relief effects, and their inevitable lack of poise, suggest only the static and material.

To understand better the Cubist's aims, we should know his doctrine of "simultaneity," some idea of which had occurred to Delacroix. This doctrine may be epitomized thus: Having seen an object from different angles, if one form a mental picture of it, his mind refuses to restrict itself to a single view and exclude the others; in fact, to mental vision every view of an object usually appears simultaneously. Cubism would not reproduce such a composite picture, but would convey an idea derived from it. Now, since neither disarrangement of the model, nor "simultaneity" fully explains Cubist art, something of the doctrine of elimination—not new, but carried to an extreme—is necessary to a clear comprehension of the matter. When in a more and more marked way the Impressionists and their successors distorted the model, they

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at the same time began to deem accessories unessential and even redundant. Finally, the Cubists, who regarded form merely as volume, discovered that, by disorganizing the model, it could be made to fill the place of these accessories. Evidently the application of this questionable discovery results in synthesis through the completion of elimination. Another matter demanding notice is that the Cubist is free to ignore aërial and linear perspective in favor of mental perspective. When the latter is employed, the unimportant, though in the foreground, is made little, whereas, however small and wheresoever placed, the important is made large and imposing.

By using only white, brown, and grey, in their reaction from the colorists, the original Cubists deprived themselves of a powerful, emotional element; hence their work should be judged from a merely intellectual viewpoint from which, however, it is evidently one-sided. ~~Awake to the importance of color, the latest following, known as the Orphists, no longer restrict themselves to grey and white.~~ Brilliant tints are now introduced into their paintings.

Before passing to a consideration of Futurism, Vorticism, and Synchromism, we will touch upon what is known as the Pre-Raphaelite movement: Despite its name, probably suggested by the German movement, of which Cornelius and Overbeck were the leaders,



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Pre-Raphaelitism was not mediæval. It did not disapprove of Raphael's work in the main, but it did make issue with the absence of thoroughness — elaboration of detail — common to his predecessors and the decadence of his imitators of whom it should be said that, when forsaking nature, the artist takes it second hand, though from a master, inevitably he acquires much of mere mannerism with but little of balancing excellence.

Mere mannerism was the chief fault which the Pre-Raphaelites would correct. Evidently, the movement was not in line with French Impressionism which minimized detail and magnified atmosphere. But, like Impressionism, it was a protest, in its case against the conventionality and pettiness and lack of spirituality into which contemporary English painting had sunk.

Though Holman Hunt, John Millais, and Dante Rossetti, originated the movement, Hunt afterwards claimed that he alone remained true to its first intent. Hunt was really a painter of easel pictures, and an artist with whom multiplicity of detail was a hobby. Whether in the background, or in the foreground, his detail, always finished and often minute, was ever apparent. Because too distinct, his distances seem falsely near, while his horizons appear as if viewed through a field glass. Hunt's detail proves his failure to learn the lesson, which was to force itself on the French moderns,

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that the conveying of information is not the highest purpose of painting.

Hunt had imbibed his naturalism from Ruskin ; from him that notion of exactness, of so-called truth to nature, which in practice becomes untruth. Because without blurring, or that melting of objects one into another which the normal eye finds in distances, Hunt's canvases seem hard and unreal. Because destitute of a definite color system, and because of the independence of elaborated parts, he usually lacks synthesis. Requiring no insight, since conveying no subjective impression, he is comprehensible at a glance and so contains those essentials of popularity which make for early but not lasting reputation.

Through Hunt's influence, Millais was brought to adopt ideas and methods akin to his own, therefore, in the landscapes of the latter, during that period of influence, every object was clear-cut as if the eye were focussed on it alone. Of course this "truthfulness" won the allegiance of Ruskin. To Millais' only normal vision, a method proper to Hunt's unusual eyesight would ere long become questionable, so, later, we find Millais turning to a broader treatment wherein suggestion to some extent took the place of the literalism of the other. This, despite the fact that, in thus changing his style, he incurred the denunciation of his former eulogizer.

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This breaking from Hunt did not quite spell advance, for it is admitted that, to no little extent, Millais then began to popularize his work. That he lacked genuine heart impulse is evidenced by the fact that his themes never welled from a source central within him. Rather, he resembled the ordinary workman who looks around wondering what next he should do. In such an artist, we expect neither heights of dramatic intensity, nor depths of moving tragedy.

As for the third member of this distinguished group, Rossetti was a poet of mystical tendencies, a word-painter of rare refinement, a colorist in whose poems a hundred shades of language glowed and gloomed in artistic arrangement. So, even as his eminent and devoted disciple Burne-Jones, he was instinctively opposed to the literalism of his two colleagues and could not but idealize in his painting. Enamored of historical subjects, he treated them not in accordance with fact, but as he would have them; in other words, he threw over them a poetical glamor the result of which was a surface prettiness leaving the under-currents of life unsounded. In respect to this phase of artistic expression, the author of *Rose Mary* was a better poet than painter.

In his first exhibition picture *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, painted soon after the foundation of the brotherhood, Rossetti had indicated the differences which more



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and more would separate him from Hunt and Millais. Technically, Rossetti was inferior to these artists, but he possessed in greater degree that sense of rhythm which usually is denied to painters of English parentage. Rossetti always strove for color which he called the physiognomy and the body of a picture, that by which immediately it is known and loved. Delacroix had made color a chief means to dramatic ends, but Rossetti's use of it resulted rather in the sensuous. To some extent, this caused the accusation that he belonged to the fleshly school of painting and also to that of poetry, in fact the school with which the early Swinburne was identified. This accusation, easily drawn from the staid and somewhat narrow British public, would have been quite incomprehensible in the land of De Maupassant and Zola and Manet.

Of the Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti and Burne-Jones especially, it is curious that, while asserting the need of a return to nature, they have chosen few subjects from contemporary life. While in many ways akin to Rossetti, though as a colorist inferior to him, Burne-Jones proved himself worthy of place beside the three leaders of the movement. So enamored of beauty for itself was he that not to have lived in the middle ages was his one regret. To dream beneath the domes and in the shadows of their mighty erections, not as one looking back from a material present, but as contem-

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porary with men whose ideals had flowered forth in the grand, the stately, the majestic, the memorable, of cathedrals and castles, yes, to dream thus seemed a boon fit for one who, making subject to be the first essential of his painting, turned to the Arthurian legends and the Biblical narratives and the myths of classical antiquity.

The art of Burne-Jones much lacked masculine qualities. It held the mirror to nature only when beauty was to be reflected, when, for instance, the human face was smoothed of every emotion which could distort its features. It was a pretty art that of Burne-Jones, femininely pretty, but an art in which the eye and the senses find reaction from the extremes to which Modernism has arrived.

Though taking root in England, Futurism is not indigenous thereto. It is an exotic from Italy whose soil afforded no nourishing ingredients. The wizard Marinetti produced that anomalous plant and nourished it to flowers of strangeness, rather than beauty.

The viewpoint of art peculiar to the Futurist is one which, for the ordinary mortal, is difficult of reach. In expressing what is seen from that viewpoint, a Futurist painting takes shape and color and proportion unlike anything in this world. As the Futurist should best understand his aims and ends, let the words of an extremist of the cult elucidate them: "By means of

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contrasted color, form, lines, planes, and dimensions, that in no way represent natural forms, it is possible to create emotions infinitely more stimulating than any created by duplicating nature."

As his name would indicate, the Futurist scorns every harking back to the murals of dead and musty Egypt. Rejecting the primitive archaism which appealed to the Post-Impressionist, he looks, for instance, to London and Chicago streets and to New York skyscrapers and to factory chimneys and to Coney Island and what ever is indicative of the rush and whirr of metropolitan life.

Marinetti is an Idealist gone astray; one in absolute revolt from the Classicism of his native Italy. By distorting or obscuring reality, he would suggest an interior, a subjective form, one requiring intelligent search, whereas, groping blindly, he seizes the merely fantastic and presses it into his service.

Holding that, while seemingly quiescent, life has a certain movement, even if only vibratory, and observing that in every activity of the body the eye gives motion to what it contacts, the Futurist painter would suggest these movements and thus make the beholder a part of the picture by means of a multiplicity of force-lines each, whether curving or straight, always concordant or nearly so. In respect to curves, we should add that the Futurist much prefers the straight line

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and the terminal. Since its force-lines convey no idea of depth, Futurist art should be classed with the two-dimensional work of the decorative schools. In passing let us say that the Futurists have discarded the human model and have criticised the Cubists for its use, even when obscured after the manner of their cult. In respect to line and its significance, the Futurists have evolved a theory even more absurd than that of the Neo-Impressionists. For instance, they hold that horizontal lines, cutting into half-revealed faces, and then into portions of irregular landscape, suggest one's starting on a journey. The central idea of Futurism being motion, there is overmuch peculiar evidence of journeying in Futurist paintings. Thus, the racing of a horse, or the rushing of a railroad train, is indicated by a multiplicity of outlines each indicating some position which the one or the other of these would for an instant occupy.

In another instance, Futurist motion is indicated by the figure of a man in the street, then on the sidewalk, and then entering his home. Inasmuch as the Cubists achieved only the static, their latest idea of motion by Futurist methods has resulted in such pictures as Duchamp's celebrated *Nude Descending the Stairs*. Now, since real motion results from rhythmic organization, one suggesting continuous flow-like that of a waterfall, and since neither the Cubist nor the Futurist attain to



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such a result, the futility of uniting their methods to indicate motion is apparent.

A series of similar lines or outlines indicates only the successive points at which a moving object pauses momentarily. In other words, such outlines are in effect static and indicative merely of successive changes of position. This is true of *Nude Descending the Stairs*, and also of the pictured man in the street and then on the sidewalk and then entering his home. The latter picture really creates the impression of three independent views.

In an art which ever approaches subjective form, or, rather, man's idea of that form which, because proper to the Creative Word itself, is perhaps beyond his cognition, Synchronism — a child of American parentage — has taken the latest step. The Synchronists have striven to make composition as intense as did Rubens, while as colorists they have eschewed all but the spectrum seven. Like Cézanne, whose color scheme they claim to have made abstract by rejecting his local color which suggests natural objects, they have achieved three-dimensional, organized and rhythmic form by means of color. In fact, they claim to have reached the goal of their art in the perfect poise of every necessary of painting as expressed through their scientific arrangement of warm and cold colors.

Now while Cézanne's form was largely objective,

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theirs would eliminate the idea of objectivity. Such an abstract method allows immense latitude to the artist. Let any number of Synchronists paint the idea conveyed by a landscape, or a human figure, and no two results will resemble each other. As demonstrated by Synchronism, abstract form is not a haphazard assembly of parts, but an organization constructed much after the manner of a fugue.

In their attempted suggestion of the purely subjective by means of color organization, the Synchronists knowingly or unknowingly have entered the domain of metaphysics, or, more properly, that of Occultism which holds that the hues of external nature are but pale reflections of those proper to the super-sensible world wherein, if one pierce deep enough, color becomes not only intense and all-pervasive, but an evident creative potency. Indeed, an Occultist might argue that, as an inner urge, color has been operative on the theorizing painters since the advent of Delacroix.

The English Vorticists stand for the ultra-modern, not only in painting, but in sculpture, poetry, and music. In respect to painting, they, as colorists, have reacted against the cold greys of Cubism, while carrying organized form to a subjectivity comparable with that of the Synchronists. With only spectrum colors, the Vorticists would create a simply-organized color arrangement capable of generating a subjective impres-

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sion, itself generating impressions even as a ball of snow gathers bulk when in motion. Again, that original impression may be compared to a vortex which gathers to itself the surrounding waters. As painters, the cult have yet to create simple impressions virile enough to fulfill the duty which Vorticism requires of them.

### II

In outlining the ideals and tendencies of modern painting, we have refrained from the technical language of the art critic and his nice discriminations, as well as his wordy description of methods and details. Our chief object has been to gain, from the essentials of the schools and cults mentioned, a place of vantage, and from it to discover perhaps the general trend of painting toward some goal to which poetry and music seem also directed.

As result of this outlining, we find in the art of painting an impulse analogous to that which separated philosophy into two great streams sourced the one in Plato, and the other in Aristotle. Idealism and Realism have maintained their respective claims since the days of the Grecian Academy, and, down the centuries, each has asserted its sole right to be.

The revolt of painting from the modern Pseudo-Classicism of David, and its division into two streams,



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was in part due to the spirit of freedom animating the works of the novelists, dramatists, and poets of the new age. The art of Delacroix is the first moving of the stream which tended towards pure subjectivity, whereas, the realism of Courbet has corresponding place in that stream which flows through the actual of the visible world. As viewed by the Idealist, the esthetic arts are branches of a parent trunk, so, to him, their modern tendency is an increasing evidence of their essential unity. As shown in the motif and fugue effects of the Synchronist, the painter is more and more striving for what was once deemed the sole prerogative of poetry and music. Simultaneously, the poet and the musician would enter the supposedly exclusive territory of one or both of the others.

Of unadulterated Realism in painting, it is evident that, while piercing no deeper than the externals of truth, it does mean the honest use of one's eyesight instead of those lenses which distort the image proper to normal vision. The Realism of Courbet was the inception of an art which, if not turned into the channels of mere novelty, would, because of its sincerity, reach in straightforward course the goal of every art. On the other hand, since the advent of Delacroix, the Idealists have increasingly falsified the contour of the human figure, not in an attempt to make it more symmetrical, but because of secondary reasons, for

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instance, like Daumier to increase volume, and like Matisse for mere novelty, and like Picasso because of his perversion of Cézanne's dictum: "Treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere and the cone; the whole placed in perspective so that each side of an object and of a plane directs itself toward a central point."

The sophisticated excuse for the peculiar procedure of the ultra-class of painters was that they subordinated one truth to another and higher. So this subordinating went on until the outcome was something unlike any object or creature either in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; while the final truth to which objectivity had been wholly sacrificed was only rhythmically-balanced, abstract form in three dimensions achieved by a certain placement of primary colors. Nevertheless, the "progressives" of to-day see in this outcome but the beginnings of a pure art, one long prepared for, and now for the first time fit to achieve the really desirable.

Communing with Nature, the poet finds her wholly adequate to arouse the emotions which impel him to creative work. Still, because an Idealist, he sees the face of the great common mother not as the ordinary man satisfied with externals, but as one of penetrating vision. So, beneath a visage at times rough and seamed and even forbidding, he sees her eternal youth

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and fadeless beauty. Never ignoring external appearance, he somehow softens it by an admixture of internal reality, and the result is not hideous caricature, nor repulsive malformation, but, rather, a veiled revelation of that super-sensible world of the immortals to which Hope and Faith with angel fingers have ever pointed the human race. Now if an Idealist, how can the painter repudiate the poet's conception of Nature unless, as we are forced to believe, into every department of modern esthetic art there have entered Idealists of two kinds, the genuine and the spurious?

If of the latter class, the painter will ignore the truth contained in the words of Whitman: "the human shape and face is so great that it must never be made ridiculous," and he will reason thus: Since, for esthetic ends, Michelangelo greatly emphasized certain parts of the human anatomy, why should not the progressive artist of a later day accomplish its distortion, or even its arbitrary re-arrangement, especially since certain of his eminent predecessors have in a lesser way set the example? So, having adopted capricious methods in respect to the human form, it follows logically that he should treat the background and the foreground of his picture, as well as that of his pure landscape, with equal freedom.

Because that Pseudo-Idealism which — as we shall see — is invading poetry and music, has, in painting,

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culminated in Cubism and Synchronism, one is led to believe that honest, straightforward Realism would have reached no such empty goal. We hold that a sound philosophy of esthetics should guide the artist, especially if he attempt the subjective. When gained, if ever, that goal of subjective art the interior model or Archetype, will no doubt explain the outer and vice versa. In other words, some resemblance between the two will have been achieved. Because of this view, we boldly make issue with those who declare that the highest art has nothing to do with the objective world; and that form, however abstract, if only it be rhythmically organized by means of color, has fulfilled every essential of painting.

In estimating the worth of any school among those here designated as pseudo-idealistic, for instance, the school of Impressionism; the crucial question is: What new approach, if any, has it made towards final Truth? Now, Impressionism has rendered obvious what before was largely ignored, or even unnoticed, namely, the effect of reflected color, however transient, upon the face of the landscape. To bring into deserved prominence this external truth was an advance, since, to probe Truth to the center, one must first develop capacity to understand its surface. While Impressionism was only a two-dimensional decorative art, its discovery in respect to atmosphere and local color has



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in a way been accepted by many painters who abjure the name Impressionist.

A defect of the Pre-Raphaelites, and especially of Hunt, was that over-attention to detail which produced a too general effect, thus leaving the painting devoid of marked focal points. On the other hand, Manet was a painter who in a noticeable way first began to slur over details by blending them into clusters of light and shadow. With more or less of modification, his procedure is now followed by many painters without regard to school. By copying the behavior of natural light on a curving surface, Cézanne achieved form having length and breadth and thickness. So he rendered obsolete the spots of the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists. Despite of the defects of Pseudo-Idealism, this much of truth, together with the local color of Impressionism, has been derived from its methods.

When certain painters, eager to be thought original, had considered that, after Michelangelo, little or nothing was left to the portrayer of the human form as God had fashioned it, they straightway conceived the idea of improving on His handiwork. Now, of the great public, the laity if you please—not all fools, nor yet like Carlyle's British public mostly fools—it is safe to affirm that never will they accept distorted or else arbitrarily arranged form done in arbitrary colors;

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never will they concede that art should so contradict what with eyes of satisfaction they have daily looked upon. No, never! even though every foremost representative of Pseudo-Idealism should dilate upon the wonderful qualities of complex organization and subtle rhythm and color arrangement and what not achieved by modern methods.

It is of interest to the psychologist, and even to the pathologist, when the works of Matisse — who admitted that he painted emotionally and without the aid of his intelligence — and when with these the bizarre canvases of the crazy Dutchman, Van Gogh, are deemed milestones in a progression from the Pseudo-Classicism of David to the latest nondescripts of Synchronism.

For the artist who would adhere to normal methods, and with them essay originality, it is perhaps unfortunate that he came into the world after so many eminent predecessors; but genius often has achieved the seemingly impossible and will do so again. As for the Pseudo-Idealist, it is but just to say that in attempting abstract form he regards the truth announced by Pythagoras that the universe, or Macrocosm, was constructed geometrically, and likewise man the microcosm. Hence the Synchronist obeys geometry and the law of rhythm as exemplified by the human body in action. In fact, the majority of ultra-modern painters have deemed it unwise to abandon the fundamentals

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of rhythmic organization as laid down by the early schools. So, having placed one foot on the earth, with the other they would touch the heavens, or, what is more likely, they care nothing for the heavens toward which, as a rule, they are as agnostic as were De Maupassant and Zola. What then are they if not mere displayers of perverted ingenuity by deviating to the farthest from objective form, while never quite losing touch with it?

And so it has come to this, that we who, though not painters, may yet have ideas of beauty and truth, are asked to believe that the makers of geometrical puzzles — gaudy with the colors in which the savage loves to deck his person — are the torch bearers of Art into the future to be the original lights thereof, while, far in the rear, a few flickering tapers almost burned out and extinguished are the pale reminders of men once the glory of awakened Italy, and of Spain and Flanders and Holland and England. But why say more? Why enlarge on conditions outside our purview, since strictly they come within the province of mental pathology?

The placing of manner above matter is a shallow doing common to the ambitious who yet are devoid of originality, that which makes its possessor somewhat indifferent to novel forms of expression. Originality often bursts through convention into a larger, freer form, but, like the musician Wagner, it first accom-



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plishes and then theorizes, hoping that the head will verify the impulse of the heart.

It is lamentable that of late years the arts have been invaded by those who, imagine that, unless one is achieving the novel, his work is stagnant, or, more likely, decadent. In our brief survey of modern tendencies in painting, we have discovered the attitude of certain make-believe artists and the by-paths and quagmires in which they have lost themselves. Now, as we turn to modern poetry, and then to modern music, we should be prepared for like results.

In passing let us say that, after Michelangelo, the art of sculpture had no eminent exponents until, in the eighteenth century, France and Denmark and Italy produced Houdon and Thorwaldsen and Canova, all artists of the classically beautiful after the Greek manner of Phidias. Then came the nineteenth century reaction toward Realism, led by such artists as Rodin and that other Frenchman, Paul Dubois. Since the most modern tendencies in sculpture exhibit the peculiarities of Futurist and Cubist and Vorticist painting, let us, without more than mentioning the fact, proceed to the next division of our subject.

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THAT the art of poetry has entered upon a period of experiment and even of transition, perhaps a notable period, is at least plausible. The pioneer of this transition was, of course, Whitman the ridiculed the tolerated, and finally the over-praised poet of American democracy and universal fellowship and goodwill. Whitman imagined himself a Realist, and, obsessed by that belief, he carried Realism to its extreme. Uncovering much that best were hidden, even as Nature hides her dead and decaying things, he laid himself open to misunderstanding and much harsh as well as ignorant criticism. Only his all-permeating Idealism, if any thing, will preserve Whitman and his poems from the dust-heap of forgotten men and their works. This, our candid opinion, is not that of one always opposed to the method of the "good grey poet," but is, in fact, that of one long since recovered from serious Whitmania.

Without precedent in America, and uninfluenced by any European poet, unless possibly William Blake, who himself had come under the spell of the amorphous *Poems of Ossian*, Whitman burst upon the public in a manner startling to the vast majority of his readers, but

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welcome to the few, some of whom were but unreasoning admirers of novelty as such, even as were many who had praised the spurious MacPherson productions. As a realist, Whitman turned from well-nigh every established canon of the poet's art. At the same time, as Idealist, he sought a vehicle of literary expression larger, more underlying, and less trammelled than any before discovered. That absolute revolt from the Greco-Latin manner of David and the Romanticism of the Italo-French school of Barbizon which, as we have seen, began with Corot and eventuated in Futurist and Synchronist painting, was a series of departures, whereas the breaking away, that resulted in the Whitmanic chants, was sudden as it was radical.

Always the sincerity of the innovator is open to question, and, concerning Whitman, it must be confessed that, prior to his radicalism, his output was commonplace enough. Given Swinburne's unparalleled felicity in the manipulation of rhythms, and the architectonic ability of Milton and the other epic bards, Whitman might have remained somewhat in line with the usual. We qualify the statement because, after throwing overboard much that his predecessors had deemed of value and even indispensable, Whitman made room for certain excellencies unique in poetry. Here again he resembled certain modern exponents of painting.

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In fairness it should be said that, after just criticism, there remains untouched in certain of the Whitmanic lines a force as of the very elements, and even more that his most successful imitators have never approached; but this excellence fails to make him the "Kosmos" he once declared himself to be, nor does it arouse "Cosmic emotion" outside his direct following. While often Whitman heaps before us a huge bulk of mere materials, unsystematized ideas, the loose lumber, so to speak, of what should at least be the framework of a poetical structure, again, at his best, there is in him a virility and a largeness which, while the spell is on us, make weak and dwarfish the work of all but the chief masters of verse. No doubt the spell of these great qualities — that from which Emerson had freed himself when he wrote his famous recantation — was operative on such men as Symonds and Burroughs, and, much inhibiting their critical faculties, permitted them to accept Whitman *in toto*.

Whitman is a mountain with vast depressions and steep though short ascents; a mass of inequalities which alternately draw and repel. Only through the softening vista of years can his true outline be descried. To decide whether or not Whitman's art was progressive or eccentric, we should determine the extent to which his chosen form of expression vitalized or vitiated his message. As for that message, the worth



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thereof will be tested by its suggestiveness to the thinking mind, and by its ability to influence and even mould the lives of his public to the standards he so ardently announced.

Doubtless, that message was a trenchant criticism of American civilization ; but, since our purpose is to determine Whitman's influence on modern poetry, we must refrain from an examination of the philosophy, showing marked traits of Eastern systems, and the religion, somewhat pantheistic, and the singleness of aim and never-failing optimism through sickness and poverty, of one that ironical Fate had decreed should be the poet of the cultured in their mood of reaction, rather than of the unlettered with whom he loved to mingle.

To say that Whitman often unwittingly dropped sheerly from the lofty to the commonplace, would seem an insult to his intelligence. Still, the fact of that quick descent is patent on many a page of *Leaves of Grass*. Therefore we are forced to the verdict that Whitman lacked correct estimate of literary values in that he deemed the commonplace to be worthy of insertion amidst the most vital fiber of his poems. Because of this lack of discrimination, we do not, like Burroughs, rank him with the prophets and seers. Then again, as a rule, verbosity much weakens his sentences. Rarely does he attain condensed expres-

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sion. Nevertheless, at times his pictures are models of graphic word-painting.

In announcing himself as pioneer and trail-blazer toward the peaks of poetical supremacy, and also as pattern for the American poet to come, Whitman little realized that the presence of mere platitude in the body of his verse, all of which had been pronounced excellent by such eminent men as Symonds and Burroughs, would encourage a crop of weaklings now inflicting their *vers libre* on the public. The decadence of certain of these is that of the mere copier to whose early demise their own will compare.

No doubt, a number of such imitators have equalled the platitudes referred to, but, thus far, few indeed seem capable of rise from the bald and sterile. While not deeming them wise, we do not in this condemnation include certain of Whitman's contemporaries whose admiration of certain passages in *Leaves of Grass* had induced them to adopt somewhat of the methods of one who, in his own manner, is at times unapproachable. As for *vers libre*, it is claimed that its inner rhythm being more pronounced than the somewhat lax rhythm of what is called poetical prose, such verse demands for itself that line division which, when understood, is felt to be not arbitrary, but natural. As for definite form, it is admitted that, this achieved, *vers libre* would belie its name. Then again, it is held that,

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since modern expression tends toward individualism, the poet is a law unto himself in many matters including poetical form.

While the point is debatable, we grant that Whitman's seeming formlessness was due neither to indolence, nor indifference to established form. Still, we do maintain that, searching for a vehicle of expression ample enough for the future world poet, Whitman at his highest attained to but the vast and shadowy outline of a form perhaps beyond the seizing of any genius yet born. When the spell of that nebulous shape is on the imaginative reader, he becomes a collaborator adding many a touch to the picture. To put it differently: in the Whitmanic poems are many vital seeds which germinate and flower in the receptive and fertile mind. Perhaps to this excellence is due that over-valuation which some of eminent name have placed on Whitman as a whole.

Among the manufacturers of *vers libre* are the American Imagists or Vorticists, who, discarding meter, claim to base their verse on cadence. While not strictly imitators of Whitman, especially in his introspective moments and in his cosmic grasp, they yet have taken their cue from him when an image-maker, and especially when he finds worth in little things usually deemed insignificant and otherwise poor; therefore, the supposed beauties in a dust heap

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are enough to fire the Muse of the Imagist to estatic utterance.

That the modern French tendency in art, which often expressed itself most strangely in painting, should at the same time find another outlet in poetry, was, in the nature of things, inevitable. Hence the arrival of such Imagists as Verhaeren, the most prominent of the group, and others of less calibre. All of these were to some extent influenced by Whitman in whom, from the first, both the French and the English saw America's greatest poet.

The name *vers libre*, which originated in France, and has come to mean any free verse, was first applied only to the work of the French Imagists, for example, to that of De Gourmont whose opinion of Imagism he defined thus: "If we hold to its narrow and etymological sense Imagism signifies almost nothing; but outside that it means independence in literature, liberty in art, and avoidance of existing forms. Also it means a tendency toward what is new, strange, and even bizarre." Again he says: "One's only excuse for creative work is originality; he should say things not yet said, and in a form never before formulated."

Exactly! but supposing one itching for notoriety has nothing worthily original to communicate, then to him Imagism must be a godsend, because, for sane reasons, the strange and the bizarre were until lately but little

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occupied fields wherein one could exhibit a forced or even a spurious originality with some hope of audience. Evidently, the American Imagist can claim two lines of ancestry, that stemming from Verhaeren, and that from Whitman. It were unjust to the French Imagists to attempt in English their strange and bizarre "poems," nor is this necessary, since the American following can furnish every example indispensable to our initiation into the methods of true art.

The Imagist cult holds that the chief office of the poet is to suggest through an image which, for his word-painting, takes the place of pigment. This image should be the most intense and concentrated expression of the thing, by means of the art best adapted to that expression. Thus the image becomes a magnetic center to which, or a vortex into which, ideas are drawn. Also, it is a prolific womb from which those ideas emerge in amplified form. Thus, the Imagist or Vorticist poet virtually enters literary partnership with the sympathetic reader who, in turn, usually supplies mentally the filling in of what is but outlined or hinted in the picture. That this is so the following from Miss Amy Lowell well illustrates :

### OMBRE CHINOISE

" Red foxgloves against a yellow wall studded with plum-colored shadows ;

A lady with a blue and red sunshade ; to 65



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The slow lap of waves upon a parapet.  
That is all."

Facility of expression, that requisite of the best prose, has always been demanded of the poet. His "flowering forth in many a golden phrase" is true not of Virgil alone. Such excellence is proper to every great modern poet from Shakespeare to Tennyson and Browning. To allow this flowering forth to occur chiefly in the mind of the reader, is for the poet to shirk a difficult though obvious duty which only he by nature and cultivation is fit to perform. His public cannot, in reason, be required to measure up to his peculiar endowment.

Now, the Imagist cares no more for this flowering forth than for the time-honored poetical forms which, with a sneer, he leaves to the dilettante, because Whitman has molded his opinion and expressed it thus :

"What is this you would bring my America?  
Is it a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness?  
Has it not dangled long at the heels of poets?"

Certainly Whitman understood the value of antithesis, and, having a large idea to express in his chosen manner, he magnified that manner by minimizing rhyme and meter of which, nevertheless, he has given us several worthy examples. Although the Imagist is



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agreed with Whitman in scorning rhyme and prettiness, there are divergencies in the methods of the two, as we shall see.

Whitman's interest was centered in man, the modern man, of which in his chants he made himself the type, for, has he not said

"I celebrate myself and sing myself  
And what I assume you shall assume."

And again?

"I will not make a poem, nor the least part of a poem, but has reference to the soul.

Because, having looked at the objects of the universe, I find there is no one, nor any particle of one, but has reference to the soul."

Everywhere and always we discover Whitman seeking to identify himself with his environment, and even the world itself, as if, beneath the objective, he divined some basic unity of all life. It is this idealistic attitude which makes Whitman one of the most subjective of poets, and also distinguishes him from the Imagist who views man and the world objectively, and in fact materially and superficially, and so avoids what he deems over-emphasis of any component, whether it be person or thing. This the Imagist does that he may image individualism and maintain balance of parts.

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The Imagist has formulated a creed, perhaps chiefly that the old Adam of perversity in him may have opportunity to disobey. One article of the creed requires direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective. Also, in disagreement with the verbose method of Whitman, it requires the avoidance of any word not contributing to the presentation. Evidently, the poet must eschew decorative language and literary transposition and confine himself to straight, colloquial speech, in fact, to what a poet of the cult has indicated thus :

" Little cramped words straggling all over the paper  
Like draggled flies' legs."

Within the circle of a narrow vocabulary, employed with the directness of common speech, effectiveness requires a workman both skilled and virile ; hence the Imagist often breaks for liberty, and celebrates his release in extraordinary and amusing linguistic exhibitions thus :

" Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing  
Amid the vermillion panoplies, against the jade balustrades."

Another article of the creed insists that the Imagist renounce the dilapidated and outgrown meters and rhythms which, for lack of larger and more adequate

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ones, have restrained the elder bards, and that, as precursor of a better era, he produced new ones. With the first of these requirements the Imagist cheerfully complies, perhaps because it is the easiest way. As for the second, it is plain that, either through incompetence or frowardness, he or she fails miserably as evidenced in our first quotation, one from a poet much above the average of the cult.

Here is another gem from the same source :

“ My thoughts  
Chink against my ribs  
And roll about like silver hail-stones.”

Whenever refraining from his “ lacquered mandarin moments,” Mr. John Gould Fletcher descends to ordinary language and gives us some such note-book jottings as this snap-shot view of London from a ’bus top :

“ Black shapes bending,  
Taxicabs crush in the crowd,  
The tops are each a shining square.” . . .

Another Imagist, one no less gifted, jots down and measures off this impression of London by night :

“ Into the sky  
The red earthenware and the galvanized iron chimneys  
Thrust their cowl.  
The hoot of the steamers on the Thames is plain.”

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The latest development of *vers libre* in America is the "polyphonic prose" of Miss Amy Lowell who derived the idea from the French of Paul Fort. Polyphonic prose allows cadenced verse, and lines in meter, and even those with rhymed endings and also "oratorical prose." Each can be used alternately, or in any way satisfying the artistic sense of the author. 67

Besides such Vorticists and Imagists as Ezra Pound, John Gould Fletcher, and Miss Amy Lowell, there are other manufacturers of *vers libre*, for instance, the Italian Symbolist and Futurist Marinetti whom we have introduced in our dealing with Futurist painting. He it is whose poetical methods represent the ultimate of radicalism, unless the palm be awarded to the ideographic poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire.

For the edification and enlightenment of the reader, let us condense a few utterances taken from the manifestos of Marinetti. To begin with, all ancient monuments and every work of art over twenty years old should be destroyed, and living artists — and poets for that matter — should be restricted to not more than twenty years of productivity. Only by these drastic measures can the world escape the obsession of Antiquity and Classicism. The Symbolist poet abhors details, analogies, explanations, but he admires abbreviation, summary, synthesis.

Disregarding syntax and eliminating adjectives, and

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even punctuation, the Symbolist should hurl at the reader a confused medley of sensations and impressions in words necessary only to render all the shocks and vibrations of his ego. If able, he should create an immense web of analogies, and — whatever this means — he should reproduce telegraphically the analogical basis of life. Always he will be as laconic as possible, that so he may be in tempo with an age of speed. In these days of wireless telegraphy, his images and analogies should be expressed in disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax.

The Symbolist should omit qualifying adjectives, since they hinder the reader's intuition. He should prefer the infinitive of the verb, for it indicates endless motion as of a wheel, whereas, ordinary verbs are squares and triangles, or, at best, ovals. To bind his sentences he should use brief mathematical and musical signs and, with the latter, he will indicate the tempo of any part of his poem. He should make and unmake words by cutting down or lengthening them, and so shall he have a new orthography, in fact free expression. Finally, to avoid a typographical sameness of the printed page, he should use ink in several colors and type of perhaps twenty sizes and kinds.

From this heaped up nonsense, it is almost a relief to turn to such writers as James Oppenheim and Edgar Lee Masters and certain others, for these have



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refrained from the limit of lawlessness. Masters having come into prominence through his *Spoon River Anthology*, let us without choosing produce extracts from a few sample "poems" of the two hundred and fourteen between the covers of that book :

CHASE HENRY

"In life I was the town drunkard;  
When I died the priest denied me burial in holy ground.  
The which redounded to my good fortune,  
For the Protestants bought this lot,  
And buried my body here,  
Close to the grave of the banker Nicholas,  
And of his wife Priscilla."

Now from an Imagist poem that well fulfils the requirements :

MRS. SIBLEY

"The secret of the stars, — gravitation.  
The secret of the earth, — layers of rock.  
The secret of the soil, — to receive seed.  
The secret of the seed, — the germ.  
The secret of man, — the sower.  
The secret of woman, — the soil."

Now let the poet, Masters, of course, indicate his dislike of the usual in poetry :

PETIT THE POET

2 *Info*  
"Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel. . . .

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Triolets, villanelles, rondelles, rondeaus,  
Ballades by the score with the same old thought. . . .  
Triolets, villanelles, rondelles, rondeaus,  
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
Tick, tick, tick, what little Iambics,  
While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines!"

The brutal straightforwardness of *Chase Henry*, and many similar productions in the *Anthology*, is an extreme protest against the insipid and petty of much current minor poetry which yet shows mastery of mere technique. As a movement, *vers libre* is comparable to the reaction of French Realism against the older schools of painting, and, like that Realism, *vers libre* will pass on and out whenever its mission of protest is accomplished.

We mistrust that in *Mrs. Sibley* our author imagined himself profound, but then, in respect to his most inconsequential sayings, even Whitman evidently fell into like error. In *Petit the Poet*, Masters hints at, or else takes for granted, a similarity between Whitman and Homer. Now, the hexameter of the old Greek poet was the culmination of, rather than the breaking from, an evolution of rhythm and meter requiring for its perfection perhaps more centuries than are reckoned from Chaucer to Tennyson, whereas, one may look in vain for the exact prototype of the Whitmanic lines, those which Swinburne labelled "sham Pindarics."

Of that ultra phase of poetry *vers libre*, or, as some

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prefer, "unrhymed cadence" or, what is more impressive, "polyrhythmical poetry," its disciples and advocates claim that, prior to contemporary times, it existed as Imagist verse in the rhythmical prose of many a writer never regarded as a poet. As we have endeavored to make plain, *vers libre* opposes a determined front against rhyme, and even against rhythm as understood prior to the appearance of *Leaves of Grass*.

Purporting to incorporate the great natural rhythm of ocean continually advancing, retreating, and the forest music of winds subdued to zephyrs, or lifted to tempests, and even the dithyrambic heart-eloquence of Adamic man who talked with angels, and held converse with God his maker, *vers libre* voices, instead, the croak of the raven, the caw of the crow, and the cry of the screech owl. Moreover, in lieu of the primeval eloquence of one fashioned in the Divine Likeness, is heard the "barbaric yawp" of the savage, and the mutterings and stutterings as of some unfortunate deficient in mind and puny in body.

Should it be asked why from certain quarters the present clamor against rhyme and meter, the reply is that rhyme always hampers free expression, and that rhythm, as heretofore understood, has been an equal hindrance, that together they shape to their own secondary ends the thought, the idea, in passage from the brain to paper.

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Against this contention we in turn contend. The technique of his chosen instrument is no hindrance to the skilled performer, nor does the florid or the chromatic bar the trained singer from his triumph. Technique is, in fact, the obedient servant and the powerful ally of either artist. Without technique, he would find his level in the ranks of the mediocre. The poet who neglects preparation, who shirks the technique of his art, is unworthy of name and fame. He must be content with such crumbs thereof as the flattery of friends and the questionable praise of the ignorant. To this poetaster, *vers libre* offers plausible excuse for his constitutional laziness; so, by sophistical arguments, the weakling is led into the net of mere license. Furthermore, though his crude attempts at subtle rhythm fail to convince the trained ear, the poetaster has at command another resource. By arbitrarily breaking the whole into lines of varying length, as in Master's *Spoon River Anthology*, perhaps the "poem" will shape to the eye even as the real article. While knowing this last is deemed an ignorant criticism, we nevertheless believe it one that analysis of such productions will justify.

The perpetrators of *vers libre*—among whom are certain ones calling themselves Post-Impressionist poets—scorn the technique above spoken of, for, like the Post-Impressionist painters, they are enamored

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of the primitive, the untutored aboriginal attempts of those in whom brawn predominated at the expense of brain. Into this folly these exponents of *vers libre* are led largely by their great prototype Whitman who often confounded mere physical robustness with true, manly power.

As offset to a freedom often leading to the verge of lawlessness, Whitman had somewhat of the cosmic touch, and, it is claimed, he had attained to Cosmic Consciousness. This attainment was, no doubt, a matter of philosophy more than of actual experience since Cosmic Consciousness is that rounded excellence which precludes such inequalities as abound in *Leaves of Grass*. Having found his vehicle, the weakling aspires to the Whitmanic standard. He too would be Cosmic, but the pitiful result of his attempts to fill the Whitmanic matrix proves him fit not for the large, but in fact only for the infinitesimal. Furthermore, the manufacturers of *vers libre* and kindred products act on the theory, derived primarily from French realistic art, and secondarily from Whitman, that whatever exists is worthy of their treatment; that, to the poet, both noble and ignoble are meaningless words, that to him the New York skyscraper and the Chicago stock shamle and the packing house should be as inspiring as the Parthenon and the grove of the Academy. Even the intelligent journalist, who never aspired to poetry,



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has discovered that very many matters and things are unworthy of his ordinary prose.

From every external and internal evidence at our command, we contend that, but for Whitman, and the French Radicals and, lastly, Marinetti, neither Imagism, Vorticism, Post-Impressionism, nor Symbolism — with its verbs restricted to the infinitive and its plus and minus signs in lieu of adjectives — nor any other departures from the normal of poetry, would have come into ephemeral being and unwarranted notice. Nevertheless, the disciples of *vers libre* think otherwise, and would trace its inception to the Shakespearian plays and the general structure of the *Samson Agonistes* of Milton.

In the evolution of the Shakespearian blank verse toward a larger and freer rhythm, its end-stopped lines, very numerous in the early plays, are superseded gradually by run on lines which reach their maximum of frequency in such plays as *Tempest*. To these late lines we cannot apply the usual rules of scansion, since the accent would then fall on unimportant words. In the *Samson Agonistes*, that product of the author's maturest period, run on lines and lines of unequal length, together with variable feet, are rather the rule than the exception.

Our modern experimenters in poetry usually proceed on the theory that the momentary expression must

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correspond with the momentary thought. If Post-Impressionist poets, they probably derive this notion from French Post-Impressionist painting. Now we contend that the evolution of the Shakespearian and the Miltonic blank verse was toward "unrhymed cadence" as a highly-evolved creation whose spontaneity was that of art which mostly conceals itself; whereas, because of inability, or — what is more probable — because of a perverse theory, the momentary expression of the experimenters is that of the raw beginner, and exactly corresponds with his raw momentary idea. Below the consummate reach of a Shakespeare or a Milton lies the locality of these poetasters, and, between the two orders, yawns a profound and impassible gulf.

Near the opening of our discourse, we defined the primal Creative Trinity, or Word, as Sound, Color, and Form. Also, we emphasized the importance and the place of the modifications of the three in the arts to be examined. From what we have gleaned concerning modern, poetical tendencies, it is too evident that the new cults are reducing poetical form to a chaos corresponding with that of the unshapen world, the nebulous mass ere yet the Divine Architect commanded it into that which we now behold.

In concluding this division of our subject, let us add that a cult like that of Imagism, or Futurism, or

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whatever folly is to succeed it, in short, a cult whose standards make few and slight demands and eventually none whatever on the poet, would be acclaimed with joy by those who, ambitious of distinguishing themselves in literature, are yet incapable of reaching the goal of a sound school of poetry. What could be more decadent than cults like these mentioned? What more indicative of a transition period in which Art approaches the as yet Undefined whose every mirage cheats the untried sailor, and where, to his imagination, every bare rock-island hides, behind its curtain of ocean mist, perhaps a continental shore?



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### I

**I**N the Cosmic scheme of things, the first manifestation of the Creative Word was Sound the correspondent of Life. Next appeared Light, or Color, the correspondent of Love. At Creation's beginning, Sound was one concentrated, unvarying tone the Synthesis of all tones, even as the white sunlight is the synthesis of all colors. Then that shaping intelligence Mind divided both Sound and Light each, broadly, into three primaries, and then subdivided these two classes of primaries each into seven which, for Light, are the seven basic colors, all of them beyond human vision. In the seven of Sound, as in the seven of Color, were contained infinite possibilities of further subdivision. Certain of these subdivisions or octaves are within the narrow grasp of our human faculties, but the vastly greater number lie outside.

As an aspect of the primal Word, one which, though far removed from the original, is yet of divine origin, music contains sound as its chief component. Now, while the eye perceives the white sunlight as the synthesis of the color spectrum, the ear in its province is not so capable. The audible sounds in nature, and

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those produced artificially, are but subdivisions of the synthesis of Sound. Hence music, as known to terrestrial beings, can originate only in a systematic arrangement of these subdivisions. This arrangement is that graded scale of ascending and descending tones, which has undergone numerous transformations in many times and countries. With this preliminary, we may now inquire into the origin of all music whatsoever.

In descending manifestation, having reached the level of human comprehension, the Creative Word gives itself to man for his betterment. Should he be a musician, his intelligence subdivides and systematizes the sound aspect of the Word into the materials of his art. Next, his love draws from the color aspect of the Word that which beautifies sound till it becomes melody, or harmonic combination. Meanwhile, his intelligence draws from the form aspect of the Word the shape, the matrix, in which his art is to be cast.

Since music had its remote beginning, the problem of the musician has been to divide and subdivide tones and to color and shape them into euphonious art. The results may be enumerated thus: The almost tuneless but perhaps rhythmic attempts of barbarous peoples, the extinct music of ancient Egypt and contemporary nations, the discoveries of Pythagoras, touching the relation of music to the Creative Word — discoveries soon lost because never made public — the bardic

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improvisations of Homer's time, the Greek modes and the music proper thereto, the church chants of Ambrose and Gregory, the blind gropings of the middle ages toward that which is revealed in the sacred music of Palestrina, the almost wholly intellectual polyphony of the Flemish composers, the culmination of counterpoint in the grand though severe beauties of Bach, the departure toward that freer expression which exists in the work of the classical school, the further departure known as Romanticism, then the advent of Wagner with new dreams and visions concerning music in conjunction with the other arts, then, in these times, the arrival of Strauss as apostle of Futurism, and now the new French school of Debussy, and the ultra-German of Schönberg.

Ah, what Protean shapes has music worn down the centuries even to this the twentieth, perhaps for tonal art the most revolutionary and even iconoclastic that it may become the most progressively upbuilding! Music had beginning, no doubt, in the crude rhythms of the savage dance, the refinements of which have been shaped gradually in many molds including that of the March. Meanwhile, the human voice has had its office of barbaric song, refined gradually through ancient, historic times. Then, in centuries more recent, was evolved such vocal or else instrumental music as the Glee, the Madrigal, the Motet, the Mass, the

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Cantata, the Fugue, the Opera, the Oratorio, the Sonata, the Symphony, and, lastly, the Music Drama. Are these, together with certain minor forms, not enough for the creative musician? or do more compelling shapes of grandeur and beauty yet hide and bide and mature in the womb of the years?

### II

An examination of the ideals and tendencies of modern music requires that we begin with the work of Hector Berlioz, a composer greatly esteemed by his critical contemporaries in Germany and Russia, but, at the same time, one of little repute in France, and especially in his beloved Paris. A pronounced musical Impressionist before the coming of the Impressionist painters, Berlioz seemed only a maker of bizarre and extravagant effects to the gay and superficial Parisians whose criterions in music were Rossini the florid and sweetly melodious and Meyerbeer the panderer to popular taste. Of his own music Berlioz says: "Its dominant qualities are passionate expression, internal fire, rhythmic animation and unexpected change." Again he says: "My style is in general very daring, but it has no tendency to destroy any constructive element of art. Rather, I seek to increase the number

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of those elements. I have not dreamed of writing music without melody as have certain ones in Germany. I have not taken short melodies as themes, but have invested my works with a wealth of melody of large dimensions."

Berlioz was a marvelous colorist who employed every tint, from black to white, in every way possible to the orchestra of his day, nevertheless, it must be admitted that his musical ideas were important and almost epoch-making because of their clothing, rather than of their intrinsic worth. In fact, Berlioz was largely a creator of atmospheres. So, to his art, might, with some warrant, be applied Burne-Jones' criticism of the French Impressionists: "they paint atmospheres and that is not very much." His merits and demerits considered—and both were indeed marked—Berlioz is valuable to progressive musical art in that he discovered and made passable the road whereon Wagner and Strauss attain to those colossal things which, to him, were but ambition unrealized.

One article of the creed by which, as a German, Wagner ordered his daily walk, required him to dislike everything French. In that dislike was of course included the music of Berlioz to whom, nevertheless, he as an orchestral composer owed much. Moreover, as a maker of Program Music, for instance, the Faust Overture, Wagner could look for chief precedent to



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the Frenchman, some of whose larger works were included in this class; one unfortunately open to the charge of charlatanism.

As a revolutionist and reformer in art, Wagner opposed certain conventions, for example, the canons of musical form obtaining until his day. With philosophical acumen, Wagner searched deep for the source of musical forms, and discovered them to be wholly subjective, whereas, their outward expression was largely artificial. In accord with Schopenhauer, his accepted master in philosophy, Wagner held that subjective and wholly ideal form was proper to music alone. On the other hand, those exponents of modern painting and poetry, the Cubists, the Futurists, and the Synchromists, together with the poets of *vers libre*, demand for themselves forms as fluid as any to which music has yet been shaped.

It was because the chief component of music is that impalpable one, sound, that Wagner demanded for music a more elastic form than those he deemed necessary to the free expression of the other arts. To his view we must take exceptions, and for several reasons. To assert that by nature sound is more impalpable than either color or form, is to judge from the viewpoint of material limitations. To beings unhampered by these, sound may be as palpable as are color and form to us. Color and sound are but rates of vibration

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which owe their seeming unlikeness to the limitations of our physical sense organs.

A progressive art must necessarily outgrow its external shaping, and, from time to time, require a larger and in other ways more adequate one. Because modern music is based on not more than the twenty-four semi-tones of the modern scale, and because the great melodists had well-nigh exhausted the possibilities of originality in mere melody, and because skilled and ingenious harmonists had discovered almost every possibility of agreeable combination, and moreover, because music had been cast in such a variety of molds, Wagner held that, unless the composer boldly entered the field of mere formlessness and cacophony, originality within the province of music by itself was no longer possible. To further the progress of art, Wagner therefore undertook the union of music and poetry. These, in conjunction with painting and sculpture, would form one great and unified art form, in fact, the Music Drama.

Constructing this art work, Wagner, as composer, gave to music a form and a rhythm more flexible than those before employed in Opera. Also, he enlarged the possibilities of the recitative till it included, as almost free improvisation, what before had been melody shaped in approved patterns. Nevertheless, in his capacity as poet, Wagner did not break with many

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established poetical forms. To the advocates of *vers libre* this must seem an inconsistency warranting the belief that here the poet lacked the resource of the musician.

Like many progressives and would-be progressives in the mixed company of modern, creative artists, Wagner as a musician sought unadulterated truth in the primitive. It seemed to him that this truth was found in the artless but rhythmic vocal improvisations of the Greek bards when chanting their poems of war and adventure. That the poetical form they employed was far from extemporaneous, being in fact the finished and well-defined hexameter, may have influenced Wagner the poet in his adherence to usual forms.

Wagner's opinion that music and poetry apart had reached their limit of normal expression, was a benefit to art in that it made necessary the Music Drama ; still, that opinion revealed the over-zealous reformer whose biased opinion would have little weight with the musician, or the poet, of a later time whenever the desire to compose only in his chosen province was urging his pen.

Far be it from us to intimate that the marriage of Music and Poetry in the Music Drama was not vindicated as the result of that profound analysis into which Wagner once entered, for, as we have already said, he first achieved and then theorized. Wagner argued

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that, in their construction, modern languages reveal the very beginnings of human speech to have been a sort of singing. With this idea the present writer is in accord, he having elsewhere endeavored to show that language originated in the sound aspect of the Creative Word ; and that, in the most primitive attempts at speech, only vowels were at first employed ; the broad sound of A and the long sound of O being the most frequent, while the voice dwelling on these made a sort of singing. Gradually the consonants came into use. Meanwhile, sound as a language was colored and shaped by the other two components of the Creative Word. In making music and poetry an inseparable unity, Wagner would return them to their primal condition plus that rich development, which, through countless centuries, they had undergone as separate arts.

The natural bent of Wagner's mind caused him, both as poet and musician, to approach and illuminate his subject from the interior. Always in the Music Drama he was more or less the psychologist, and, in fact, his deliberate choice of the legend and the myth, as alone suited to his artistic treatment, originated in his habit of exploring that subjective world of causes which determines the activities of man's outward existence.

In both the legend and the myth, the actors stand forth shorn of the commonplace and the minutiae of

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daily life. Interest is now centered mainly in these actors as doers of great deeds, while yet they are beings not wholly unlike ourselves. In choosing such for his dramas, Wagner the poet could devote himself chiefly to a revelation of the complex mental states beneath the simplified action which the drama required. Next it was incumbent on Wagner the musician to illustrate musically those mental states as, for instance, in the marvellous *Love Death* in *Tristan*.

Wagner once confessed that his approach to that fullness of subjective detail which, as poet, he gave to the composer of *Tristan*, was but a gradual one begun with the *Flying Dutchman* where, with but a few general outlines, the poet indicated the work of the composer. Reviewing the work which filled the stormy and stressful years of his life, Wagner could, without much exaggeration, affirm that through his Music Dramas, as an entirety, he had revealed a subjective world worthy to compare with that more tangible one toward which the indomitable Genoese navigator had steered his prow.

Wagner's theory and practice having finally united in *Tristan*, no new phase of development could be expected in the great *Ring Trilogy*—much of which was written before *Tristan*—and certainly nothing new should be hoped of *Parsifal* which shows the composer as now past his meridian of achievement.



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Since the beginnings of musical Romanticism, and especially since the great piano compositions of Chopin, the conclusion has been forced more and more on the musician that the group of acknowledgedly related keys has been much too limited. Weighty evidence in support of this conviction exists in the fact that modulations and transitions, once condemned as harsh and violent, were afterwards accepted without a murmur. On no modern composer had this conviction pressed so heavily as on Wagner when seeking the musical equivalents of the subjective in his dramatic poems.

Necessarily, Wagner sought to establish among the twenty-four keys, possible to the modern scale, a larger grouping than the most radical musician had before conceived of. Moreover, he employed many effects which he excused in these words: "When occasion required I could venture terrible things in music since the action rendered them comprehensible, but which, apart from the drama, should not be risked lest they become grotesque." In dealing with music since Wagner, we shall keep well in mind the warning contained in this saying of the greatest of the moderns.

An individuality compelling as that of Wagner, could not but influence certain contemporary composers who yet would not accept him *in toto*. Thus, when past the usual period of production, Verdi developed certain Wagnerian tendencies. As for his younger country-

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men, the crossing of the Music Drama with the Italian Opera has resulted in but a hybrid incapable of reproducing itself.

Wagner had gone far, but it remained for another, in another generation, to duplicate or perhaps exceed his methods. That this successor would be forthcoming was probable since no man, however eminent, in passing leaves a total void. Somewhere, someone is training to occupy his place, if not to fill it. Accordingly, in due season, appeared another Richard purporting to be of the same high lineage, that of the prophets, and concerning whose credentials let us now inquire. If mere precocity were sure indication of the future, superiority should be accorded to Strauss, a musician by birth and sprung from a father musically eminent. As a youth, Strauss, then a composer of the somewhat conventional, had won the notice and even the praise of such musicians as Von Bulow, whereas, at a corresponding period, Wagner's mind seemed in a nebulous and almost chaotic condition. What with musical and literary absurdities inspired by doubtful talent inherited from no revealed source, Wagner seemed of that unfortunate type which, because of some mental defect, is always attempting great things, but accomplishing nothing.

Strictly speaking, Strauss is the successor of Liszt more than of Wagner who doubted the ability of

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instruments alone to express much that Liszt, through the program music of his Symphonic Poems, would make obvious. Speaking of this music, Liszt says that a program should be a foreword couched in intelligible language and preceding some purely instrumental work, to prevent its arbitrary interpretation, and to direct attention to the poetical ideas to be expressed. Evidently, the methods which Strauss has carried to at least their logical conclusion are Lisztian, rather than Wagnerian. In shaping their divergent theories of Music as a progressive art, neither Wagner the poet composer, nor Liszt the piano virtuoso, could avoid the conclusions which his bent imposed upon him.

Adopting the Lisztian theory, Strauss abandoned the manner of his apprentice years and entered a province toward which not only Liszt, but also Berlioz, had directed him. Thus Strauss, in *Zarathrusta*, has not attempted to philosophize as did Wagner in *Tristan* and *Rhinegold*, but rather to convey, through instrumental music alone, an idea of the development of the human race from the atom to superman. A stupendous undertaking, but not wholly a successful one as may be taken for granted. Concerning this attempt of Strauss, we shall hold, in the face of every criticism, that it is a legitimate one and known as such to his inner self for, as Wagner has affirmed, the inspired musician speaks truth in a language which his mere reason fails to

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understand. As we have already said, after countless modifications, Sound, as an attribute of the Creative Word reaches down to mortal comprehension, and by man is shaped into music, its highest terrestrial expression. Why then should the musician halt at the task of depicting the creative and evolutionary processes in the external world? or, for that matter, in the subjective world of causes also?

If our position be tenable, we must nevertheless allow that, as the externalization of interior potencies, both sound and color, and also form, have experienced many restrictions. Desire to determine these for music, painting, and poetry, in order to achieve every possibility within legitimate bounds, is the incentive beneath all modern experiments in those arts.

As already explained, original harmonious Sound, together with Color and Form, was the vibratory power which shaped the world to that ideal form, the sphere. Contrawise, discordant sound, together with darkness and formlessness, was the primal chaos. As in the beginning, so now; the essential nature of both harmony and dissonance obtains forever throughout their manifestations.

To the musician, tonal harmony means vastly more than a simple succession of closely-related chords. To him a Bach Fugue, a Beethoven Symphony, a Chopin Ballade, or a Wagnerian Music Drama, are as harmo-

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nious as are the intricate processes of world-building to the geologist. On the other hand, mere dissonance, whether in the natural world or in that of the musician, corresponds with disintegration and return perhaps to confusion. It corresponds with what the normal mind contemplates with regret, unless when, for instance, the demolition of a fine structure or a stately column means that its place is to be better filled.

For reasons which to him seem justified, Strauss, having crossed the borderland of harmony as defined by the moderns, has boldly entered the domain of mere cacophony with its quagmires and pitfalls fit to undo the most wary. As a cacophonist, Strauss can be empty, or petty, or even wholly ugly, as are certain paintings of the French Realists. Again his cacophony is of terrible dramatic intensity. As a whole, he exhibits inequalities comparable to those of the poet Whitman, for whom a mountain peak meant a valley hard by.

Strauss' art shows far less of height and much more of depression than Wagner's, but both arts lack compression. Even in his great music dramas, Wagner may be likened to the orator so enamored of his abilities that he forgets that, if too protracted, eloquence may be wearisome. As for Strauss, in the midst of torrents of cacophony, he fails to consider that the ears of even his most inured admirers have their limit of endurance.



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In the art of instrumentation, Strauss is without an equal. His contributions to orchestral effects are many and unique. To this extent, at least, he is a progressive. Learning from Berlioz and Wagner and Liszt, he in turn will impart to future composers for grand orchestra.

Mere mechanical dexterity is not musicianship, but only natural aptitude developed by practice. So it is only a somewhat higher correspondent of the aptitude and development of the skilled artisan. Mere dexterity in orchestral writing is but a more intellectual correspondent of the other two. A Chopin endowed with a wealth of musical ideas, but exhibiting little or no capacity for orchestral scoring, may be a far greater genius than a Strauss. As in estimating a man his garb means but little, so, in the final estimate of a musician, the intrinsic worth of his ideas, and not their mere clothing, will alone have weight. In original ideas do we not find a touchstone to decide whether the metal of Strauss be gold, or alloy, or only some baser material?

In a symphony, or a sonata, or any other form of absolute music, the merit of an idea is easily determined. Now, by natural bent, Strauss is a maker of program music wherein he illustrates a literary theme. In this illustration, ideas purely musical give way to those based on considerations perhaps quite complex. In

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program music, Strauss has far outstripped Liszt and also Wagner whose art theories actually taboo such program music as the *Faust Overture*, *Tannhäuser's Pilgrimage*, the prelude to *Lohengrin*, the *Ride of the Valkyries*, and certain other specimens scattered through his works.

In his Symphonic Poems — really program music — Strauss feels justified in employing effects which Wagner allowed only in the Music Drama, and for reasons made plain in the quotation already given: "When occasion required I could venture terrible things in music, since the action rendered them comprehensible, but which, apart from the drama, should not be risked lest they become grotesque." This quotation defines sharply the line of cleavage between Wagnerian and Straussian methods. Our personal opinion is that while Wagner was somewhat circumscribed by his theories, the quotation yet contains a warning which, to some extent, Strauss should heed.

In an attempt to determine the actual worth of Strauss' ideas, if we turn from the flaring tone-colors of his grand orchestra to his songs with piano accompaniment, and there inspect ideas clothed only with such color as the human voice and the pianoforte can give, what is the result of an impartial estimate if not a few lyrics worthy of the best song writers, and many more decidedly commonplace, or almost empty, and certain

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others that are actually ugly? The surest test of a melodist is his ability to compose a simple song that reaches the heart. In the *Lieder* we have Strauss at his simplest, the musician stripped of every glittering accessory, and the result, considered as a whole, is poverty, or almost that.

The time was when for their author such defects meant speedy oblivion, but, fortunately for Strauss, he lives in an era when, like the Athenians who listened to Paul's preaching, people are eager for some new thing. Because novelty now gains a ready hearing, manner has an opportunity almost equal with matter. The manner of Strauss is the most pronounced of any composer thus far, and this manner blinds his admirers to the comparatively insufficient matter in his orchestral numbers. In fact, the baldness of many of his themes, when reduced to piano music, makes evident their inferiority to those of Wagner.

Manner being his chief end, we can well understand Strauss' bold excursions into the desert of mere dissonance. We grant that his gigantic tone-structures require materials of all kinds including some never before used, but we do insist that mere cacaphony is a material of which it were wise to make no great show. As the most pronounced realist and mannerist who ever invaded the realms of tone, Strauss is bent chiefly on the novel and the startling; moreover, the

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true goal of the musician is not for such as he. While harmony was within his reach, cacophony was nearest and so, even before the composition of *Zarathrusta*, he chose the one at hand, the one most useful to his purpose.

Concerning Strauss, a query, not unlike that induced by the inequalities of Whitman, demands answer. This demand is emphasized by the fact that, whereas, in times past the great artists in every department had their dull moments, it was impossible for them wholly to leave the heights and drop to mere platitude, or turgidity, or some other fault of the talentless; and yet all this too often is true of certain among the eminent moderns. The anomaly suggests several answers, one of which is that the religious, the scientific, the political, the social, and the economic conditions of to-day have psychological effect on the creative artist, and therefore upon his art in its every fibre.

Now, while the painter of the merely conventional, and the poet of the birds and the flowers, and the composer of superficial salon music, are almost outside the current of the potent but subtle influences emanating from the complex activities of our times, it is for the artist, bent on novel and notable things, to feel the full sweep of that current. Therefore is he even as a man standing on a tall column where, to be safe, one should be well-poised and strong throughout. Like

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that man, this artist is subject to many forces, and, because of certain defects in him, these tend to disturb and upset his unstable equilibrium.

That the compositions of Strauss, his music dramas included, contain many passages of great beauty, or else of real dramatic power, it were bigotry to deny. Nevertheless, no work of any author, not even of Strauss, can hold together longer than its weakest parts permit. This means that of some, and perhaps of not a few, of Strauss' most vaunted tone-poems and music dramas, only fragments will be preserved to future generations, as is the case with Handel's operas.

Even should the work of Strauss be known to after times only through excerpts, or should his tone-poems survive merely as musical curiosities, their author nevertheless has done much toward furthering musical progress. In defiance of the limitations wherewith the theorizing Wagner had hedged instrumental music round about, Strauss has opened a new field for its enlargement. This, independent of his success or non-success therein. Furthermore, in his symphonic poems he has evolved a freer and more ample art form than the conservative Brahms could have discovered from the enclosure which the leaders of the classical school had marked out for him.

While of Berlioz, and of Liszt, and even of Wagner, it is true that his place in progressive art has been



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well-defined and is now accepted by the musical public, it must be confessed that, to estimate Strauss, we have crossed the boundaries of settled opinion and have entered a region of conjecture. Therein, if at all, we shall deal with such moderns as Debussy, Ravel, Cyril Scott, Scriabine, Stravinski, Max Reger and Schönberg.

In support of these composers, their adherents advance a certain argument, one echoed in somewhat faint and timid way by those who halt between two opinions, either because undecided which way to turn, or else fearing that decision will mark them as too radical, or else too conservative.

This argument is based on the fact that nearly all innovators in art have been misunderstood and sometimes maligned and persecuted. Thus, Haydn was accused of daring to found a new school of music, nor did the lucid Mozart escape censure, and when, having shaken off the tradition of Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven had entered on his period of individuality, many contemporary critics deemed him more than eccentric. Especially was this true in his latter period. Afterward we find Mendelssohn condemning many harmonic progressions in the great piano-forte compositions of Chopin. Then came the fierce outburst against the Wagnerian departures, and because Wagner was a strong and determined fighter, the conflict waxed

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hot and furious with stroke and parry and counter-stroke until ended by the defeat of his opponents.

Now the argument referred to may be stated thus : Because later times have proved that such critics as we have mentioned were, at best, short-sighted, and some of them were even stumbling blocks in the way of progress, it follows that failing to accept *in toto* whatsoever the modern composer chooses to offer, we join fellowship with the ultra-conservatives and the dullards of yesterday.

Surely it is a long road that has no turning, and the mere fact that certain composers of past times were in the straight way of progression — appearances to the contrary notwithstanding — is no guarantee that all others to come will be so fortunate. In fact, we have no right to assume for these an unfailing instinct, or a guiding star.

✓ In this age of striving after the new, what more natural than that attempters other than Strauss should be in the musical field? Might not some arrangement of tones, constituting a radical departure from the modern scale of twelve semi-tones, form a basis whereon to build a novel art, one not necessarily superseding the old, but, no doubt, an agreeable divergence from it? The thought was parent of the deed, and so the whole tone scale came into being.

That the whole tone scale — or, more precisely,

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scales — are of limited use appears from the fact that, whereas, from the twelve semi-tones of the modern scale, twelve major and twelve minor scales are constructed, these semi-tones admit of but two whole tone scales; that from C to C, and that from C sharp to C sharp. To one familiar with the archaic Greek modes, the origin of these two scales is obvious. They represent a return to the primitive corresponding with the return of the Post-Impressionist painters to the ideals of Egyptian and Assyrian mural painting.

That the Post-Impressionist musicians did not return to the Egyptian and the Assyrian tonal systems, may have been for the sufficient reason that the music of those nations has vanished, and only vague conjecture could have aided such return. Having neither beginning, middle, nor end, the whole tone scales are adapted to vague and shadowy effects. They represent more of super-refinement than of strength, and more of caprice than of progress.

Although the ultra-modern French composers are using the whole tone-scales, the credit — if that be the word — of first employing them, belongs perhaps to the Russian composer Moussorgski, a man of unusual natural ability, but one impatient of system and, in fact, one whose Realistic and even Nihilistic tendencies were reflected in his music before the advent of Strauss. As an entirety, Moussorgski's career was a

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failure, but his whole tone scales have survived in the music of Claude Debussy and his school.

Debussy's music is a unique but skillful blending of the archaic Greek modes, the whole tone scales, the duodecuple scale—to be explained later—and an ultra-modern use of the over-tones based on the notes of these scales. This use of over-tones requires somewhat of explanation, thus, if, in the key of C, the tonic triad C, E, G, be sounded, the chord by itself is satisfying and so demands no resolution. Now, since with this chord are heard such over-tones of C as B flat, the 7th over-tone, D the 9th, and F sharp the 11th, to say nothing of the over-tones of E and G, Debussy would hold that the triad and over-tones, if struck together, would, like the triad, be satisfying and so demand no resolution.

Since music requires more or less of chord progression, let us see what are certain of the over-tones up to the 11th of our triad, and also of the chord B, D, G, to which we will resolve it. Omitting the octave over-tones, those of C are G the 3rd, E the 5th, B flat the 7th, D the 9th, and F sharp the 11th. Those of E are B the 3rd, G sharp the 5th, D the 7th, F sharp the 9th, and A sharp the 11th. From the 7th upward, these over-tones are proper to the whole tone scale beginning on C. The over-tones of G are D the 3rd, B the 5th, F the 7th, A the 9th, and C sharp the 11th. From

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the 7th upward, all are proper to the whole tone scale reckoning from D flat, or C sharp.

The total of varying notes in the triad and its over-tones are therefore, C, E, G, B flat, D, F sharp, B, G sharp, A sharp, F, A, and C sharp. In the chord B, D, G, the over-tones of B are F sharp the 3rd, D sharp the 5th, A the 7th, C sharp the 9th, and E sharp the 11th. From the 7th upward, all are proper to the whole tone scale reckoning from C sharp. For D the over-tones are A the 3rd, F sharp the 5th, A the 6th, C the 7th, E the 9th, and G sharp the 11th. From the 7th, all are proper to the whole tone scale reckoning from C. The over-tones of G we have already mentioned. The total of varying notes in the two resolved notes of the chord, together with their over-tones, are therefore B, D, F sharp, D sharp, A, C sharp, E sharp, C, E and G sharp.

From this exposition we discern that, in the resolution of the tonic triad, G and its over-tones D, B, F, A and C sharp are stationary, while E and its over-tones B, G sharp, D, F sharp and A sharp, resolve to D and its over-tones A, F sharp, C, E, and G sharp, while C and its over-tones G, E, B flat, D, and F sharp, resolve to B and its over-tones F sharp, D sharp, A, C sharp, and E sharp.

If, from one of the simplest chord progressions, together with its struck or otherwise sounded over-tones,



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such strange clashings are obtained, what must result from chord progressions in the whole tone scales and the archaic modes? Our question pertains only to possibilities, for, though the simultaneous use of all over-tones is warranted by his theory, Debussy rarely proceeds to such lengths. If, by nature or through cultivation, Debussy's ear is super-sensitive to the over-tones in chord progression, it does not follow that he should inflict them on the musical public. It is safe to contend that if, in the development of music during the modern centuries, the over-tones had been considered, a way would have been devised to make their succession somewhat euphonious. Against this contention it will be asserted that the major triad, with octave, 7th, and 9th, was built up gradually from the over-tones of the root, and that the moderns have only enlarged the chord.

As we have said in a previous chapter, Holman Hunt was a painter whose backgrounds were finished with the same minutiae as were his foregrounds. Thus his pictures convey little or no idea of distance. This defect in his art was due to a seeming excellence in himself. To his keen and far-reaching vision, distances meant but little. In fact, he painted the landscape as he saw it. We hold that, because of his phenomenal ear, Debussy is at least as unfortunate as was Hunt. On the other hand, Debussy's admirers behold in him

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the forerunner of musicians equally sensitive to the over-tones. He is compared to Manet and Monet whose sensitiveness to color caused them to paint atmospheres rather than objects.

As a painter of musical atmospheres, Debussy excludes nearly everything that enlisted the energies of Bach the contrapuntist, and of Beethoven whose harmonies prove his consummate mastery of melodic voice progression. In lieu of consecutive ideas appealing to both the heart and the intellect, Debussy, by means of unrelated chords, gives impressions which appeal to the merely emotional nature. It is interesting to note that, while the Impressionist painters seek entrance to the musician's domain, Debussy would become a musical painter. His detached chords correspond with the divided colors of the Impressionist painters, and, as when viewed from a certain position, these colors blend in a harmonious whole, so Debussy's characteristic progressions are supposed to merge in one closely-woven concord provided the hearer is in receptive attitude.

On its face, this assumption seems ridiculous; but that such an effect has been produced, much sentimental gush over Debussy's music amply proves. The mood necessary to the transformation of his cacophony is the mood inducive of a self-hypnotism which quite subverts the critical judgment. By the way, a key to

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many singular doings of such musical Impressionists as Debussy, is found in this their favorite formula: should any chord, however dissonant, convey a desired sensation, that sensation is emphasized if, instead of resolving it, the chord be repeated on various degrees of the scale. — *Palmer, green - May Night.*

It is a defect of the ordinary church hymn tune, that stanzas embodying diverse sentiments must adapt themselves to it. The same is true of any melody written for one stanza of a series. This defect, so pronounced in Italian Opera, Wagner remedied by a compromise between melody and free recitative. Debussy has carried this reform perhaps beyond its logical conclusion. Every suspicion of melody is banished from the vocal score of his operas, but, to some extent, the compromise exists in the orchestral score.

Because of the vagueness of Debussy's chord movements, the point and impressiveness obtainable only through a definite tonal progression which acknowledges a tonic center, is absent from his figures and motifs. If these be performed piano, or, better, pianissimo, their lack is less apparent; but, if blared forth after the manner of Wagner or Strauss, they reveal themselves as mere empty noise. Perhaps such a test is not wholly just, because any theme from any master of the classical or the romantic school loses much,

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though not all distinction, if performed with a stress and in a tempo quite foreign to it.

A fair estimate of Debussy's music, one that after times will endorse, is not an easy matter. No doubt, he should be judged in the large, rather than by certain admired passages either in his operas, or his songs, or his piano pieces. Usually these excerpts little represent the radical composer but, instead, his leaning toward conventional melody and harmony. Debussy's writing down of over-tones seems to us whimsical, seeing that these have their unwritten over-tones. This much suggests the query: may not his musical impressionism be a super-refined estheticism induced and fostered by an environment of ultra-modern French theory and practice of poetry and painting?

While it is true that the old modes at times reappear fragmentarily in the masterpieces of the contrapuntal and the classical schools which, of course, are based on the diatonic scale, we yet contend that well-nigh complete return to those modes, by means of the whole tone scales, and analogous methods, is the opposite of progress, because the diatonic scale was an improvement of its predecessors.

While Debussy is enamored of the archaic as expressed in the six-tone scales, those without tonic or dominant, beginning, middle, or end, and while the Russian composer Scriabine uses a six-tone scale



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slightly different, because formed of the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th, and 14th harmonics, we discover the antithesis of these men in Max Reger who admits the validity of only one scale, that of twelve semi-tones, all of equal value, in fact the duodecuple scale, one not to be confounded with the chromatic scale, that modification of the diatonic. While Max Reger's scale acknowledges a tonic, we find Debussy oftentimes leaving the cramped circle of his whole tone scales for the larger duodecuple scale in which he abjures the tonic.

It would be deeply interesting and very enlightening could we determine to what extent the unrest of modern life has found lodgment in the susceptible artistic mind, to be reflected forth in its creations. That this unrest is approaching a pathological condition seems more than a surmise, but so insidious and gradual is the approach and so potent is the spell of that condition, that, because born into the change, the present generation seems quite unaware of any departure from the normal.

An eminent exponent of modern musical theory — if that which savours chiefly of caprice can be termed theory — has expressed belief that, ere long, one about to perform diatonic music must first apologize for his act. Now, while acknowledging that the diatonic scale is open to certain criticisms which the adherents of other scale systems have not failed to voice, we yet



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contend that whereas, the modes and their modern substitutes, the whole tone scales and certain others of recent date, are defective, the duodecuple scale also has its shortcomings, one of which is the absence of a real dominant. True, its defenders have generally agreed upon a sort of dominant, the augmented 4th, or its equivalent the flatted 5th; the F sharp reckoning from C. Still, the result is vagueness, uncertainty, restlessness; admirable as the expression of a mood, but quite unfit to color a composer's work, unless he be a hypochondriac or a pessimist.

Certain versatile composers of former times having employed with discrimination not only the modes, but also the chromatic scale using it duodecuply, therefore we hear that the new school is based on the bed-rock from which the old arose. And so we must needs have a cult of late comers adopting as a rule what before was an exception. Not only this, but many expounders of musical theory — those whose immediate predecessors had frowned on such trifles as open, consecutive perfect 5ths — are straining themselves in an effort to conform their teachings to the wider and wider departures of the new school, many of whose representatives have wholly renounced traditional methods.

Unresolved and unresolvable cacophony has resulted from the doings of a group of ultra composers each a

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little more daring because of the boldness of the others; and yet, modern tendencies in harmonic treatment began in what now would be deemed a mild way.

Among the earliest innovations are found numerous scale progressions of open, perfect 5ths and their inversions, perfect 4ths, all used to insure that vagueness for which originally they were condemned. Also, for vagueness, were omitted those intermediate chords which otherwise bind and clarify the harmony. Then came open 5ths and 4ths in skips; also scale movement of tonic chords in their first position; also chords of the 7th and the 9th progressing in scale movement or otherwise; also the 7ths and the 9ths of these joined to their roots as major 2nds and used in skips, or in scales both diatonically and duodecuply; also there were numerous attempts at greater sonority by means of the major 2nd in almost any chord; also there came into use chords composed of mixed intervals, or of unequal 4ths and 5ths, or else of such equal intervals as minor or major 4ths or 5ths, whereas, in the older system, only major and minor 3ds were so used. Meanwhile the new school Impressionists were building chords without regard to a scientific basis, and sometimes piling them to enormous proportions.

Contemporaneous with this desperate striving for the unusual, the use of major 3rds and 6ths progressing by whole tones led to the adoption of whole tone

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scales on which, as we have seen, Debussy and his kind built their system of over-tones. It was now customary to close on some chord or note once considered quite foreign to the tonic, or the dominant, or the sub-dominant. This and more was but an application of the saying that scales are artificial, since tonality alone is real. Then came chords without other than Impressionist significance and used singly, or in sequence; also chords altered chromatically until they defied analysis.

Evidently, it was no longer an innovation to use any succession of mixed chords without regard to the satisfactory disposition of other than the keenest dissonance in each. Such procedure as we have outlined also allowed any discord to move directly to the tonic harmony, and almost any succession of single notes or harmonies to move in conjunction with a figure in another key, provided the figure was first established in the mind. Also, modern procedure allowed not merely the free entrance, but even the free exit of any harmonies moving against a pedal chord. Not to go further into details necessary to an understanding of the situation, composers were now prepared for cacophonies of the rankest kind wherein almost every note of the duodecuple scale would sound simultaneously.

The method, peculiar to the new French school, of mirroring chords by an exact reversal of their intervals,

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works well in the whole tone system, but is productive of queer results in the diatonic. Thus C, E, G, B flat, if mirrored, give C, A flat, F, D, while the old method of reversion gives C, G, E, and the B flat below the C, or the E. Whereas, by sounding together the two chords according to the new method and then those produced by the old, we discover to what extent euphony is being sacrificed to mere musical mathematics. When, as numerous examples attest, the mathematical phrase is joined to the harmonic system, and a free Impressionism, the result is actual incoherence.

So methodical has been the departure to the pathological that such cacophonists as Strauss, Debussy, Ravel, Cyril Scott, Stravinsky, Scriabine, and Schönberg, perceive either beauty or dramatic truth in what to the unsophisticated is only disagreeable noise. So obsessed by theory are they that not one realizes to what extent the hideous exists in certain of his creations. However, the point where the disagreeable in any art begins will depend upon the peculiarities of the individual.

### III

In our survey of modern painting and poetry, we saw the Futurism of Marinetti rejected by his Italian countrymen, but afterwards encouraged, and even

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gaining disciples, in the art circles of Great Britain. Meanwhile, in America, a nation new to the fine arts, we found the Synchronists developing the latest phase of Modernism in painting, while the makers of *vers libre* were enjoying a mushroom growth. What wonder that the musical Impressionism of the new French composers, and even the *outré* of their contemporaries in Russia and Germany, should break out in England! Already Cyril Scott and some others are badly infected, but let us hope the disease will not become epidemic.

As for Max Reger, that thoroughly German illustrator of modern methods, at first sight he seems a more complex Bach; but, while Bach's most intricate counterpoint is always logically clear, that of the other often degenerates to the obscure and the turgid. This because, in the place of modulation, his duodecuple theory allows abrupt transition to almost any key. As a whole, Max Reger's compositions show head effort rather than heart impulse. Still, his avoidance of sheer cacophony is almost a virtue in these days of abrupt surprises and violent shocks to the auditory nerves.

While we cannot dispute that war has given to mankind the *Iliad* of Homer and many another masterpiece of poetry, both ancient and modern, and while we grant that war often has inspired both the painter and the sculptor, and that it has incited music fiery as that wherewith the *Marseillaise* roused the French



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Revolutionists to even greater frenzy, we nevertheless contend that neither on war nor unrest, but only on peace, can a rounded art be based.

Peace being the normal condition of man, it alone favors the normal development of his higher faculties, including imagination. War is a stimulant which gives to the artistic output the quality of vehemence, or it is an intoxicant rendering that output coarse, or brutal, or incoherent. Vehemence is a compelling quality in the work of poet, painter, or musician; but its prominence means the subordination of certain other qualities essential to a symmetrical whole.

Because it is an abnormal condition, restlessness is not a begetter of qualities; in fact, it admits of no concentrated effort essential to their birth and development. Rather it is a deteriorator of qualities, and this for art means decadence. That in certain quarters the spirit of restlessness is infesting art is obvious enough; but, at bottom, this restlessness is of a world-wide kind and portends some profound change — for the better let us hope — in the conditions of human society.

For the real exposition of this matter, let it be understood that the Creative Word, of which music is an expression, has a negative or destructive potency, as well as a positive or creative one. Strauss' employment of this negative potency too often depicts the vehement and brutal spirit of destructive war, whereas,

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Debussy and Ravel's use of it depicts the restlessness of the sentimental, sighing being, whose only source of disquiet is mental and bodily weakness. While Debussy and Ravel depict individual, feminine restlessness, Max Reger sometimes depicts masculine restlessness. At other times his pretentious works depict the larger world restlessness.

Though the poet is a conscious seer, the musician is an unconscious one who, in his moments of inspiration, enters the world of causes to project outward, by means of his art, those events which as yet have not materialized to the ordinary eye. Unknown to himself, the world war existed in the cacophony of Strauss years before the events which precipitated the conflict. To-day that cacophony is not only tolerated, but has actually found admirers for the basic reason that what in tone's mysterious language was there foretold, is now with us.

Moreover, the individual and world restlessness which preceded and is now accompanying the war, even as clouds precede and accompany the storm, is the inner incentive of those musicians who employ a system of tonality requiring no tonic repose. This also is true of those who habitually employ abrupt transition instead of modulation. Therefore the music of both Claude Debussy and Max Reger is acceptable to-day whereas, for specific reasons, a pure polyphony

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in the time of Bach, and a pure classicism in the time of Mozart, and a departure toward Romanticism in the time of Schumann and Chopin, were the ideals which met general requirements.

As the latest tonal expression of chaotic conditions created by the present world upheaval, listen to the efforts of Schönberg that riddle of the serious musician, inasmuch as he would be taken seriously, even as would the Cubist painters and the Symbolist poets who themselves are the product and expression of abnormal world conditions.

Because of our interpretation of causes, we grant to Schönberg, even when his seemingly unrelated harmonies move together, a seriousness perhaps incomprehensible from any other viewpoint. Heard in the usual way, this composer's rhythmless cacophony seems destitute of ideas as are the ravings of the madhouse; but, to hear Schönberg aright, one is supposed to separate mentally the harmonic streams which, in different keys, clash and grind in utmost dissonance.

To separate mentally these harmonic streams, we are told to acquire the habit of what is called horizontal listening. In hearing any ordinary counterpoint, we consider the individual parts both singly and in their harmonic relation to the others. This act may be named horizontal and perpendicular listening. Now we are assured that if, in estimating the new composers, we

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forego perpendicular listening and concentrate on horizontal listening, the clashing and grinding of different keys will not offend the ear. Granting this brings us only to the decisive question: Is the result worth the effort? Judging by such examples of Schönberg's work as have come to our notice we must reply in the negative.

As Schönberg has his followers, they, if sincere, must somehow have gained his peculiar outlook. In justice to this composer, we will say that many of his simultaneous chords, though seemingly independent, are built up from a common root. Possibly Schönberg has adopted methods analogous to those of certain ultra schools of poetry. Perhaps his chords should be regarded as symbols, or else as images supposedly able to stimulate the listener to a mental filling in of what is absent from the printed score.

After Schönberg what? In other words, after the world war what road will music find open to itself, either as a progressive art or a decadent one? Should that time mean a surface peace, one hiding but not quenching the old fires of jealousy and hatred, then no good course can be prophesied for music, or any other art able to epitomize world conditions: but if, as we believe, an era of human brotherhood more sincere and general than any heretofore known, is to come from the crucible of war, we may predict for the fine

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arts a turning from the pathological toward the sane and wholesome.

The words sane and wholesome are indefinite, but we may perhaps narrow their scope to something like exactness. Wars have come and gone and the shadow of their darkest hours has often obscured the sun of world progress, but never, for a moment, has such an eclipse retarded its passage to the calmer and clearer regions of a higher shining. Since modern composers are striving with might and main to break from the diatonic system, it is possible that a scale more subdivided than the duodecuple, and of which the Orient has taught us something, will prove the means toward the sane and wholesome which that loftier light is to illuminate.

That future composers cannot return to Bach is certain. Even to us his music does not convey just what it did to his contemporaries in their quaint semi-mediæval world. Nor are the methods of the grand old master pliant to modern improvement. The unfortunate attempts of Max Reger, who would be a more learned and recondite Bach, go far toward warranting the contention that the contrapuntal school has finished its work. The goodly company of the classical composers, their mission also accomplished, has moved on with Brahms lagging much in the rear. Those of the Romanticist group, fantastic at first appearance, then interesting, then adorable, are thus far perhaps the



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last rightful children of the Muse; but these alas! have joined the great fellowship of those whose destiny it was to enlarge the boundaries of their chosen art.

No effort born of sincerity can in all ways be useless. No belief based on honest conviction but contains a nucleus of truth for those who can discover and appropriate it. In the sincere effort and in the kernel of truth discernible in certain of such recent experiments in painting as Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Synchronism, and in the better poetry of *vers libre*, and in the best work of Debussy and other late composers, is found their sufficient excuse for being, and their ability to contribute to a composite art of which music may become the magnetic center.

While such a mere external as fashion in dress moves almost in a circle, we cannot admit this purposelessness in the deep and high things of life. Religion, Philosophy, Art, and Science, demand at least a spiral at whose top is the ultimate end, perhaps a unification as incomprehensible to man's at present undeveloped higher senses as would be the merging of every note of the duodecuple scale in one concentrated tone comparable to the synthetic white of the sun.











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