THE THEORY OF LITERATURE OF JAMES BRANCH CABELL

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PREFACE

James Branch Cabell has until recently been treated by critics as a writer completely out of tune with his age--a romanticist and an impressionist in an age of social consciousness and The Humanism of More, Babbitt and Forester. The author's pose has been accepted as the final critical position about his works. This study of his theory of literature and its presentation, The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel (1927-30), explores Cabell's complex mind and his consistent philosophical and fictive vision. Out of his sardonic and romantic sense of artistry and style came a composite of critical theories from the past and from his contemporaries. Although he ignores the social consciousness and the prevailing literary rebellion of the 1920's and 1930's to strike a seemingly outmoded literary pose, it is this presentation which best sustains his notions of the human condition and of true literature. Underneath the facade and woven into the medieval and romantic tapestries is a perspective, a vision, that lights up most of man's doubts and dreams and forces the reader to examine his own values in life and literature.

A searching examination of universal human behavior cannot be separated from a theory of literature because the success of the skeptical romantic position lies in its insistence upon a critical literary theory. The theorist plays fictional slight-of-hand, working his ideas through character, patterns of action and theme, place, and emblem; creating a magical illusion of other times; shaping a completely realized heterocosmos, a world and a universe with its own abstractions and gods. Action does not slow down for a fictional status to present ideas; it moves without pause--the work of a self-expressive imagination that thinks and creates in historical, literary, mythical, and metaphysical forms. The characters, the patterns, the settings and the ideas are forged into a single effect--Cabell's coherent fictive vision of the world and the literature wrought out of that world.

That vision is expressed in The Biography as a theory of literature. Cabell himself does not use the phrase, theory of literature, and for purposes of this discussion it needs a definition. The phrase suggests the complex ideas or notions (as Cabell would prefer to call them) concerning the act of creating a work of fiction, the nature of the creator or poet, the materials used--both life and words--to make the work, and the audience who responds to the completed work. Cabell treats all of these aspects of literary theory in The Biography.

The manner and mode of the presentation is an elaborate fiction with a dominating metaphorical structure. The Cabellian characters, both human and supernatural, are arranged in an intricate genealogy which begins in Medieval France and ends in Modern Virginia. However, it is not ancestral relationships as such which occupy his attention. Rather it is dominant attitudes that characterize the men and women who descend from Manuel the Redeemer. The genealogical metaphor gives order to the theories about human nature and literature. Cabell consolidates this metaphor into a genealogical table, The Lineage of Lichfield, also an outline of The Biography.

Since the major presentations of this theory are fiction, the analysis of it should concentrate on aspects of fiction as well as the terms and conception of literary theory. These aspects are characters, action, theme, setting and symbol or emblem. The theory, however, is grounded on a philosophical position which Cabell expounds in both fiction and non-fiction in the epilogue and prologue of The Biography. These more specifically critical and philosophical parts of the work are distillations of thought from prior fictional shapings of them. These books, Beyond Life (1919) and Straws and Prayerbooks (1924), define Cabell's abstract terminology. Clarification of the terminology necessarily leads to a clarification of the fictional presentation of the theory. In the novels and stories Cabell objectifies his abstractions in character, action, theme, place and emblems. The literary theory is given a multi-faceted, sometimes densely ornamented form.

The consistency of his point of view and form of expression is unique in American Letters. Both the form and viewpoint have until the recent work of Arvin Wells, Joe Lee Davis, and Raymond Himelick and Louis Ruben, Jr., obscured the skeptical serio-comic thought; the esoteric learning has detracted from the rich humor and the biting but timeless satire about literary life; the meticulously beautiful style has softened the lashing wit and the modern temper.

To grasp this vision and in some way to explicate it, I have read the greater part of Cabell's work. For purposes of this study, however, I have limited the discussion of what he considered his major work, The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel, the Storisende Edition. The fictional works appearing after this collected edition add little to the literary theory, and the autobiographical works explore the same ground covered in *Beyond Life* and *Straws and Prayerbooks*. I have read *The Biography* in two ways: in the chronological order in which the books were written and in the order in which Cabell arranged them for the Storisende Edition. In the analysis I have chosen to use *The Biography* as it was finally ordered, regardless of when the individual volumes first appeared. That form reflects Cabell's final and best shaping of his fictive vision.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION: TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTIONS OF THE THEORY OF LITERATURE

The genesis of Cabell's theory of literature is no more systematic than is Emerson's intellectual growth through his lectures and essays. As in Emerson's Nature, the basic concepts, terms, and metaphors such as compensation, beauty, and organisms appear; then, through the various works, these elements are expanded by example and constant re-examination. Emerson chose poetry and poetic, organically--developing essays and lectures to extend his seminal ideas. Cabell chose allegorical-episodic fiction and the familiar essay. If we look for a tight, professional philosophical system in Emerson, we find a poet. If we look for a poet, the philosopher-sage is uppermost. In Cabell's works, the germinal ideas are presented in the earliest literary effort (see Rothman on the Congreve essay written during Cabell's college years,[1] 1894-1898), and they are often repeated, developed, and embellished in all that follows, achieving their most mature statement in the final volume of The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel.[2]

Cabell's literary theory receives its major shaping in Beyond Life (1917) and Straws and Prayerbooks (1924). After the books which comprise The Biography, the theorizing, which is usually more informally conversational than logically philosophical in tone and manner, continues through The Nightmare Trilogy and dissolves into anti-climactic querulous arguments in the last autobiographical works, Let Me Lie (1943), Quiet, Please (1952) and As I Remember It (1955).

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[1] See the unpubl. diss. (Columbia, 1954) by Julius L. Rothman, "A Glossorial Index to the Biography of Manuel," pp. 1-2.

[2] James Branch Cabell, The Works of James Branch Cabell, 18 vols. (New York, 1927-1930). All references to The Works will appear in the text.

Cabell's position is characteristically nineteenth-century romantic in its concentration on the poet-artist. But he is also much the eighteenth-century neoclassical figure in his association of art with some common source--Nature or the Universe. Cabell does not restate Pope's "Art is Nature to advantage dressed," but he comes close to it as he explains the auctorial virtues. His theory thus synthesizes the eighteenth and the nineteenth-century literary philosophies. In The Biography he plays across the whole continuum from art as a perfecting of nature used to delight and instruct to art as sincere overflow--a God-originating force--and finally to the art for art's sake, fin de siecle theories of Pater, Wilde, Stevenson.[3] He is caught in the central fight of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Indeed he may be called one of the major casualties of that other "foolish war" between Romance and Realism. He takes sides with Romance, illusion, dream; he chastizes Philistia, the Realists, social consciousness.

The theory has as its axis the opposition between the Realist, who attends to the physical world as it is, and the Romanticist, who imagines an ideal world that ought to be. The Realist criticizes life by transcribing it; the Romanticist criticizes life by evading the distasteful, thereby implying that it could be improved. Cabell does not deny the universe that the Realist describes; he merely finds that excessive attention to it is not so productive as attention to the illusions which men live by. The conceptions of the literary theory and the fictional statements of those conceptions start from this basic antithesis between the Real and the Romantic.

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[3] Oscar Cargill, Intellectual America (New York, 1941), pp. 498-499.

For Cabell, _the universe_ that the artist lives in supplies the materials for the work of art insofar as the particular vision of the universe is reflected in his work. The theory begins with mechanistic and evolutionary conceptions of man's relationship to the universe, of the peculiar quality of the poet's relationship to the universe, and of the kind of association existing between the universe and the work of art. In _Beyond Life_, Charteris cogently states this view: "All about us flows and gyrates unceasingly the material universe, an endless inconceivable jumble of rotatory blazing gas and frozen spheres and detonating comets, wherethrough spins Earth like a frail midge. And to this blown molecule adhere what millions and millions of parasites just as I am, begetting and dreaming and slaying and abnegating and toiling and making mirth, just as did aforetime those countless generations of our forebears, every one of whom was likewise a creature just such as I am!" (I, 38-39). In this mechanistic universe man moves and evolves physically in a certain pattern. The body works on the same philosophical principle as does the universe:

> The thing is rather a parody, in dubious taste. . . .
> So far from being you, it is not even really under your

> control. Prefiguring it as your residence, you are immured in the garret, where you have telephonic communication with the rest of the house. But a house remains quiescent: whereas this thing incredibly sprouts lawns of hair; concocts, as no chemist can do, its saliva and sweat and gastric juices, with a host of mysterious secretions and uses them intelligently; makes and fits on a vitreous armor for the tips of its toes and fingers; builds up and blazes and renews its sentient teeth; dispatches, to course about its arteries, innumerable rivulets of blood, with colonies of living creatures voyaging thereon; and of its own accord performs a hundred other monstrous activities in which you have no say. A third of the time, indeed, this commonwealth which you affect to rule takes holiday, willy-nilly, and you are stripped even of pretendership by sleep;. Meanwhile the thing restlessly destroys and rebuilds itself. There is no particle of it, in the arms and legs or anywhere, which those hands before you have not lifted and put into the mouth's humid cavern: nor is there remaining today one atom of the body you frequented ten years ago. For incessantly it sloughs and renews and recasts itself, this apparently constant body: so that you afforded neither a private nor a permanent residence, but wander about earth like a windwhirl over a roadway, in a vortex of ever-changing dust. (I, 85-86)

This seeming parody came into existence not through any particular physical superiority. As a being "it was unpleasantly apparent that man did not excell in physical strength, as set against the other creatures on a planet whereon may be encountered tigers and elephants. His senses were of low development, as compared with the senses of insects; and, indeed, senses possessed by some of these small contemporaries man presently found he did not share, nor very clearly understand. The luxury of wings, and even the common comfort of a caudal appendage, was denied him. He walked painfully, without hoofs, and, created naked as a shelled almond, with difficulty outlived a season of inclement weather. Physically he displayed in not a solitary trait a product of nature's more ambitious labor"(I, 32-33).

Having nothing physical to compete with the universe around him, he did possess one quality that the rest of creation did not seem to possess: the power to reason. This reasoning did not acknowledge the fact of its physical limitation. Instead, "man probably began very early to regale himself with flattering narrations as to his nature and destiny" (I, 33). Alone in his understanding of his condition, he evolved on another plane. "Among the countless internecine animals that roamed earth, puissant with claw and fang and sinew, an ape reft of his tail, and grown rusty at climbing, was the most formidable, and in the end would triumph. It was of course considered blasphemous to inquire into the ground for this belief, in view of its patent desirability, for the race was already human. So the prophetic portrait of man treading among cringing plesiosauri to browbeat a frightened dinosaur was duly scratched upon the cave's wall, and art began forthwith to accredit human beings with every trait and destiny which they desiderated" (I, 33). Man's salvation is in his refusal to accept the facts his reason shows him about himself and his universe. Man revolts against the order imposed upon him; the mode of that revolt is imagination.

Precisely as Plato had revolted philosophically against Democrites' mechanistic view of the universe, Man, according to Cabell, revolts against his own knowledge by seeking to push his self-expression beyond life. The term given to this impulse, Demiurge, derives from this Platonic revolt. For Plato in Timaeus, the Demiurge is "the world-forming God who formed or shaped out that which is not Being, i.e., space, 'with regard to Ideas'." For Cabell, the Demiurge is "the power of romance--

the world shaping and world controlling principle" (I, 14). This "shape giving principle of all sentient being is artistic" (I, 20). The Demiurge is "the universal tendency to imagine--and to think of as in reality existent--all the tenants of earth and all the affairs of earth, not as they are but as they ought to be" (I, 20-21).

Cabell's Demiurge creates what he called dynamic illusions: religion, myths, politics, common sense, art, patriotism, and realism. The central impulse producing all of them is the spirit of Romance. "Dynamic illusions" or "dreams" or "fictions" are the realities, the timeless truths of the world. They also represent phases in man's cyclical progress. In defining the relationship between the spirit of Romance and dynamic illusions, Cabell reflects a romantic naturalism: ". . . the progress of romance . . . is a purely natural force; and in nature, as has been strikingly observed, any number of times, there are no straight lines. Art thus does not always go forward, but moves in recurrent cycles, as inevitably as the planets and tides and seasons, and all else, which is natural" (I, 100-101). There is, he says, a need for "a continual slight novelty."

Cabell shapes a kind of hierarchy or chain of dynamic illusions. Perhaps these dynamic illusions in their somewhat schematic arrangement of varying intensities could be called Cabell's value system. In this scheme he has Charteris, his most Romantic writer-philanderer, arrange his fictive evaluations of man's mental, social, ethical, religious, and artistic behavior. The dynamic illusions are like Leibniz's monads--independently reflecting each other and all reflecting a part of a presupposed harmony, the demiurgic spirit of romance. Similarly the dynamic illusions may be said to reflect their distance from the absolute creative form--the ideal Romance. Some illusions are more intensely reflective than others. All have uses for "man, who alone of creatures apes his dreams" (I, _passim_).

The dynamic illusions are interdependent as the emotions, experience, and the intellect are interdependent, but Cabell views a progression from the most elemental to the most complex. The following presents a brief definition in that order:

1. _The Dynamic Illusion of Common Sense_:

"the belief in the value of doing practical things" (I, 87) gives the average person a reason for working and attaining creature comforts. That Cabell places this illusion at the bottom of his scale is made obvious by the manner in which he characterizes the relationship between the _Demiurge_ and the belief or illusion: "to every dupe, of course, romance assigns no more than a just adequate illusion; and squanders no unneeded cunning in contriving the deceit" (I, 88).

2. _The Dynamic Illusion of Religion_

is "the demiurgic effort to exalt the animal and to woo him away from 'realism'"--that adjunct of the lowest dynamic illusion, common sense. (Religion and myth are synonymous to Cabell, and so they will be synonymous here.) "Everywhere, as romance evolved the colorful myths of religion, the main concern of the gods was, less with their own affairs, than with the doings of men; and everywhere religion was directly profitable to men, and everywhere romance loaned to this new form of expression that peculiar beauty--which is delicate and strange, yet in large part thrills the observer by reason of its unexpected aptness--such as always stamps the authentic work of romance (I, 119). Cabell was to realize this dynamic illusion in fictional form in The Silver Stallion, that satirical Acts of the Apostles, that storehouse of mythologies ranging from Ancient Taoltecs to Egypt to Virginia-Shintoism.

The culminating development of this dynamic illusion was to be Christianity--the Demiurge's masterpiece. The story of Christ--the whole Bible romance is "the apotheosis of the Cinderella legend" (I, 120). No effort of the Demiurge is more delightful romance than The Bible wherein "there are only two characters. God and Humanity." This cosmic love affair is caught in the many people of the Bible who are used as "arbitrary symbols" which "individually signify very little," but viewed collectively, like so many letters on a printed page, they reveal a meaning, and it is gigantic. Cabell, discussing Christianity as a fairy tale, substitutes the Author for God or Jehovah. The Author, God, Jehovah, and Demiurge are avatars of a single concept.

3. The Dynamic Illusion of Patriotism and Politics

is both dynamic illusion and an anesthetic."When you consider that presidents and chief-justices and archbishops and kings and statesmen are human beings like you and me and the state legislators and the laundryman, the thought becomes too horrible for humanity to face. So, here, too, romance intervenes to build up a mythos about each of our prominent men--about his wisdom and subtlety and bravery and eloquence, and including usually his

Gargantuan exploits in lechery and drunkenness--so as to save us from the driveling terror that would spring from conceding our destinies in any way to depend on other beings quite as mediocre and incompetent as ourselves. . . ." (I, 176-177). The Demiurge thus protects us with an anesthetic called patriotism which is also a dynamic illusion for it allows us to move without depending upon logic--it is a creed "undefiled by any smirch of 'realism' or of that which is merely 'logical'" (I, 181). Again to repeat the theme it takes us "beyond life" and therefore is another of "the magnanimous factors in human life" (I, 180).

4. The Dynamic Illusion of Chivalry

has as its cornerstone "the idea of vicarship for the chivalrous person is, in his own eyes at least, the child of God, and goes about this world as his Father's representative in an alien country" (I, 36). On this notion of divine vicarship man built his elaborate medieval code. The same illusion also shaped courtly love codes around _domnei_ or woman worship in which man found his mistress to be "an ever-present reminder, and sometimes a rival of God" (I, 38). Man's life is assumed to be a personal transaction between himself and omnipotence and the female held in _domnei_ is the most earthly emblem of that transaction. "It was a canon of domnei, it was the very essence of domnei, that the woman one loves is providentially set between her lover's apprehension and God, as the mobile and vital image and corporeal reminder of Heaven, as a quick symbol of beauty and holiness, of purity and perfection. In her the lover views all qualities of God which can be comprehended by merely human faculties. . . . And instances were not lacking in the service of domnei where worship of the symbol developed into a religion sufficing in itself, and became competition with worship of what the symbol primarily represented" (I, 59-60). For man to imagine this chivalrous relationship between himself and God with the worshipped woman as the intermediary is to bring that relationship about "since man alone of animals can, actually, acquire a trait by assuming, in defiance of reason, that he already possesses it" (I, 38).

5. The Dynamic Illusion of Optimism:

Writing of Dickens and Thackeray, Cabell reveals the high point of the scale in this illusion: ". . . these writers faithfully copied life in life's most important teaching, inculcating that for persons who honor the aesthetic convention of 'good' and 'evil' a happy ending impends and is inevitable, through howsoever unlikely means? For the dynamic illusion of optimism is very thriftily fostered by romance in the wisest, and in the wise alone" (I, 196).

There is an organic relationship between the illusions brought on by their dynamic natures. They are not mutually exclusive: the same words and phrases are used in defining each of them. These illusions are characterized by a utilitarian purpose because they generate good effects for man--they are necessary for his survival. Common Sense feeds him and occupies his hours, gives him other creature comforts. Religion shows him a point toward which he moves with the aid of its fictions. Politics, and its corollary patriotism, provides an anaesthetic as well as another point of externalizing, or objectifying without benefit of "logic" or "realism". Chivalry and optimism are further sophistications of the forces suggested in Common Sense, Religion (in its primitive, mythic state) and Politics. The ideas of vicarship and of domnei--(romantic love and spiritual love in association) are the ideas of something better evolving as we progress. Man embellishes with his highest illusory forms those forces from within which drive him on--the Demiurge--the spirit of romance. Surely it is significant that the last word of _Beyond Life_ is God, and God and the Demiurge are seen in Charteris' fictive mental processes to be the same. The idea of dynamism does not foresee an end; it postulates a kind of cosmic optimism (the wisest of the illusions): a kind of Bergsonian ever-evolving, flowing _elan vital_.

The analogue here between the theory of literature and the aesthetically oriented cosmology is apparent. _The Biography_--or any fiction that can be called art--is itself a dynamic illusion which unleashes (or should) useful human movement or action. Any work of art has as its basic dynamism a kind of life force, an existence as it were separate from the literary artist (who should be analogous to the Demiurge in Cabell's cosmology). Of course this separation of the illusion from the spirit that engenders it becomes for the poet the essence of his seeking for immortality. The force or spirit behind the illusion may be forgotten, but the illusion itself generates responses which in themselves produce new patterns of ever-improving illusions.

The literary artist rebels against the universe and the body by playing; he seeks _diversion_ from reality by romantic creating. _Straws and Prayer Books_, the epilogue of _The Biography_, is an extended discussion of this "playing" which produces a work of art. The thesis of that discussion is stated by Charteris before Cabell begins to speak for himself: "Art, just as Schiller long ago perceived . . . is an outcome of the human impulse to play, and to avoid tedium by using up such vigor as stays unemployed by the necessities of earning a living. The artist is life's playboy. The artist, to avert the threats of boredom, rather desperately makes sport with the universe" (XVII, 12). Cabell expands this theory of art as play or diversion into recapitulation of the major themes of The Biography and his literary theory. He re-defines the universe and man's living in the same manner that he uses in Beyond Life; then he works out the relationship between the Economic theory and the play theory, giving attention to the complexities of the artist's motivations, particularly the novelist's. He develops what he calls a creed based on the idea of art as a diversion.

In his art the novelist plays with common sense, piety, and death. The first two are considered to be man-made, and the novelist may be said to face his own creations, his playing with these guides to man's actions; but death is the one inevitable fact of existence, and in his playing with death the novelist may be said to face his creator, rather than one of his own creations. The novelist, that is, the romantic novelist, plays with common sense by ignoring it, "for common sense tempts men to be contented with their lot, to get the most from what is theirs, and not to hanker nonsensically after the unattainable" (XVII, 63). To this temptation the literary artist says "Bosh!" "And having uttered it, the artist proceeds to divert himself by living dozens upon dozens of lives which in nothing resembles the starveling and inadequate existence allotted him by the mere accident of birth" (XVII, 64). In his aversion to common sense, to acceptance of things as they are, the literary artist is a wizard, a magician concerned with his own self-expression.

"The literary artist . . . plays with piety" (XVII, 73) by recognizing man's interest in "some cunning, strong, unconquerable rogue" (XVII, 83) such as Robin Hood, Rob Roy, or Tyl Eulenspiegel. This interest reflects man's desire for the forbidden and his admiration for those who rebel against law. "Imaginative literature has tirelessly advocated revolution, by depicting the possibilities of a more pleasure-giving state of affairs, and in his diversion, the artist has consistently tended to identify himself with the rogue and the lawbreaker" (XVII, 83).

Cabell further finds the explanation for the Romanticist's inclination "to glorify the breaker of laws current in the artist's lifetime" in the failure of society to provide ". . . any exact or generally respected status for the artist. . ." (XVII, 84). This failure and the constant use of reason, which the artist alone is permitted, have led the artist to find all "human ordering of this world, under all regimes, to be unsatisfactory" (XVII, 84). Disliking the world he lives in, he "diverts himself by constructing other worlds, where orderings are different, and to his mind, more approvable" (XVII, 86). In effect, his impiety is suggested by his indirect instructions to "the aggregate wisdom of his fellows, and even of Omnipotence, how to create a more satisfactory world" (XVII, 86). Content with no condition that he meets in life, the romantic artists criticizes order, and attempts to impose a better one through his own imagination. Not satisfied with being discontented, he sets about not only "to create more interesting persons than nature creates, but to outvie nature by making his creatures durable" (XVII, 92). To do this, he plays with ageless symbols of man's irreverence, for example, Pan or Prometheus, or Satan.

The artist plays with death by acknowledging constantly its inevitability and yet by believing that he purchases immortality beyond the body with his works. Against piety and common-sense he pits the creations of his imagination and against death he takes an altruistic chance that his works will receive the acclaim of posterity. He knows implicitly that he cannot last, but he hopes that his works may. Here Cabell does not give the audience or posterity much credit, and he says that the writer

> who is sustained by the notion of his books' being perpetual things cannot, after two minutes of honest thought, believe himself to be sustained by altruism, nor by any faith in the superior discernment of posterity. Upon no ground perceptible to me could reason detect, the instant that reason weighed the present rate and direction of man's progress, any marked likelihood of posterity's being in anything more logical than is that contemporaneous, so huge and so depressingly unimpressed audience which every artist must perforce condemn. Posterity in its approach to literary matters would probably muddle forward as man has always done, upon humanity's time-tested crutches of hearsay and stupidity. (XVII, 254-255)

As the artist cannot rely on posterity, so he must also ignore the attitudes and desires of his contemporary audience. His best work comes from his playing with his own ideas and his shaping of these ideas according to his own plans. His readers may follow the trail that he blazes and find delight in "the by-products of his hedonism" (XVII, 35), but the diversion he seeks is for himself and no other. The artist "who for one half-second during his hours of play with ink and paper considers anybody except himself is contriving a suicide without dignity" (XVII, 36).

Only insofar as he delights and interests himself will he delight and interest his audience and contribute to the general human happiness.

The artist, like all men, seeks diversion from the universe, society, and his own physical being; but the artist alone seeks to give shape to his diversions, hence sharing them with other men for their diversion. In his play, the literary artist makes sport with common sense, piety, and death--thus making his diversion a constant rebellion. But, for all his efforts to achieve immortality through his works, at the last, all that the artist can be sure of having attained is his own self-diversion.

In his creation of his work the literary artist acts analogously to God's creation as described in Genesis. M. H. Abrams has traced the development of this commonplace analogue from Plotinus through the Renaissance to the nineteenth century romantic critical theory and into the twentieth century New Criticism. Cabell consistently reflects this Neo-Platonic position: the artist is to his work as God was to Adam and Eve. "The elect artist voluntarily purchases loneliness by a withdrawal from the plane of common life, since only in isolation can he create. No doubt he takes with him his memories of things observed and things endured, which later may be utilized to lend plausibility and corroborative detail: but, precisely as in the Book of Genesis, here, too, the creator must begin in vacuo" (I, 90). Plotinus had produced this analogue "to elevate art from the realm of flux and shadows to an eminence over all human pursuits, in close connection to the Ideas and to God himself. The artist, from being a craftsman, became (in a momentous new aesthetic metaphor) a creator, for it was sometimes said that of all men the poet is likest God because he creates according to those patterns on which God himself has modeled the universe."[4] This metaphor is significant because it both raises the artist above the craftsman and becomes the major presupposition for the theory of art as expression, the dominant theory of the nineteenth century (Abrams, passim) and the major aesthetic theories of the twentieth century as developed by Cassirer, Langer, Croce, and Collingwood. Collingwood discusses this theory in his defense of the verb, create, and in the prevalence of the God-Artist analogue. "To create something means to make it non-technically, but yet consciously and voluntarily."[5] Collingwood, like Cabell, contrasts the idea of God's creation to the universe with the artist's creation on the basis of their respective infinite and finite being. Artists unlike God must have circumstances which enable them to create, as well as "certain expressed emotions and the wherewithal to express them."[6]

Cabell adopts the basic Romantic conception of the artist as a creator even though he does not ignore the artist-as-craftsman theories of Aristotle and Plato. By locating the act of creation within the mind, he accepts "the concept of art as a mirror turned around to reflect aspects of the artist's mind. . . ." The Romantic position is "that the content of art has an internal origin and that its shaping influences are not the ideas or principles informing the cosmic structure, but the forces inherent in the emotions, the desires and the evolving imaginative process in the artist himself."[7] The impulse to create, for Cabell, the Demiurge or Spirit of Romance, is inherent in man's mind; the dynamic illusions shaped by this internal force are the substance of man's immortality.

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[4] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York, 1958), p. 42.

[5] R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (New York, 1958), p. 128.

[6] Collingwood, p. 130.

The gadfly of self-expression which stings the romantic artist forces him away from social virtues, giving him an exaggerated opinion of himself and making him "avoid all persons whose tastes are similar to his," and condemning him "to continuous loneliness" (I, 146). The Demiurge is very powerful and "so potent and honey sweet, is the allure of this desire to write perfectly of beautiful happenings: for all that, it may well be the contrivance of some particularly sardonic-minded devil: and beyond doubt, if follow the desire you must, you will be the wiser for scrutinizing its logic none too closely. You had best yield blindly to the inborn instinct, and write as well as you possibly can, much as the coral zoophyte builds his atoll, without any theorizing" (I, 145). This desire is the only emotion that the creative artist yields to, because he must become so callous that he observes any emotion "as potentially an interesting topic to write about" (I, 148). Driven toward immortality to be attained through his objectified dreams which he has "snared with comely and fit words," he separates himself voluntarily from ordinary human intercourse.

The artist subjugates himself to all the demands of his desire. He uses his physical self, but the expenditure is worth it, "the game is worth the candle." The poet's body becomes a battleground wherein "the human brain is perverted to uses for which, as first planned against arboreal requirements, it was perhaps not especially designed" (I, 89). He knows his body is "a cunning and elaborate piece of mechanism . . ." and "an apparatus wherein something might conceivably be done." With this loaned machinery "these covetous-minded persons, the creative writers--the poets, the _poietai_, the 'makers'--endeavor . . . to make something permanent." This desire "to get enduring increment of his body" guides "the craftsman in that creative literature wherethrough a man perpetuates his dreams." (I, 88). He chooses his dreams over his body and once the dream is written down "its creator may usurp the brain-cells and prompt the flesh of generations born long after his own carnal loans are dust" (I, 89).

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[7] Abrams, p. 46.

The alternative choice is the universe and the body as it is, the acceptance of reason and fact as the sole attention for men. Reason would have man accept his physical inferiority to all that shares the universe with him, and to acquiesce to the facts that are everywhere apparent, even in the mirror. _Realism_ is the name given to this alternative, the enemy of _Romance_. It is the constant reminder that men are "mediocre creatures" (I, 27). The begetting, slaying, abnegating, and toiling of man are its subject matter; the dreaming is evaded. Realism is the fallacy that "our mile-posts are as worthy of consideration as our goals; and that the especial post we are now passing reveals an eternal verity. As a matter of fact, mile-posts by ordinary [_sic_] reveal the pretension of a tradesman who believes in advertising, which very possibly accounts for the manner of our more generally esteemed 'realists' in every field of human action. So, realism, too, becomes an art of sorts, a minor art, like music or hairdressing. 'Realism' is the art of being superficial seriously" (I, 246-247). Dwelling upon mannerisms of the moment, it misses the truth that imagination, the power of Romance, would certainly have revealed.

This antithesis between the universe and defiant man's imaginative self-expression about his place in that universe, is the philosophical basis of Cabell's conception of the artist and his work. It is also the basis for Cabell's conception of history and ethics. The literary theory is never too far removed from the ethical theory; imaginative self-expression is man's highest development whether in his arts or his religious systems or his political notions.

The universe and the life within that universe which the poet makes use of must not control his product, but they are nonetheless necessary to him. Art is derived from the everlasting tension between the universe as it is and as it ought to be. "'Art . . . is an expurgated edition of nature: at art's touch, too, 'the drossy particles fall off and mingle with the dust.'" (I, 190). The artist works with his imaginative self-expression but there can be no separation between his imagination and his intellect. "Precisely as the sculptor's inspiration must conform to his supply of marble, so must romance be trammeled by working in the rarer and more stubborn medium of human intelligence" (I, 125).

The creative process involved in this working of the Demiurge through the materials of reason and behavior is the central concern of Cabell's theory of literature. All creative artists must face this choice and in some way reach a compromise between their existence as artists and their animal natures--the antithesis of "things as they are" and things "as they ought to be" is reflected in the mind of the creative writer. The Economist, or elect artist or the truly creative artist makes his compromise and strives "to create against the last reach of futurity that which was not anywhere before he made it. He breaks his implements with ruthless usage; he ruins all that time will loan: meanwhile, the work goes forward, with fair promise" (I, 94). Inevitably the purchase price of his body's destruction must be set against the enduring value of the finished work. The term, Economy, to Cabell is synonymous with great literature, i.e., the best expenditure of life for art. A high point of this literary theory comes in Charteris' resume of the auctorial virtues--the closest Cabell comes to setting forth a kind of poetics for the Economist. Charteris (really Cabell) is perturbed that Cabell (really Guy Holt) had thought that he (Charteris) was talking all Walpurgis Eve about rules for producing novels. Charteris feels that he has been discussing man, the universe, the spirit, and art. Cabell's attack is solidly on the literary side--the logical weaknesses of the literary theorizing, but Charteris is appalled that he has talked so long without being understood. Jarred by his failure to communicate, the fictional voice of Cabell answers the fictional voice of Holt (posing as Cabell) by a carefully orchestrated coda in which he defines the auctorial virtues as qualities to be desired in literature because they are not to be found (or experienced) in life. In the term virtue and in the manner of defining the qualities: distinction, symmetry, clarity, beauty, tenderness, truth, and urbanity, Cabell suggests the overlapping of ethical and literary theory.

Through fiction the novelist seeks to distinguish himself, to acquire universality and immortality which is outside his physical, worldly limitations. "In art it may so happen that the thing which a man makes endures to be misunderstood and gabbled over: yet it is not the man himself. We retain the Iliad, but oblivion has swallowed Homer so deep that many question if he ever existed at all . . ." (I, 262). Distinction for an individual man is impossible to conceive in "the long progress of suns, whereby is thought to separate the personality of any one man from all the others that have lived, becomes a task to stagger Omniscience" (I, 262). Art is the only possible means of perpetuity, the one means of being different from "this throng of human ephemerae and all their millions and inestimable millions of millions of predecessors and oncoming progeny" (I, 261).

Faced with the universe and lacking any knowledge of its intention and purpose, the writer seeks to impose symmetry and clarity on life to make it intelligible. The writer revolts against the "tyranny of matter" --"against life's absolute need of food, and books, and fire, and clothing, and flesh, to touch and to inhabit, lest life perish . . ." (I, 263). His creative effort, his desire for order and explanation in his objective realization of his dreams, is a desire to alleviate his sense that life is "all a muddling thought, somehow without any recognizable goal in view, and . . . no explanation of the scuffle tendered or anywhere procurable"(I, 264).

Beauty is synonymous with perfection, ideal form, or completeness, which is always just beyond reach. For Charteris, beauty is best defined symbolically in the life of a butterfly which is "such a graceful gesture: and yet in that its loveliness is complete and perfectly rounded in itself" (I, 264). The beauty fiction should have is the beauty of the butterfly's "bright flicker through existence" (I, 264). The beauty the poet seeks is flawless and he divines that it exists somewhere but nothing in human life contains or suggests it.

Tenderness in books alleviates the need for likeable people, people who have "generally distributed qualities which entitle them as a race to admiration and affection" (I, 266). Honesty, trust, and openness in dealing with other beings must offset suspicion, posing and concealment or misrepresentation that characterizes human dealings with one another. People in books must bring forth "tenderness and caressing words, in part because they deserve it, and in part because I know they will not suspect me of being queer or of having ulterior motives . . ." (I, 266).

Truth, as an auctorial virtue, opposes consciousness of physical actuality, that "phantasmagoria of sound and noise and color" which may or may not be illusion. It is man's lot to be "a very gullible consciousness provisionally existing among inexplicable mysteries." Truth in fiction is "certainty" or a shaping of sensations.

And, finally, urbanity, the highest and rarest virtue, is tolerance of the unfamiliar. The urbane person would be alien to the world as it is because he would be "a mortal open-minded and affable to conviction of his own shortcomings and errors, and unguided in anything by irrational blind prejudices (I, 267). Urbanity would, in effect, be compassion, commiseration, and empathy "to that piteous thing called human nature" (I, 267). Intolerance being the essence of the history of the human race, the literary artist should reflect absolute tolerance--an idealized romantic vision rather than the world as it is.

Cabell's insistence upon intrinsic auctorial virtues in a literary work is a kind of marriage between the classical and neoclassical theories of art as craft, as perfected representations of nature, and the theory of art as expression originating within the artist. The key event in the shift from craft to expression had also brought the poem into a more significant position than that suggested by mimesis of "the mirror of nature." For the Romantic theorist the poem became a heterocosm, a second nature, which must be judged by criteria intrinsic to its own being.[8] This idea had been prevalent in the Renaissance and it was to come into prominence again in twentieth century criticism (See Austin Warren, Rage for Order, 1948), with the idea of the poem as a heterocosm there came a new emphasis on the analogy between God and the Artist. If the poem is a whole cosmos then its creator certainly takes on aspects of God.[9] Both ideas, the poet as the point of greater interest in critical theory and the poem as the major critical concern, are synthesized in Cabell's expressive--objective fictive theory, his notion of imaginative literature finely crafted.

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[8] Abrams, p. 262.

[9] Abrams, p. 272.

The movement of Cabell's thought is a combined metaphysical cosmological, ethical, moral, psychological, progression through skepticism to a final affirmation which does not throw out the skepticism but optimistically accepts the duality of the sensate physical and the illusory, demiurgic spirit. The act of believing in practical matters, in religious ritual, in politics, in dommei, in God's love for man reciprocated and in the world beyond life--"as it ought to be"--whatever the act of believing may be is guided by the dynamic illusions. God may be an illusion; man's relationship to God, man himself may be an illusion, but there is in Cabell's affirmation an acceptance of the illusions for their perhaps illusionary worth which he feels exist though he doesn't know they exist.

The Biography once completed is outside Cabell as its demiurge--its Author--and he can feel only gratitude for the act of working it out--of seeing the dynamic illusions, within the work--of reviewing the various fictions as they now seem to have lives of their own. He believes unquestionably that he has "written beautifully of beautiful happenings" which was his set purpose in 1907 when the young Cabell produced the first book of The Biography--The Eagle's Shadow. Of course as The Biography is finished he embellishes (elaborates) this desire into both an ethic and a theory of literature involving the auctorial virtues to which "romance directs all the affairs of life . . . , distinction and clarity, and beauty and symmetry, and tenderness and truth and urbanity" (I, 141).

PART II

FICTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF LITERATURE

Character

The major terms and premises of the Cabellian theory of literature receive continuing development throughout The Biography. Cabell's fictive world is filled with characters who embody some or all of his literary ideas and who enrich those ideas through their complex actions and dialogue. The abstractions are constantly objectified in fictional terms. It would be a mistake to refer to these personae as only figures of allegory or walking ideas, however, for they are always much more than that. Cabell's novels and short stories are composed of adventure and social comedy intrigue, but they are also augmented with discussions about literary matters and with actions that have literary significance. At the center of most of the actions is a poet-hero and closely related to him there are always women who stand outside the creative act but serve as catalystic agents in the poet's life. All of Cabell's poet-heroes are human; some of the female characters are human, some are supernatural creative figures--gods and demi-gods--who omnipotently set events in motion, complicate the action, and respond to earthly happenings with intrigue within their own ranks. The literary theory is an integral part of both the human and the supernatural actions of the poet-heroes, the women, and the other-worldly figures.

Poet-Heroes

The actions of Cabell's poet heroes are governed by three attitudes:

chivalry, gallantry, and poetry. Chivalry was "an intelligent attitude in which one spun romances and afforded no meticulous attention to mere facts . . ." (I, 38). The chivalrous hero considers himself a vicar of God on earth, and his living is a testing to prove his worthiness for that illusion of himself. The gallant hero, on the other hand, accepts "the pleasures of life leisurely and its inconvenience with a shrug" (I, 101). He is "a well-balanced sceptic who comprehends that he knows very little, and probably amounts to somewhat less, but has the grace to keep his temper" (I, 102). Finally, the poet-hero is driven by the desire to make something endurable out of the raw materials of life. Cabell uses the term, _poet_, to include all creating or making: literary artists are poets, God is a poet, and some historical personages, such as Nero, lead lives that are poetry in the sense that their legends are endurable creations. To make out of life what will endure is to adopt the poetic attitude.

The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel, with its complicated genealogical substructure (see _The Line of Lichfield_, a genealogical charting of the intricate familial and ideological relationships of _The Biography_), is a fictional presentation of the evolution of these attitudes from Medieval Poictesme to Modern Virginia. The three major archetypal characters of the work are Manuel, Jurgen, and Madoc, representing respectively the chivalrous, the gallant, and the poetic attitudes.

All of Cabell's modern poet heroes are direct descendents of Manuel or Jurgen, but their spirits share Madoc's attitude. Manuel begins as a poet--an image maker--but he turns away from creating to become the redeemer of Poictesme. His rejection of image-making is a rejection of language for a life of action. "Words are only transitory voices, whereas man is the child of God, and has an immortal spirit" (II, 126-127). Manuel discovers that image-makers are a tribe of ugly, rickety and short-tempered men who despise all people unable to make images. Alone and miserable in the world of image making, Manuel turns away from Freydis and Audela and chooses a life of action.

> Freydis, there is no way in which two persons may meet in this world of men: we can but exchange, from afair, despairing friendly signals, in the knowledge that they will be misinterpreted. So do we pass, each coming out of a strange woman's womb, each parodied by the flesh of his parents, each passing futilely, with incommunicative gesture, toward the womb of a strange grave and in this jostling we find no comradeship. No soul may travel upon a bridge of words. Indeed there is no word for my foiled huge desire to love and to be loved, just as there is no word for the big, the not quite comprehended thought which is moving in me at this moment. But that thought also is a grief--. (II, 129-130)

Manuel's notion of himself as the vicar of God clearly encompasses God's poetic aspect--if God created life, so can man. Man's attempt, however, is a failure when he uses words.

Jurgen, we are told, is an ex-poet but we are never shown the nature of his works. He has given up poetry to be a pawnbroker. The poetic aspects of his life are no doubt those elaborate imaginative excursions in which he indulges. His imagination--his lies about Manuel's dying in Poictesme--becomes the basis of Manuel's religious cult in Poictesme. Jurgen's poetic imagination is the impetus for the later elaborations about Manuel's life which become the guiding dynamic illusion for the country. In his middle age he skeptically accepts the fabrications of the religion he knows to be based on his own childish falsehood. Ironically, he looks upon the legend he helped shape. Having been deeply involved in the illusion of chivalry as represented in the Legend of Dom Manuel, he stands outside that legend. Knowing the nature of the fictions, which guide men, he accepts those fictions for the good they engender though he is much aware of the actualities which they conceal.

Manuel and Jurgen abandon poetry for chivalry and gallantry and as the lineal ancestors of all the modern poet heroes in The Biography they leave some of this basic antagonism between two of man's images of himself to their descendents. Significantly, Madoc, the only absolute depiction of complete subservience to the poetic attitude, is not a part of the genealogical structure of The Biography. He is, however, no less the spiritual ancestor of the modern poet hero than are Manuel and Jurgen. Madoc, the poet-hero of Music from Behind the Moon, is the medieval archetype of Cabell's modern literary artists, particularly Musgrave and Kennaston. In this brief prose work, the poetic attitude is treated without the heavy overlay of allusion and conundrum so typical of Something About Eve and The Cream of the Jest.

Madoc, a mediocre poet, was dissatisfied with his poems because they lacked order and ". . . they strained toward a melody which stayed forever uncaptured; and they all seemed to him to be thin parodies of an elvish music, not wholly of this earth, some part of which he had heard long ago and had half-forgotten, but the whole of which remained unheard by mortal ears" (IV, 252). The forgotten music, a music perhaps associated with a spiritual existence beyond life and time, returns to Madoc when he sees Ettarre, the witchwoman, and hears her playing on her heartstrings. Unsettled by discontent with his songs and the otherworldly skirling "music from behind the moon," he leaves the court in search of her. Thus begins his journey toward perfect poetic self-expression.

On this journey he meets Jonathas, the Wise, who tells him that once he has heard the music, there will be no rest for his imagination. "There is for a poet no defense against their [the witchwomen's] malice, because their weapon is that song which is an all consuming fire. Still as one nail drives out another nail, and as one fire consumes another, so something may be done against the destroying pain with this" (IV, 254). Whereupon Jonathas gives the poet a large quill pen "fashioned out of a feather which had fallen from the black wings of Lucifer, the Father of all Lies" (IV, 254). Here with greater clarity than in his other fiction about poets, Cabell emphasizes his belief in the magical and diabolical origins of poetry.

The quill pen makes Madoc a more successful poet, if not a better one. He writes patriotic songs, songs glorifying death in war, and optimistic songs to comfort the people; but always he hears the skirling music which derides these songs and reveals the truth. "For always when his music soared at its most potent he heard the skirling music, which was all a doubtfulness and a discontent" (IV, 263).

Madoc as a successful, popular poet is trapped by "the puzzle of all artists." His commercial success wars with his indistinct notions of what his art could be. There is no audience for his true self-expression, only his magic potions of comfortable song. "No other person willed to hear a music which doubtfulness and discontent made overpoignant. They thronged, instead, to hear the sugared and grandiose music which Madoc peddled, and which, like a drug, buoyed up its hearers with self-approval as concerned the present and with self-confidence as touched what was to come" (IV, 264). Freeing himself from this puzzle he continues his search for Ettarre, the source of his inspiration. Maya of the Fair Breasts supplies him with a hippogriffin for his journey toward "the pale mists and the naked desert space behind the moon." This place throbs with Ettarre's music: ". . . it seemed the heartbeat of the universe, and the wind that moved between the stars was attuned to its doubtfulness and discontent" (IV, 271). He frees Ettarre and returns with her to earth where she ceases to sing, but he comes to accept his "comfortable and uplifting songs." Ettarre's domestic instinct overcomes her music, and Madoc compromises his art for security. However, upon Ettarre's death, the "music unheard through all the years in which he had held Ettarre away from her lunar witcheries to be his bedfellow upon Earth . . ." returns. (IV, 286). Again he becomes a vagabond--"a trifle crazed, a trifle ragged, but utterly satisfied to follow after that music which none other heard" (IV, 287). Of this brief, allegorical tale Davis says: "More concisely and drastically than any of Cabell's fiction about poets, The Music From Behind the Moon defines the end of poetry's quest as the supernal beauty described by Poe in 'The Poetic Principle.' Like Shelley's Alastor and Keats's Endymion, it conceives this quest as the life long pursuit of an illusive perfection. Like Poe's 'Israfel' and Rossetti's 'The Blessed Damozel' it eulogizes the chasm that divides the realm of essence from the realm of matter."[1] Madoc is the purest, the most unadorned representation of the poet in the whole of The Biography. In the starkly allegorical presentation of him, Cabell gives his contemporary poet-heroes a forerunner less complicated by the other attitudes. None of the later poet-heroes are direct descendents of Madoc, but they share in part some of his attributes. It is as though Madoc were a distillation of the poetic attitude in pure form, in an earlier more rigidly ordered age--Medieval France. The later appearances of the poetic attitude are complicated by vacant forces within the characters which are no doubt derived from their lineal forefathers, Manuel and Jurgen.

Cabell examines the modern poet-hero in Beyond Life, Cords of Vanity, Something About Eve, and The Cream of the Jest. John Charteris, Robert Townsend, Richard Harrowby, Gerald Musgrave, and Felix Kennaston embody various aspects of the poetic attitude in its complex interrelationship with both the chivalrous and the gallant attitudes. Charteris, Townsend, and Harrowby represent the ascendency of the gallant attitude over the poetic; Gerald Musgrave represents the failures of the chivalric and the poetic attitudes and Felix Kennaston represents the ultimate coalition of the three attitudes--vicarship, skepticism, and creativity.

John Charteris, the Fairhaven novelist, makes frequent appearances throughout The Biography as the town's most famous novelist and philanderer; but his most significant appearances occur in the prologue, Beyond Life, where he talks about literature all Walpurgis Eve, and in the epilogue, Straws and Prayerbooks, where he is summarily dispatched by Cabell who has tired of speaking his literary theory through Charteris' character.

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[1] Joe Lee Davis, James Branch Cabell (New York, 1962), p. 112.

The format of Beyond Life is a nightlong literary discussion, a one-sided exchange of ideas between Cabell and Charteris. Charteris dominates the conversation with what amounts to a series of loosely constructed essays treating the main tenets of the theory of literature and illustrating that theory with impressionistic discussion of favorite writers--Marlowe, Villon, Sheridan, Wycherly, Congreve, Dickens, and Thackeray. This monologue is in essence a peculiarly involved glimpse at some biographical details concerning the lives of these men and some highly opinionated responses to their major works. The emphasis is unquestionably on biographical details, but the writers are introduced "as illustrations of his (Charteris') theory as to the working code of romance." The nature of Charteris' critical viewpoint about the writers is caught in his comments about Christopher Marlowe who in the manner of a true Economist "wasted health and repute, and even lost his life in pursuit of pot-house dissipation" (I, 70). He is a writer whose "utterance is lacking in that element triteness without which no work of art can ever be of general appeal in a world of mostly mediocre people" (I, 73).

As Charteris talks, the reader is aware that the voice is a creation, a fictional character speaking literary ideas which must be received as fictions or illusions. The theory of literature is ever subjected to a kind of Socratic dialogue in which the author appearing as himself attacks his ideas as expressed by one of his characters. Cabell speaks critically of Charteris' views:

> Well, I shall generously say at outset that not in a long time have I heard a discourse so insincere. It is an apology for romance by a man who believes that romance is dead beyond resurrection; and who considers, therefore, that to romance may be attributed every imaginable virtue, without any imaginable consequence. It is a tissue of wild errors, deceitfully glossed with the unreasonableness of a person who is really in earnest; so that I confess, I was at first quite taken in, and fancied you to be lamenting with honest grief the world's lost youth. (I, 245-246)

The warning implicit in this self-examination is that the reader must absorb nothing too quickly; he must be made aware that the theorist, Charteris, may be some wizard--controlled inhabitant of a witches' Sabbath. (Witching nights are Cabell's favorite settings for literary discussions and dream allegories.) Charteris is both Cabell's mouthpiece and his best playing with a kind of mirror image in which he can see himself as a poet and criticize the somewhat loquacious reflection.

Charteris' role in Beyond Life continues in Cords of Vanity where he becomes the major critic of Townsend's literary work.

The Cords of Vanity, the most important depiction of the gallant attitude as it was in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Virginia, is a satirical examination of the novel writing practices of the period. The work presents a rebellion against the idealized vision of the literary artist as reflected in Beyond Life. Robert Etheridge Townsend, for the most part of the novel, narrates an account of his love affairs in which he learns "to accept the pleasures of life leisurely and its inconveniences with a shrug" (XII, ix). During the time of this growth toward sophistication, he also becomes a successful novelist and short story writer with the encouragement of Charteris.

Charteris and Townsend have several discussions of literary art in which Charteris is less the talker than he is in Beyond Life, and more the listener to a point of view which is opposed to his own. In his advice to Townsend concerning a literary career, Charteris says: "You have the ability . . . that dances most gracefully in fetters. You will never write convincingly about the life you know, because life is to you . . . a series of continuous miracles, to which the eyes of other men are case-hardened. Write me, then, a book about the past!" (XII, 90). He suggests that Townsend become an Economist, but this is rejected as "absolute and unmoral nonsense." Writing for posterity's acclaim is of no consequence to Townsend because, in the true spirit of the gallant attitude, he lives wholly in the present. He cannot understand what benefit is to be gained for the author, such as Charteris, who writes for posterity. He wants "to be read and to be a power" while he can appreciate the fact that he is "a sort of power, howsoever insignificant." At the outset of his career, he plans to write "with his tongue in his cheek," which he considers "the one and only attitude . . . in which to write if you indeed desire to be read with enjoyment" (XII, 93).

To support this attitude, Townsend sermonizes in defense of the best-seller. Unlike all of Cabell's novelist heroes and Cabell himself, Townsend studies the demand of the contemporary audience and supplies fiction to suit that demand. He accuses Charteris of overlooking "the single achievement of the nineteenth century--the relegation of its literature to the pharmacopoeia" (XII, 93). Fiction has, in this view, as its main purpose to cause relaxation, to uplift by diverting, to intoxicate and to hypnotize. The successful writer of fiction that sells must "avoid bothering the reader's intelligence . . ." by remembering "the crass emotions of half-educated persons are his chosen keyboard" (XII, 94). Townsend abhors Charteris' expression, "the dignity of literature" and replaces it with the most elemental premise of literary discussion: the book I like is a good book. "A novel which has diverted a thousand semi-illiterate persons is exactly ten times as good as a novel that has pleased a hundred superior persons" (XII, 95). To Charteris writing is "an art rather than a business"; to Townsend this is a silly position that ignores "the touchstone of any artist" which is

> . . . the skill with which he adopts his craftsmanship to his art's limitations. . . . The most important limitations in the writing of fiction nowadays is that you have to appeal to people who would never think of reading you or anybody else, if they could possibly imagine any other employment for that particular vacant half hour. And you cannot hope for an audience of even intelligent persons, because intelligent persons do not attempt to keep abreast with modern fiction. It is probably ascribable to the fact that they enjoy being intelligent, and wish to remain so. (XII, 95)

At the outset, then, Townsend sees the main limitation on the fiction writer's success to be his audience. For his theory the audience is far more important than the quality of the work or the artist's integrity in producing that work. His position is directly opposed to Charteris' at this point, because it insists on a place of importance for the audience that receives a work of art. His derogatory notion of the quality of audiences is a direct statement of what is implied in the slighting of the audience's importance throughout the other discussions of literary theory. The final sardonic statement of this position makes the commercially successful writer the ultimate artist.

> The writing of a frankly trashy novel which will 'sell' is the highest imaginable form of art. For true art, in its last terms, is the adroit circumvention of an insurmountable obstacle. I suppose that form and harmony and color are very difficult to tame; and the sculptor, the musician and the painter quite probably earn their hire. But people don't go to concerts unless they want to hear music; whereas people who buy the 'best seller' are the people who would prefer to do anything else conceivable rather than, in Cabell's phrase, be reduced to reading. I protest that the man who makes these half-wits labor on until they see how 'it will come out' is a great deal more than an artist; he is a sorcerer. (XII, 96)

Townsend's artist is clearly no Economist and at this stage he seems to be committing artistic suicide according to Cabell's discussions of the means of becoming a great literary artist. As well he might, Charteris condemns the whole argument, calling it a rehashing of "Cabell's plagiarized nonsense"; but, he admonishes Townsend to write the book anyway, perceiving, perhaps, that the true process of writing as he conceives it will take hold and exclude the drive toward commercial success.

The Apostate, Townsend's first novel, written according to his formula, is an immediate success; the author calls it "a medley of conventional tricks and extravagant rhetoric inanimate by any least particle of myself. . . . The book was the most unbridled kind of balderdash" and "the very current mode of 1900" (XII, 97). His second novel is based on one of his affairs; it, too, becomes an immediate success. For the third novel, he briefly plans to write a book in the manner of Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford, with Fairhaven's provincialism as its subject; upon reflection he discovers a truth about the relationship between the real world that one experiences and the possibilities of successfully fictionalizing that world. "For to write convincingly of the persons peculiar to any locality it is necessary either to have thoroughly misunderstood them, or else perservingly to have been absent from daily intercourse with them until age has hardened the brain cells and you have forgotten what your quodam associates were really like. Then, alone, may you write character studies which will be sufficiently abundant in quantities and local flavor" (XII, 165). By the third novel, Townsend's position is clearly moving toward Charteris' notion about the necessary distance between the literary artist's experience and his conversion of those experiences into literature. Obviously Townsend is becoming more interested in the nature of the work, in the qualities he can attain without considering the audience's taste. He puts aside the plan to use Fairhaven and turns to the idea of writing an idyllic novel about young love, a novel in which style is uppermost; however, he recognizes that he will lose his audience. "But I had somehow contracted an insane notion that a novel is the more enjoyable when it is adroitly written. In point of fact, of course, no man who writes with care is ever read with pleasure; you may toil through a page or two perhaps, but presently you are noting how precisely every word is fitted to the thought, and later you are noting nothing else. You are insensibly beguiled into a fidgety-footed analysis of every clause, which fatigues in the outcome, and by the tenth page you are yawning" (XII, 186). The concern for style and the knowledge of its effect on his readers leads to a position commensurate with that expressed in Straws and Prayerbooks: "A man writes admirable prose not at all for the sake of having it read, but for the more sensible reason that he enjoys playing solitaire" (XII, 187).

Townsend's idyllic novel never is tested against the audience because the other party of the affair on which it is based writes her own novel using the plot.

Townsend's career as a novelist reaches its pinnacle when Charteris with whom he has disagreed at the beginning of his career praises some of his short stories. Having moved to a position more closely akin to Charteris', Townsend desires to meet the standards set in that critical theory through a clear fictionalization of the poetic attitude which achieves some dominance over the skeptical and worldly gallant attitude.

Gerald Musgrave, an early nineteenth-century Virginia novelist, is the poet-hero of Something About Eve. He is writing a romance "about the high loves of his famous ancestor Dom Manuel of Poictesme," with the main purpose of giving America "a literature superior to that of other countries." He alone of the American Musgraves has adopted the poetic attitude to become a member of the clan of Madoc ". . . who was neither chivalrous nor gallant, but merely a poet,--a never-idle 'maker'; and to whom all human life afforded, in the ultimate, only to raw material which his half-trained imaginings might remake into something more comely, more symmetrical, and more diverting" (X, x).

At the beginning of the novel, Gerald has lost patience with writing and has acquired a taste for magic; he escapes from the confinement of his literary career and his sex-life with Evelyn Townsend by making a bargain with a Sylan, Glaum of the Haunting Eyes. Sylan wishes to enjoy the fine sense of physical existence, and Gerald wishes to excel in "the unjustly neglected art of the magician." For him the source of the great and best words of magic is the Master Philologist who rules Antan with his wife, Queen Freydis. Gerald and the Sylan exchange places and Gerald's spirit begins a journey toward Antan.

His spiritual journey through the Marches of Antan is marked by a series of episodes in which Gerald is tempted away from his artistic goal by his own desires. Mother Sereda, the eternal female principle, sends her daughters to tempt Gerald. His contacts with these mythical temptresses, Eve's daughters--Evadne, Evasherah, Evavan, and Evaine--are thinly veiled sexual episodes in which the consummation of physical involvement is checked by his feelings that they represent partial reflections of his ideal dream woman. Sereda notes these failures but says that they do not matter because it is not the female alone that words to detain the romantic spirit. "He travels . . . with his assured betrayers and the road he follows, that also, is lively enough and long enough to betray him in the end. For he will meet other of my daughters; and if all else fails, he will meet me" (X, 61). She admonishes her daughters that "one has to perserve with these romantics, no matter how hard the task may seem!" (X, 61).

Gerald seems to be aware that he is the source of these dreams of desirable women; as he observes one of them, he feels that "he is observing himself and the thing happening to this careful, this well-poised, fastidious, parched rather pitiable Gerald whom for so many years he has known." (X, 92). These dream women are representations in each case of some part of his idealized vision of "unflawed beauty, seemingly not ever to be found upon this earth" (X, 95). Each of them offers him "an untruth that shall make him free" to pursue a living "among bright shadows very futilely" but with happiness.

Faced with this overwhelming and redundant evidence that all human existence is governed by Two Truths that govern the Marches of Antan, "we copulate and die," Gerald optimistically reaffirms his belief in a goal beyond life and in the divine order and symmetry of life.

> I am persuaded that in the goal of all the gods there is a more august power than any which men know of hereabouts assuredly. For I note the sympathy and compassion and love and self-denial which human beings display toward one another, after all, rather copeously. I reflect that every art is a form of self-expression and I deduce that the artist who created human beings was prompted in his embodiment of all these qualities by sheer egotism. He observed these qualities in his own nature: he approved of them: and so he embodied them. No actually reflective person, therefore, will ever imagine that human life does not go forward toward some kindly winding up, since none who finds philanthropy in his own heart can doubt that philanthropy exists in the head of his creator. (X, 148-149)

His imaginative powers still unharmed by his physical desire and his dreams of something beyond sexual fulfillment, Gerald is finally confronted by Mother Sereda herself. With a magic potion he changes her into a more youthful and more desirable Maya of the Fair Breasts. The temptresses having failed to lead Gerald into an illusionary phallic world, Maya resorts to passive femininity and an idyllic domestic life. In a cottage filled with rose-colored mirrors and with the aid of rose colored glasses, she seduces him away from his goal--Antan. From the serenity of Mispec Moor, Antan seems to Gerald "to be uniformly wonderful." He feels that in certainty he has a better imaginative vision of happenings there than could ever be enacted.

His stay on Mispec Moor (Compromise) is a period in which he questions other figures who move toward Antan. This section of the novel is a long series of conversations with poets, myths, legends, and historical persons. His dialogues with Nero, Villon, Odysseus, Neo, Merlin, and Tannhauser gradually convince him that he need journey no further. With the desire to achieve Antan on the wane, he attempts to discover the nature of his goal indirectly. Over and over he asks these figures why they are going to Antan, but he gets no definite answers. Gradually, he comes to understand that they go not because they know the nature of the goal, but because of their own dissatisfaction with the world behind them. This realization and the quality of his own imaginings about Antan lead him toward the conclusion that such unknown but idealistically imagined goals are best left unattained. Antan, he recognizes, is a kind of death of the creative spirit when attained.

The desire to go having been dissolved by both domestic and imaginative contentment, Musgrave is quickly returned to his library and the work of chronicling man's sexual behavior throughout history. Through Sereda's magic his romantic imagination is replaced by a concern for realistic scholarly research into the complexities of the Two Truths. With his research comes fame and the favors of married women.

None of Gerald's decisions is forced upon him. He is an agent of his own condition; his final attitude succumbs to his physical needs and his curiosity. Gerald Musgrave, then, is a characterization of the literary artist who attempts to push his powers beyond his limitations. He is doomed from the start by his condition as a man never to attain his goal, which is his own illusion. His final acceptance of what he is as a man deprives him of the poetic attitude, but it restores him to a successful existence as a human being. The condition of being satisfied destroys the power of Romance within him.

Felix Kennaston makes his first appearance in The Eagle's Shadow (1905) and later becomes the central figure of The Cream of the Jest (1917), the climatic fiction of The Biography and the book most completely devoted to a modern examination of the poetic attitude.

In the course of The Eagle's Shadow's complicated Austen-like plot of suitors and maidens, Kennaston's major action is a reading from his own book, Defense of Ignorance, an attack on truth in art and life: "In art, the bare truth must, in mere gallantry, be accorded a petticoat, of paint or of painted goods, to hide her nakedness; and, in life, truth is a disastrous virtue that we have united to commend and award." (XV, 124). The conclusion and major point of Kennaston's book foreshadows the arrival of the Philistine in Pseudopolis, a major incident in Jurgen. (The Philistines come with the avowed purpose to explain away all of the Greek myths and legends.) Kennaston complains that there are "too many inquiries, doubts, investigations, discoveries, and apologies" (XVI, 126). History and mythology, indeed all imaginative stories about Joan of Arc, Aaron Burr, Shakespeare, and Zeus are being dispelled and explained. "Mythology--the poet's necessity, the fertile mother of his invention--has become a series of atmospheric phenomena, and the labors of Hercules prove to be a dozen weather bulletins" (XV, 127). Thus Kennaston is first seen as a detached novelist who opposes realism in life as well as in fictional presentation of life. This premise is developed in an essay that foreshadows the content of Beyond Life and Straws and Prayerbooks.

In his later role as the poet-hero of The Cream of the Jest, Felix Kennaston represents the poetic attitude in modern setting; he is a man using the raw materials of human life to divert himself and to assure his own immortality. By means of the Sigil of Scoteia, he lives in a dream world, ever seeking but not touching Ettarre, the female creative inspiration. In his dreams he is Horvendile, wandering through history, fiction, mythology, and folklore. The concentration in this novel is on Kennaston's feelings and sensations and his imaginative working within his dream experiences. The Cream of the Jest explores Felix's dream world and his self-analysis and self-realization of the nature of literature, reality, and the universe. It is a self-justifying expression of a creed in which Felix distills his thoughts from his dreams much as Cabell distills his notions in Beyond Life and Straws and Prayerbooks.

Chapters entitled "Eppur Si Muove" and "Evolution of a Vestryman" are the most conclusive statements of Felix's literary theory. As he moves through history in his dreams, Kennaston comes to understand that man progresses "through irrational and astounding blunders, whose outrageousness bedwarfs the wildest cliches of romance" (XVI, 137). He sees that man evolves by happenstance toward "greater efficiency and comeliness" (XVI, 137). Mankind like the characters in his novels is moved by a puppet-shifter who appears "to seek, at once, utility and artistic self-expression" (XVI, 137-138). In this world's history, human inhabitancy is not very important, considering how short a time there has been life.

Dwarfed by his sense of time and of the brevity of life, Kennaston poses the question, "Why is Kennaston?" Religion does not satisfy him because he distrusts the simile that describes the relationship between divinity and man as that of a father and his children. He rejects the chivalrous attitude of vicarship--of man's illusion of his relationship with God. For Kennaston, reality consists of the "evanescent emotions and sensations of that single moment, that infinitesimal fraction of a second which is passing now, and it is in the insignificance of this moment precisely that pious people must believe" (XVI, 143). Religion strives to teach that this moment is unimportant and that man must live for something beyond actuality. Art, on the other hand, strives to make "the sensations of a moment soul-satisfying." Hence art has been considered irreligious because it performs what religion only promises (XVI, 143-144). Man's life is a continual looking forward to something that will be better tomorrow; his desire is to have life assume the shape of a romance like those in story-books. Human life is conceived to be "a distorted mirror held up to literature" (XVI, 148). The hope that guides Kennaston is that "living might become symmetrical, well-plotted, coherent, and as rational as living is in books" (XVI, 149). Life, to Kennaston, has no symmetry and the universe seems "a vast disheveled horror" (XVI, 149). Life strives toward symmetry, balance, order and proportion, but nowhere does it attain these goals. Only man can make symmetry. Kennaston sees an Artist-God--his fellow craftsman--with a commendable sense of form and the planet earth as that corner of the studio wherein God is working at present, and all life as the romance that God is editing. Life and God are one in this striving; the poet's drive toward symmetry is analogous to the drive inherent in the Universe.

Felix, like God the Artist, falls short of his literary goal, but he believes in the possibility of ultimate success in his drive toward perfect order. However, this absolute acceptance of cosmic and literary optimism as the highest dynamic illusion is modified at the conclusion of the chapter, "Evolution of a Vestryman" (XVI, 145ff). This modification of an exuberantly expressed creed occurs in a manner very closely akin to the closing chapters of Beyond Life. A skeptical novelist-friend of the hero attacks the position and suggests a less optimistic position. As Cabell himself appears to challenge Charteris' theory at the conclusion of Charteris' long monologue, so Richard Harrowby takes issue with Kennaston's doctrines. Harrowby sums up Kennaston's position in a sardonic tone:

> To the discerning, it is easy enough to detect, in all this fantastic theorizing, the man's obsessive love of ordered beauty and his abhorrence of slovenliness and shapelessness--very easy to see just what makes the writings of Felix Kennaston most admirable,--here alluring him to believe that such ideals must also be cherished by Omnipotence. This poet loved his formal art to the extent of coming to assume it was the purpose, and the origin of terrestrial life. Life seemed to him, in short, a God's chosen form of artistic self-expression; and as a confrere, Kennaston found the result praiseworthy. Even inanimate nature, he sometimes thought, might be a divine experiment in vers libre. . . . (XVI, 58)

Harrowby as the narrator of The Cream of the Jest finds Kennaston's theory too pat--"the shallowest sort of mysticism." He says in rebuttal as a character within the novel he narrates, "The fatal fault, sir, of your theorizing is that it is too complete. It aims to throw light upon the universe, and therefore is self-evidently moonshine. The Wardens of Earth do not desire that we should understand the universe, Mr. Kennaston; it is part of Their appointed task to insure that we never do; and because of Their efficiency every notion that any man, dead, living, or unborn might form as to the universe will necessarily prove wrong. So, if for no other reason I must decline to think of you and me as characters in a romance" (XVI, 161-162). Harrowby reflects the skeptical gallant attitude. He is willing to stop with the necessary doubt, accepting what he cannot know; but Kennaston desires the fabricated illusion of his own belief in the ascendency of Art.

This motif occurs in a more symbolic form at the conclusion of The Cream of the Jest. Harrowby explains the nature of Kennaston's dream symbol, the Sigil of Scoteia, but Kennaston ignores the explanation, saying that it makes not a whit that the romantic emblem is merely a cold cream jar cap. The dreams, the fictions, are nonetheless real. The fact that the belief is an assumption without basis in actuality is not so important as the subjective feelings and the creations aroused by it. Thought and feeling are communicated by the artist's shaping of his materials, not by those materials themselves, and "all art which strives to make the moment's sensations soul-satisfying performs what religion only promises" (XVI, 144).

Cabell's theory of literature receives its final and most conclusive examination in the poet-hero, Felix Kennaston. He is the best depiction of the poet who understands his relationship with the universe and the relationship between the work he creates and the creative force at the center of the universe. Davis has summarized the aesthetic historicism of The Cream of the Jest and Kennaston's view, most succinctly: "Thackeray in 'De Finibus' tells how the characters of his creation become real people to him, moved into his study, disrupted his household, ignored his convenience, and behaved generally with wills of their own. If one combines this view of the author's relation to his puppets with Coleridge's primary and secondary imagination and if one adds the Butlerian, Shavian, and Bergsonian versions of 'creative evolution, he has the substance of Kennaston's thinking about art and reality."[2] Kennaston is Cabell's last poet-hero in The Biography; as such he reflects the basic tension between the image-makers and the universe. In opposition to the actualities of the universe and his rationalisation of belief in fiction or illusion he takes a position opposed to Manuel's but somewhat akin to Jurgen's and exactly parallel to Madoc's vagabondage. He does not reject image-making or illusion fiction, but he is not without knowledge of their intangible aspect. Like Jurgen he understands the bases of belief, and he values the good results. Like Madoc he strives toward a perfected self-expression which eludes him. The seeking is more productive than completion. Kennaston chooses an unattained, ordered, fictive vision of the universe over disordered actuality.

Cabell's variant depictions of the poet-hero emphasize the conflicts and the solutions to conflicts of both internal and external nature which confront the poet. Devotion to the poetic attitude is replaced in Manuel's case by the chivalric attitude; for Jurgen the gallant attitude supersedes the poetic though it does not obliterate knowledge of the creative past. For Madoc, commercial and popular success as well as domestication of the dream woman destroy the imaginative drive; however, the normal course of human existence restores the poet to his endless search. Townsend progresses from absolute supply and demand creativity toward self-diverting shaping of words. Gerald Musgrave's poetic ambition succumbs to contentment and finally he even substitutes the study of sex for sexual involvement; but it must be remembered that his spiritual journey was a quest for magic words not for beautiful carefully ordered words. Essentially his direction was away from poetry at the beginning. And finally there is Kennaston, the dreamer-poet, who immerses himself in belief and in the historical, mythical, and legendary materials that are the poet's tools. Optimistically he harmonizes his ideas of literature with his thoughts about the universe and finds in both a shared harmony, a common drive toward symmetry, beauty, order, and truth. The irony of Kennaston's achievement lies in the fact that his grasp of this analogous relationship between universe and the creative imagination brings his productive years to a halt. Like all the rest, with perhaps the exception of Madoc, having solved the puzzle, having resolved the tension within himself, he withdraws from his art.

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[2] Davis, p. 126.

Supernatural Characters

The supernatural characters in The Biography are of two kinds: those taken from true mythologies and those invented by Cabell. The true mythological characters usually are one part original to three parts Cabellian invention. Two of these figures make frequent significant appearances throughout the work, namely Koshchei and Horvendile. Two others make less frequent appearances but nonetheless important contributions: Miramon Lluagor and Donander. Of these four gods or demigods only Koshchei is a true mythical figure. He is Koshchei the Deathless of the firebird legend in Russian folklore. These mythic figures are part of what might be called the Cabellian pantheon of creation myths. Their relationships to each other are clearly drawn; their influence among the other characters and in the major actions of The Biography are as consistently developed a literary apparatus as are Homer's gods and Alexander Pope's sylphs. Cabell spends as much effort in making them believable personages as he does in creating the knights and gentlemen of Poictesme and Fairhaven.

Miramon Lluagor, one of the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion, is a creator of dreams; he is the lord of magicians, of seven sleeps and nine madnesses; he lives on a mountain, Vraidex, in his castle, Doubtful Palace, where he thinks dreams, illusions, and nightmares which he rolls down the mountain to the people. His freedom in creative thinking is hampered by his wife's attitude toward such activity. As a continuing theme, Cabell's female characters, particularly the wives, are Realists who restrain and paradoxically inspire the creative urge in men. Miramon's desire to free himself of his wife, Gisele, is the trigger to the main action of Figures of Earth, beginning with Manuel's journey up Vraidex, ostensibly to rescue Gisele from Miramon, but really through Miramon's trickery to take the querulous Gisele away from the magician.

The third book of The Silver Stallion is devoted to Miramon's escapades as a member of Manuel's dissolved fellowship. Miramon is the second member to deny Manuel. Returning to Vraidex and his nagging wife, he resumes his "art for art's sake," composing the black and white and technicolor dreams of mankind in order to help them escape themselves.

Miramon's dreams, however, are tinged with skepticism and do in truth "mirror man." It is precisely this quality in them that Gisele is opposed to, thinking that dreams should only show the good side of mankind. So Miramon, in a fit of temper, wishes her into the middle of last week. Without Gisele, Miramon is miserable and void of creative urges; domestic tranquility is not conducive to imaginative productivity in the Cabellian theory of letters. Miramon's is the artist's characteristic compromise and acceptance to pursue his art in the Economist's way--making the greatest use of the raw materials of self-expression.

Donander is the hero of Book IX, "Above Paradise," of The Silver Stallion. He "was the only one of the lords of the Silver Stallion who accepted with joy and unbounded faith the legend of Manuel, and who in all his living bore testimony to it" (III, 251). Upon his death Donander's spirit is taken by mistake to pagan Valhalla where he marries Vanadis and fits out a chapel, a place where he can pray for "the second coming of Manuel and for the welfare of Donander's soul upon the holy Morrow of Judgement" (III, 265). For the Aenseis in Ydalir, Donander becomes the Man-God, Donander Veratyr, an Ans of mature standing, one of the Aenseis.

After a while in pagan eternity, Donander sees one of his brothers-in-law, Koshchei, playing a "droll-looking sport." (III, 266). Vanadis teaches Donander how to play; he begins to create and populate worlds by his handicraft. Thus Donander begins his demiurgy with an Egyptian creation myth, Kam and Khypera. His skill increases as he indulges in demiurgy, until he merely has to desire a world to have it come into existence. In this manner he creates a universe of planetary systems (III, 268) while he awaits Manuel and Judgment Day.

Sidvrar Vafudir, the Weaver and Constrainer, Father of Vanadis (the Father and Master of all), comes to stop Donander's excessive world and universe making. To do this he shows Donander that all the worlds he has created worship him, Donander Veratyr, as a god, and fight over theological differences about their belief in him. Sidvrar also shows Donander that the Earth is gone, that Jehovah has long since stopped playing with it and he admonishes Donander to stop his world making because all of the noise these believers send out are ugly and unbecoming for an Ans of Donander's rank. Donander, in supposed contempt for these creations and the insects which inhabit them, wills them gone. Sidvrar closes the oval window on the universe for good and Donander becomes "a lonely and uncomprehended immortal among his many peers" (III, 276). But, as soon as the King and Father of the Aenseis leaves, Donander returns to his chapel to worship Manuel and to await his coming and Judgment Day. To his mind all that Sidvrar has shown him is "illusion planned with some evil spirit's aid to tempt Donander away from respectability and the true faith" (III, 277).

Significantly, just as novels are created by the Cabellian novelist characters, so Donander creates universes as play, as a self-diverting, self-expression. The worlds like the fictions are "imaginative self-expression which have 'no purpose, no particular end for the creation except play, self-expression, or self-diversion" (III, 277). The Demiurge, here represented by Donander Veratyr, creates dynamic illusions which are worlds and universes and planetary systems but, he has a human heart which makes him a devout believer in one of these dynamic illusions, the legend of a redeemer, of hope and salvation for mankind as well as the Gods or Demiurges. Like Felix, Donander, though he is aware of the illusionary nature of his creations, chooses to believe even as he stops creating.

Koshchei, Donander's brother-in-law, is the creator of "things as they are." He is the ultimate Realist in The Biography and he appears almost as frequently as Horvendile, the diabolical author of the Romantic events. Koshchei, a familiar figure in Russian folklore, appears most importantly in Jurgen and The Silver Stallion. The Heaven which Jurgen ascends to is the Heaven created by Koshchei after Jurgen's grandmother Steinvor's concept of what Heaven ought to be like. The ideas for heaven were taken from Revelation. The Hell Jurgen visits was also created by Koshchei, in this case, after man's guilt-ridden dreams of his own punishments. From these two examples it is apparent that Koshchei is an unimaginative creator, a realist bounded in his making by what is.

In the last episode of Jurgen, the hero faces Koshchei as "the manager of the cave"--a cave similar to Plato's. Here Koshchei brings back all of Jurgen's dreams to tempt him again, but Jurgen rejects these phantoms: Guinevere, Anaitis, Helen and Death. So, reluctantly, Koshchei returns Jurgen's wife, Dame Lisa, as "the voice of Judgement."

Koshchei's power as the creator of the world is threatened in The Silver Stallion. When the rogue Miramon knocks the bees of Toupan off their blackcross, the cosmos that Koshchei dominates is disturbed and the

Old Ones who superseded him are awakened. Toupan, Guaracy, and Jacy begin to stir, threatening the harmony of the universe. Koshchei's agents, the Star Warriors and the Wardens of Worlds, beg him to do something, but he refuses. As each bee is knocked off Koshchei's power weakens and suns melt; but the Realist, Koshchei, has absolute faith that the world he has made will work as he has intended it to work. Miramon's desire for his wife causes him to wish both her and the bees to be restored. When the bees return, the Old Ones settle into their places and Koshchei's rule is complete once again. The essence of the man and woman relationships, sexual desire and domestic regularity,overcome any threat to the universe that he has patterned after his ideas of flesh.

Koshchei's most frequent activities as a supernatural version of the realistic literary artist are passive; as a craftsman his success seems to lie in having made an absolutely predictable world peopled by absolutely predictable beings--a sexually dominated real world which behaves mechanistically. He reduces the romantic dream creators to flesh by the reminder that they have since creation been flesh and no more. He uses man's self-punishing guilt, which is inherent in the flesh, as his main source of inspiration for man's end--Hell. Koshchei's omnipresence is assumed by the world as it is, a world without the auctorial virtues of fiction. Like Death, Pan, the Brown Man, and Janicot, frequent symbolic characters in The Biography, Koshchei is dull but powerful, a constand reminder of decay and of the strengths and weaknesses of the flesh. Like the Realist female characters, Sereda, Maya, Gisele, and Niafer, he sustains the world by expecting no more of it than was in the original creation, itself no more or less than colorless, imperfect, intolerant clay.

Except in Jurgen, where he is identified with Koshchei and Koshchei's realism, Horvendile, the diabolical romantic demiurge of The Biography, is Koshchei's opposite and, by far, the most complex creator-artist, fictional mythic character that Cabell created.

Horvendile's first appearance in the Biography is as Orven Deal, an off-stage character in The Eagle's Shadow who sends a villain, Cockeyed-Flinks, to wound the hero, Billy Woods, and change the course of the plot. Kennaston, who later shares Horvendile's identity, makes his first appearance in this novel.

Horvendile makes a brief appearance in Figures of Earth, as Grandfather Death's companion and as the prophet of Manuel's coming experiences. After Death takes Niafer away, Manuel has a discussion with Horvendile who tells him that he will lose everything and will at the last detest all human wisdom. To Horvendile the whole of the place, the action, the characters seem things that he has imagined and all the world appears to him to be only his notion. As the internal author of The Biography Horvendile expands his ideas of the fiction into a philosophical discussion. Man's seeking for success is "but the stirrings of an ape reft of his tale, and grown rusty at climbings, who yet feels himself to be a symbol and the frail representative of Omnipotence in a place that is not home." (II, 39). Man employs himself stirring "blunderingly, from mystery to mystery, with pathetic makeshifts not understanding anything, greedy in desires and honey-combed with poltroonery, and yet ready to give all, and to die fighting for the sake of that undemonstrable idea, about his being Heaven's vicar and heir" (II, 39). In this manner Horvendile sums up the basic romantic-naturalism discussed in Part One of this study. Essentially he restates the central collusion of man's dynamic illusions and his natural condition--the dreaming ape. On this combined note of literary theory and world view, Horvendile instructs Manuel as to the means of attaining his desires. His other appearances in this novel are silent, the most notable occurring as Manuel's saga begins again by the Haranton, near the worm-eaten cross and the two stones: those Christian-Phallic emblems of his redemptive nature. Horvendile's presence at this scene reminds us that Manuel holds Poictesme in liege to Horvendile--the auctorial overlord of The Biography.

In The Silver Stallion Horvendile's role is that of liege lord and fictive author of the events. He sends the Fellows of the Stallion toward adventures which he has foreordained. In Book One he sends the members of the dissolved Fellowship in different directions to storm the fortresses of other Redeemers and to replace those fortresses of myth with Dom Manuel's legend. This dispatching of the knights occurs in a chapter suitably entitled "The Economics of Horvendile." Being the chief myth maker or illusion shaper of The Biography, Horvendile as the Demiurge has his role sharpened by the fact that it is he who controls the shaping of the new dynamic illusion, the life of Dom Manuel, which is the substance of The Biography. He is the supernatural Economist author, making the best use of the raw materials ordered by him in a work of art.

Characteristically, Horvendile's next appearance in The Silver

Stallion comes at the conclusion. He appears to dispel women's disagreement over Manuel's true nature. His statement to them is a cogent repetition of Cabell's basic view of mankind and the necessity of illusions or fictions: "So does it come about that the saga of Manuel and the sagas of all the lords of the Silver Stallion have been reshaped by the foolishness and the fond optimism of mankind; and these sagas now conform in everything to that supreme romance which preserves from insanity. For it is just as I said, years ago, to one of these so drolly whitewashed and ennobled rapscallions. All men that live, and that go perforce about this world like blundering lost children whose rescuer is not yet in sight, have a vital need to believe in this sustaining legend about the Redeemer, and about the Redeemer's power to make those persons who serve him just and perfect" (III, 293). Niafer, the preserver and developer of the legend of Manuel, turns away from this skeptic with the same resolution that Donander had when he turned away from Sidvrar. Horvendile vanishes again, having spoken the broadest view of man's role in his own fictions or illusions.

The metamorphosis of Horvendile into Felix Kennaston, the poet-hero of The Cream of the Jest, is the climactic fictional point of The Biography and of the theory of literature. Horvendile describes himself before he is transformed into Kennaston of modern Lichfield: "There was once in a land very far away from this land--in my country--a writer of romances. And once he constructed a romance which, after a hackneyed custom of my country, he pretended to translate from an old manuscript written by an ancient clerk--called Horvendile . . . I am the maker of that romance, this room, this castle, all the broad rolling countryside without, is but a portion of my dreams, and these places have no existence except in my fancies" (XVI, 27). The remainder of Horvendile's life in The Biography is as the self-analyzing dreamer-poet, Kennaston.

Horvendile is both god and man, creator and author, fate and improbability, critic and philosophical commentator. He is a skeptic and a disrupting force who works within the fictional patterns. In brief appearances he sets some of the novels in motion and he resolves other actions in unexpected and illogical ways. He may be pure spirit or force, a real Demiurge; but he is always described as red-headed and constantly attended by the perfect woman, Ettarre. He also may be one of Felix Kennaston's dreams about his romantic activities in past ages. Frequently he is called the Author, indicating he is the major Artist-as-God character of The Biography. He is the gadfly to all the idealistic and befuddled heroes of The Biography. He is an ally to Grandfather Death and, perhaps, the creator of Koshchei, the supreme Realist. He is the perfect embodiment of romantic naturalism, the guiding wizard of the skeptical-optimism, which is Cabell's hallmark. In his duality as Kennaston, he is the personification of the poetic attitude.

Cabell's supernatural characters are not, literally speaking, literary artists with the exception perhaps of Horvendile who associates himself specifically with the literary artist's imagined and controlled world. They are "makers" or poets in the Greek sense and as such they reflect the same creative processes that are expressed by the literary artists of Poictesme and Modern Virginia. These mythical characters create at a cosmic level with worlds and the worldly poet-heroes mirror these supernatural creations in their shapings of words into novels, poems, and plays that are analogous to the created universe.

These supernatural creators of The Biography are embodiments of what Cabell considers the archetypal patterns of poetry. In depicting them, he can shape his theory of literature on a more allegorical and hence more complexly philosophical plane. He can examine the God-the-Artist or God-the-Poet analogue by creating Gods and demi-gods such as Horvendile, Donander, Koshchei and Miramon Llugor who are transcendent but also imminent forms of artists. They, too, create in acts of imaginative self-expression. Koshchei is the realist of the cosmos; Donander and Miramon are the romantic makers of worlds and dreams; and Horvendile is the skeptical, diabolical, romantic shaper of lives and actions which are the contents of The Biography. Cabell uses these mythical makers to suggest that the universe and The Biography are far too complex to have been generated out of one creative imagination.

Women

Cabell's female characters generally reflect a central paradox of his literary theory: the destructive and inspirational necessity of the female in the poet's life. Woman for Cabell's poet-hero is an ideal toward which he moves and a force which restrains his imaginative powers. The sexual impulse and its object control the worlds of actuality and of fantasy. Though the ideal woman may be the poet's major inspiration, she is, if attained, the agent of destruction for that inspiration. In the flesh or in the dream, Cabell's women are realists or anti-romantics. If for a moment Guinevere, Anaites, or Melior seems the perfect woman, proximity reveals that the essense of womanhood is realism. Helen alone of all Cabell's female figures remains an emblem of untarnished beauty and symmetry; Jurgen knows that to touch her would be to destroy this dynamic illusion out of the classical past.

Two classes of women populate Fairhaven and Poictesme: the dreamed witchwomen and wives. The fantasy women are as frequently corrupters of poetic expression as they are its inspiration. Wives, on the other hand, are poets' necessary associations, perhaps even more necessary than the fantasy women. Consistently dreamfigures disperse the imaginative world in witch-like conjurations of illusory sex and domesticity. But wives challenge poetic illusions with common sense. The successful poet-figure traverses both fantasy and actuality: Miramon, the dream-maker, achieves a harmony between his own self-realization as an artist and his wife, Gisele's, grumbling disapproval of his art. Jurgen, Manuel, and Florian give up the dreamworld for domesticity. An archetypal Penelope-figure and the duties of home await every poet-adventurer after his imaginative sojourns with the Circes, Didos, and Nausicas of his dreams.

Cabell's witchwomen are derived from myth, fiction, and history: Ettarre and Guineveve are derived from the Arthurian materials. Freydis is Germanic; Sereda, Russian; and Anaites, Greek. Melior and Melusine are French fairy tale and folk characters and Alianora is based on Eleanor of Acquitaine. Each, however, becomes a complex allegorical figure in Cabell's fictive theory of literature. Of these the most important are Ettarre, Freydis, and Sereda.

Ettarre, Manuel's third daughter, is the constant companion of

Horvendile, the all-controlling fictional author of The Biography. Horvendile says that she is Helen to him (VI, 214). She is the epitome of the Cabell witchwoman who beguiles the poet toward creativity and destruction. In her physical form she is illusive, "white-limbed and like a living mist" (IV, 253) in the twilight. The Norns have condemned her to live in the Waste Beyond the Moon for so long as her poisonous music lasts (IV, 254). Her music inspires Madoc, the poet, to perfect his singing. After succumbing to domestic life with the poet, she dies. His inspiration gone, Madoc places his pen in her hand saying that he will write no more songs. Charteris, in Beyond Life, associates her with both Circe and Melusine, witchwomen who dwell in "a secluded land which is always less glaringly lighted than our work-a-day world shows at noontide" (I, 54). For Horvendile she embodies all he "was ever able to conceive of beauty and fearlessness and strange purity, and she is "that ageless, lovable, and loving woman long worshipped and sought everywhere in vain by all poets" (XVI, 10). In a typical Cabell internal footnote Horvendile lists all of Ettarre's appearances before great poets of the past: she was Helen to Homer, Calypso to Odysseus, Antigone to Sophocles, Bombycan to Theocrites, Isolde to Mark and Tristan, Medea to Jason, Esclairmonde to Huon. Indeed, "all poets had had fitfull glimpses . . ." (XVI, 11-12). She has also taken part in the lives of powerful men who have lived with poetic intensity: Cromwell, Mohammed, Richelieu, Tamburlaine, and Julius Caesar (XVI, 183). Cabell obviously thinks of her as the feminine essence--enigmatic, witch-like, beautiful, disarming, crafty, fickle--which survives all ages. Though her fleshly forms may be destroyed by domesticity her spirituality is timeless and her life with any poet is only a fragment; "for her story is not lightly to be ended . . . by the death of any woman's body which Ettarre is wearing; nor is her music making ended either . . . , no matter to what ears time and conformity may have brought deafness" (IV, 288).

Significantly, Ettarre is the only figure in The Biography who is not "debunked" by Horvendile as an unworthy, manmade illusion. She is his guiding illusion and one of Cabell's major character types--the witchwoman.. No other figure in his allegories is quite so absolute, so unchanging in form and position. He conceived of her as the spirit of all historical and literary seductresses. Like the archetypal artist, Prometheus, whose spirit of rebellion passes from poet to poet, the witchwoman is a constant in the lives of poets, in their works, and in history.

Mother Sereda is another form of absolute female presence. She, like Koshchei, is a character in Russian folklore. She shares one quality with Ettarre: a variety of avatars. Ettarre appears as herself throughout The Biography and references are made to her past involvements in poetic creativity. Sereda, however, appears in many forms throughout the work, sometimes changing from shape to shape in one volume as new shapes are demanded by the situation. As Eve she is man's living on earth; as the young Maya, she seduces poets away from their purposes into sex and domesticity. Sereda rules the middle of the week, Wednesday, and all things blue (VI, 40). She is the embodiment of destruction, discoloration, and contentment. She possesses "the secrets of remunerative mediocrity in the learned professions, in truth telling, in upholstering, in the removal of mountains into the sea, in the erection of bridges over any impassable place, in the preparation of rose-colored mirrors, in criticism, in oratory, in jurisprudence, and in the safe interpretation of Holy Writ" (X, 168). Her sisters, the fates, "nibble at temporal things, like furtive mice: she devastated, like a sandstorm, so that there were many dust heaps where Mother Sereda had passed, but nothing else" (VI, 35-36). As Maya she is one of those who guard the way to Antan (VIII, 155) and makes the poets wear rose-colored glasses. She is "a placid, stupid rather dull woman" who thinks that contentment is all. The desire of poets and gods to create splendor and to perform tremendous feats is foreign to her. Her great lover, the Adversary, or Satan describes their relationship: "We two who began in the Garden to contrive for the happiness of men, and to be speaking always for the real good of men,--yes, certainly, our work is hard and endless. For men stay romantically minded creatures who aspire beyond my kingdom. Yet we do not despair" (X, 283).

Sereda, Maya and Aesred are avatars of the same idea: the female rulers of "things as they are." They are the illusions of contentment and compromise which can seal off the poet's creativity. Like Circe, Maya reduces men to animals by nurturing their animalistic traits: sexual fulfillment and physical security. Sereda and Aesred are more ominous and less attractive versions of the same character. Both bleach life and color out of all things and turn men into "useful domestic animals" (X, 155). From Eve forward this destructive, bleaching quality of the female has had as strong an influence as has the witchwoman's sorcery. Ettarre and Maya are not the same, but neither are they completely divergent; both are dynamic illusions or fantasy figures which fade in and out of the Cabellian hero's dream life.

Freydis, another variation of the witchwoman, has been the Queen of Audela and the guardian of its fire, but she becomes the Queen of Antan. Her exile from one kingdom to another is a shift of her power over truth beyond life's shadows to control over the yesteryear of myths and poetry. In Antan she possesses "a mirror which must, they say, be faced by those persons who venture into the goal of all the gods of men--the Mirror of Hidden Children" (X, 163). This mirror reflects images which are "unclouded by either good or evil" (X, 11). Good and evil being man's first major dynamic illusions, this mirror must show "the word as it was in the beginning." Freydis is desirable, inspiring and destructive like the other witchwomen; but as a gray witch she is neither the ideal female nor is she its negation. As a major figure of the theory of literature she is the most vascillating and enigmatic because of her relationship with the two allegorical places, Audela and Antan. Her realm is at once physical--she is seduced by men of action, Manuel and Florian--and spiritual--she has possessed the fires of great poetic inspiration and she comes to possess the all enveloping misty past which is the end of all poetry.

Another set of dream women are of literary and historical origins, for example: Guinevere, Helen, Melusine, Melior, Alianora, and Ysabeau. Of these, the most important to the literary theory is Helen, who represents classical perfection in womanhood. Melusine and Melior are figures of French literature and folklore, characters from the courtly love tradition of the troubadors. Guinevere is emblematic of the collapse of chivalry. Alianora and Ysabeau are fictionalized historical personages, Eleanor of Acquitaine and Edward II's wife, women who have sacrificed their female qualities for political power. Jurgen's dream of Helen and Helen's image as the epitome of beauty and desirability remains intact; he refuses to possess her physically because he cherishes the power of her illusion. He refuses to make Faust's and Paris's mistake. Having possessed Guinevere, Anaitis and Chloris, he knows the consequences of the physical to be disillusionment. Unlike Faust he refuses Koshchei's offer of any perfect woman, thereby accepting life "as it is" while retaining his ability to move beyond life in the dynamic illusion of perfect beauty and symmetry, Helen.

The wives of the heroes are not dream women or witches; they are helpful antagonists to the poet's inner life. As essential catalysts for the poet's physical existence they serve a dual purpose in Cabell's literary theory. Niafer protects Manuel's image while he lives and develops a religion based on that life after his death. Gisele chastizes Miramon for the sexual aspects of his dream-making; he uses the last two of three wishes to send her away and to recall her when he discovers that her absence unsettles the necessary harmony of his household. Lisa grumbles constantly, but Jurgen chooses life with her over all the romantic dream women. Saraide, Kevin of Nointel's wife, cuckolds her husband, and ridicules his attempt to acquire all knowledge, but remains with him to provide the truth that tempers his learning. Each wife represents the dynamic illusion of common-sense challenging the dynamic illusions, chivalry, art, optimism, and knowledge.

Niafer shapes the religion of Manuel, but she does not waste real jewels on Manuel's tomb. Gisele nags about Miramon's dreams, proposing less skepticism. Saraide questions all knowledge with a definition of life as a ". . . pageant that passes quickly, going hastily from one darkness to another with only _ignes fatui_ to guide; and there is no sense in it. . . . But life is a fine ardent spectacle; and I have loved the actors in it; and I have loved their youth and their high-heartedness, and their ungrounded faiths, and their queer dreams, my Kevin, about their own importance and about the greatness of the destiny that awaited them--while you were peddling after, of all things, the truth" (III, 207).

Her statement is that of a romantic naturalist: the world view does not shatter her belief in the truth and enjoyment of the dynamic illusions necessary to life. Her "economics" is the same as the Economist poet's theory of literature: to make the best use of the raw materials to move beyond life. Each of the wives retains her belief in the basic dynamic illusions, ignoring the dream-wrought skepticism of her poet husband. Each of them becomes in some way the sanctuary for the poet outside the fantasy world. Not fully understanding the nature of the hero's life, each nurtures it with healthy antagonism and protectiveness. Like Priscilla Bradley Cabell, the model for all of them, they encourage the poet indirectly and keep his skepticism in check with regular church attendance, domestic harmony, and children. It is this image of the poet's wife that correlates with his idea that poets are childlike persons who play at elaborate make-believe for their own diversion and need constant attendants.[3]

The women--wives or witches--of Cabell's novels are essential to his fictive vision: the paradoxical interdependence of existence and dream, the world "as it is" and the world "as it ought to be." "Man alone plays the ape to his dreams"; his greatest dreams are of women and his fantasy playing is supervised by women.

Woman, in her various aspects as conceived by Cabell, occupies a position of importance in all of the attitudes which guide men. In chivalry she is the intermediary worshipped figure who symbolizes God's spiritual presence on earth. In gallantry, she is the object of man's living within the bounds of his physical limitations; she is not worshipped but coveted by the gallant hero. And to the poet she can be destructive, inspiring, and compromising; the poet may worship her, covet her body, or idolize her as the embodiment of perfection in art. Either possessing her or worshipping her may destroy his creative drive toward immortality in literature. Idolization of her as the unattainable symbol of symmetry, order, and beauty results in the best poetry. As a dream she inspires what she cannot engender as a physical actuality.

As he depicts the various aspects of the poet's inner being by creating a widely differing group of poet-heroes, so Cabell includes many women characters who have great ideational significance in his theory of literature. Woman-consciousness is an aspect of all the attitudes treated in The Biography and by far the most complex presentations of her occur in relation to poets.

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[3] James Branch Cabell, As I Remember It (New York, 1955), p. 42.

The Allegorical Journey and Thematic Pattern

Beginning with The Cream of the Jest (1917) and culminating in five major works of the next decade--Jurgen, Figures of Earth, The High Place, The Silver Stallion, and Something About Eve--Cabell uses one fictional pattern with variations. The literary theory, which increases notably in these books, is developed as allegorical journeying of the hero's spirit or dream form. Cabell refers to this quest journey as "the true formula": "It is the formula of the Odyssey, the formula of picaresque romance, and of all fairy stories properly equipped with quests and the undomitable third prince. It is, of course, precisely the one formula which cannot ever lose its charm so long as men retain that frame of mind which seems coeval with recorded history, of being bored by the routine of their daily living" (XVII, 54). For his purposes, this form offers a very suitable and logical construction in which he can arrange a variety of thoughts and symbolic actions. He courts the rather obvious comparison between his work and The Odyssey, Pilgrim's Progress, Gawain and the Green Knight, the Divina Commedia, Faust, and Tom Jones because he wishes to echo the color, tone, incident, and literary significance of these classical journeys. No doubt he shares Joyce's and Eliot's mythopoetic conception of literature, a critical vision which came into being during Cabell's most productive period, the 1920's. Cabell has in the five major novels of this decade examined the dynamic illusion, the Demiurge, and the auctorial virtues from different points of view.

The Cream of the Jest is a series of dreams interspersed with discussions of dreams and literature. In effect the book begins in Kennaston's dream of Horvendile, and then moves back and forth from fantasy to actuality, comparing the two worlds and eventually emphasizing the more productive fictions of dreams. The pattern of action in the book stresses the interdependence of the imaginative world and the physical world.

Kennaston's dreaming is stimulated by a dynamic illusion, his belief in the Sigil of Scoteia. The novel's zigzag movement is toward a unification of the two halves of the Sigil and Harrowby's explanation of that emblem. The novel's climax is in a philosophical decision: Kennaston's wife dies at the moment he discovers that she has the other half, he ends his writing career, and he defines the importance of belief which is based on illusion. Separate dreams of encounters with fictional and historical personages are the episodes which lead Felix to self-realization and to acceptance of his physical existence. As is so frequently the case, the hero's journeying brings him back home. Kennaston's acceptance is at once a thematic resolution of his life as a husband, an artist, and a creature of the universal order. Harrowby's explanation of the Sigil acts in the plot as a denouement faintly suggestive of a detective unraveling the facts in a murder mystery--all of the illusions are explained away. The Sigil has lost its use as the poet's looking glass or Proustian madeleine, the entrance and impetus into a controllable fictional world.

As a prelude to the period of the mature comedies, The Cream of the Jest's structure is important because it hints at the more linear progressions to come. Cabell seems to have turned away from the intermingling of dream and reality to the journey in which the hero moves through increasingly more complex allegorical episodes. The idea of a plotted progression toward acceptance suited his purposes so well that he used it in four succeeding novels and in most of the episodes of The Silver Stallion.

Critics consider Jurgen the prototype of Cabell's mature comedies.[4] In it the allegorical quest or dream journey is worked with a control that Cabell improves as he approaches the completion of The Biography. Jurgen's Walpurgisnacht journey is composed of episodes in which he rejects chivalry, hedonism, poetry, and religion to accept things as they are. To Cabell this attitude is a mature acceptance identified with middle age, a time for setting aside sexual, religious and poetic involvements. Jurgen's journeying in the middle of his life is downward through vicarship and hedonism to Hell and upward to a Heaven created by Koshchei in the image of Jurgen's grandmother's belief, and finally, downward again to the middle regions, the grumbling, taxpaying world of his wife, Lisa, his pawnshop, and old age. Cabell has replaced the zigzag pattern of The Cream of the Jest with the descending-ascending allegorical journey. The Greco-Medieval combination of The Odyssey and the Divina Commedia provides a loose episodic order for Cabell's literary, philosophical, and ethical positions.

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[4] See works by Davis, Wells and Rothman.

The episodes of Jurgen represent various rejections which are a turning away from dynamic illusions, or an exchange of one set of dynamic illusions for another. Jurgen's dreams are rejected but not forgotten, and they are likely to recur. Systematically, episode by episode, he rejects chivalry in the form of Guinevere; hedonistic sex in Anaitis, a nature myth; realism, in the Brown Man, the Lord of the Two Truths; ideal classic poetic inspiration in Helen; guilt in Hell, man's dynamic illusion of a punishment suitable for his sins; and, finally, optimism in Heaven, a romantic, youthful acceptance of the beliefs of old age. Jurgen's rejections are Cabell's negations of the dynamic illusions which he says govern civilization. Notably, he has Jurgen reject these dreams twice; the second rejection occurs in the last episode of the novel when Jurgen returns, with the aid of Koshchei to his wife, "the voice of Judgment" and the ultimate human compromise.

In Jurgen Cabell has mirrored the complexity of his conceptions which are expressed more abstractly in Beyond Life. Jurgen is an aging ex-poet who has not completely lost his poetic attitude; he has been chivalrous, but vicarship to God, too, has become a memory. He has been a hedonist, but physical limitations have destroyed all save the memory of physical accomplishments; he has been a believer in the religious essentials, guilt and optimism, but these notions evaporated with youth. Now, he accepts, and he works within the world as it is; however, he aids in the development of all the illusions which he has abandoned. Having been deeply involved in these illusions, he now stands outside them, believing in them, remembering, knowing the good generated by these forces with, but somehow content with his less imaginative lot.

Jurgen's dream experiences are comparable to the dynamic illusion created by the Demiurge; they exist in a complicated progressive interrelationship--an interdependence resulting from their common source. The pattern of action in Jurgen is repetitious and cyclical because of this interdependence of illusions. For Cabell, history, mythology, religion, and poetry must be viewed as manifestations of the unknowable third truth which the human mind, in this case represented by the skeptical and worldly-wise Jurgen, only glimpses through the dynamic illusions. All of Jurgen's dreamed adventures in the shadowy cave are specific incidents reflecting the Spirit of Romance's creations in history, myth, religion, and poetry. His rejection of each of them as a way of living is Cabell's most extensive examination of the more rationalistic gallant attitude overriding poetry and chivalry. Jurgen accepts illusions for what they are and recognizes his part in creating them, but he remains aloof from them by pursuing a life devoted to the diversions which he enjoys. He insists upon keeping the two parts of his life--the dreams and the actualities--absolutely separate. He does not wish to attain the dreams, only to dream dreams and he is satisfied with his life as Lisa's husband and a pawnbroker.

Jurgen and Figures of Earth have a contrapuntal relationship that is essentially a variant resolution of two related but different patterns. Cabell writes in the author's note to the Storisende edition of Figures of Earth that "where Manuel faces the world, Jurgen considers the universe. . . . Dom Manuel is the Achilles of Poictesme as Jurgen is its Ulysses" (II, xxiv). He concentrates on Manuel's actions and both Jurgen's thoughts and actions (II, xxiv).

Figures of Earth is another development of the quest-journey exploits of a hero, in this case, the hero in spirit of The Biography. Manuel's journeying is both a quest for self-fulfillment, as a man who follows after his own desires and thinking, and a denial of the dream-world of the poet, beyond life. In this order Manuel turns away from his youthful love, Suskind; the politically powerful Alianora; and the guardian of poetic inspiration, Freydis. Manuel, like Jurgen, rejects life as a maker, or poietes, to become a man of action, but his actions are conceived as a part of his vicarship to God.

Each book of Figures of Earth is given a title taken from accounting terminology: "The Book of Credit"--Manuel's quest mission up Vraidex to Doubtful Palace; "The Book of Spending"--his sojourn with Alianora; "The Book of Cost Accounting"--his sojourn with Freydis and the image makers; "The Book of Surcharge"--his life as a ruler and redeemer of Poictesme; and "The Book of Settlement"--his departure. The analogy imposed here is a loose one between an account book and Manuel's actions.

The climax of Manuel's picaresque adventures is his reign over Poictesme, which he redeems from the Northmen and which he holds in liege to Horvendile, the fictive Author of The Biography. His characteristics as a Redeemer are the philosophical climax of the novel. Having peppered his book with Biblical associations, Cabell explicates them internally in the final episode. Miramon Lluagor, one of the Fellows of The Silver Stallion, draws a complicated parallel between Manuel's actions and those of Christ and other redeemers of mankind. The analogy between Christ's life and Manuel's is a broad one and there is really no need to expect a tight parallel between the pattern of Figures of Earth and any particular synoptic Gospel. Miramon describes the details of that life which make it suitable to be that of a Redeemer. Manuel was "'born in a cave at about the time of the winter solstice, of a virgin mother and of a father who was not human'"; he "'wandered duly from place to place, bringing wisdom and holiness to men'"; and he "'duly performed miracles, such as reviving dead persons and so on--'"; and he "'duly sojourned with evil in a desert place,'" and was "'tempted to dispair and blaspheme and to commit other iniquities '" (II, 226). Miramon then notes that these have been characteristic of all reputable Redeemers: Mithras, Huitzilopochtli, Tamouz, Heracles, Gautama, Dionysos, and Krishna (II, 227). He does not specifically mention Christ. Manuel accepts his role as a Redeemer and descends into a cave for three days to be properly prepared. Here his journeying on earth ends for he remains in Poictesme to defend it from Philistia's threats until he dies.

Cabell explores the major dynamic illusions systematically in Figures of Earth, as he did Jurgen, but the rejections are made by a man of action whose motto is Multi Vult Decipi. Manuel rejects the dreamworld of Vraidex, the political ambitions of Alianora, and the image making of Audela, and accepts his life in Poictesme with Niafer. He also accepts the notion of man's vicarship to God, but this acceptance does not involve an optimistic illusion of life beyond death. Manuel is not an optimist and the climax of Figures of Earth--his departure with Grandfather Death--is a willing acceptance of the inevitable unknown end of all men.

Jurgen participates in the events of each episode; Manuel works at avoiding involvement while he pursues the devices and desires of his own heart. Jurgen's end is middle age; Manuel's end is disillusionment and death, but his life is carried on in a new redemption myth. In Manuel Cabell depicts a skeptical lonely anti-poet who finds discontent as a redeemer and ruler. The end of his rise from swineherd to liege lord is boredom and a desire for the meeting with death.

Jurgen can be God but he chooses middle age; Manuel is the ruler of Poictesme, but he turns to death and hence to immortality as a new religion. What Manuel appeared to be in his life becomes an ideal way of life--a religious cult. Manuel's acceptance of his lot and his acknowledgement of the necessity of belief in vicarship to God becomes the pattern which Cabell examines throughout The Biography.

The shaping of Manuel's life into a major dynamic illusion--a religious cult--is the subject of The Silver Stallion. Cabell calls The Silver Stallion a parody of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Equally apparent is its indebtedness to the Arthurian legends, but then perhaps there is an inherent similarity between the apostles of Christ developing Christianity into a coherent religion and the knights of the roundtable making the ideals of chivalry the moral code of an age. The form of The Silver Stallion is certainly the same episodic quest journey form of Acts and the Arthurian legend. In The Silver Stallion, the followers of Manuel engage in quests, missions, and evangelism in the name of his legend and in opposition to many other religions and myths.

The Silver Stallion is clearly a parody of Acts and the Arthurian legends; it is also a reworking and ordering of the pattern of man's myth making ability into a commentary on the human spirit.

In this novel religion or the mythic content of religion is the dynamic illusion that Cabell takes as his subject. Since he assumes that religions are created by man and as a direct result of the Spirit of Romance, there is little doubt that the poetic attitude is at work in the shaping of any religion. The making of a religion is a poetic act--the use of raw materials of life to attain immortality. Cabell regards the hero of The Silver Stallion as the idea of Manuel. "The theme of this book, then, is how that legend ('of the all-powerful Redeemer who will come again, tomorrow') came to attach itself to Dom Manuel; how, in particular, that legend afterward affected, or did not affect, those persons who had known Dom Manuel almost intimately; and how in the end nobody believed in it any longer except Donander Veratyr. But Donander Veratyr was God" (III, xvi).

The Silver Stallion contains several quest journey episodes in which followers of Manuel live or fail to live according to their legendary model as they attempt to shape that legend to make it work as a dynamic illusion. They are representative of all the attitudes--chivalry, gallantry and poetry. Some conceive of themselves as vicars of God; some deny this vicarship to pursue lives of diversion; and all of them contribute some part of themselves to the legend.

After the introductory book in which Horvendile assigns tasks, each of the remaining nine books is devoted to a description of the way in which these tasks are accomplished. Five of these episodes are quest journeys in which the personal drives of the knight and his allegiance to

Dom Manuel's legend are in conflict.

Gonfal journeys South to overthrow the mythology of the fundamentalists, but he quickly succumbs to the female wiles of Queen Morvyth of Inis Dahut. For him Manuel is dead and there is nothing of value in the legend of Manuel. He questions the value of political power, wisdom and love, saying that they are worthless illusions which he as an ex-poet has found to be ephemeral. Declaring himself a realist, he readily accepts his own execution at the order of Queen Morvyth; Gonfal, then, denies the demiurgic spirit of Romance, pursues a life devoted to gallantry and dies fully accepting the world as it is. The legend of Manuel has in him its first martyr, a necessary ingredient for any religion. Gonfal is like Jurgen, in some ways, but unlike Jurgen he throws over illusion for reality; he does not possess Jurgen's ability to straddle the world of illusion and the world as it is.

Coth's quest journey takes him West and his main desire is to save the Manuel he knew from the idea of him as it is being developed by Niafer, St. Holmendis and lying poets. Where Gonfal denies Manuel any existence after his departure from Poictesme, Coth professes to keep the real Manuel intact against all comers. He is journeying to fetch Manuel back because he refuses to believe that he is dead.

Coth's journeying takes him through many lands and in each he honors the particular religious custom of that land. He is capable of accepting any illusion so long as acceptance is expedient. In Tollan, Yaot, in order to rid himself of Coth, wills the spirit of Manuel back and the spirit bestows a final obligation on the only person on earth who loves him as he was. Manuel's spirit tells Coth that the fictions being created in his name are better than the real thing; so he as a Fellow of the Silver Stallion must obey and forget Manuel the man to take up the idea of Manuel, the Redeemer, the idea created and embellished by Jurgen, Holmendis, Niafer, and the lying poets.

Coth returns to Poictesme where he confronts the legend of Manuel as it has been developed around Jurgen's childish lie. He disparages the legend, but he accepts the motto "Mundus Vult Decipi," making emblems bearing it the major icons of his house. Remembering the days of his quest, Coth grows old in a world founded on a legend which he knows to be untrue. Finally he dies feeling cheated by life. He has failed to make the compromise with the fiction by which fools live.

Both of these followers of Manuel reject the legend and accept death without belief; but both become parts of the legend which makes saints of all those who knew Manuel. Gonfal is a martyr and Coth becomes a fondly remembered elder who ostensibly seems to preserve the memory of Manuel the Redeemer until his last day.

The remaining quest journeys in The Silver Stallion are spiritual and supernatural. As in The Cream of the Jest and Something About Eve, Cabell shifts his attention to the internal problems of his heroes. Guivric the Sage discovers that his world though materially secure, is spiritually disrupted; so he goes East to seek some solution from the Glaum without Bones. As he journeys East he gradually loses his physical form and when he arrives at the Glaum's place he discovers that he is at home. The Glaum has taken Guivric's body, leaving only his spirit.

As Guivric, the Glaum becomes a pillar of the religion of Manuel. The real Guivric, now only a Phantom, wanders the hills of Perdigon, diffusing funeral odors, walking on feet with illuminated soles, and making girls giggle and blush.

Guivric's journey back to complete spiritual existence is a journey toward origins of religions, the East. It is a movement away from the corroding, life-sucking life of Asch (Cash) and of power and security. He is throwing off the vestments of life for a phantom existence as a legendary, lecherous devil-spirit. His physical self adheres to a belief in the legend of Manuel; his spiritual self becomes an adversary of that belief, a ghostly illusion that attracts believers away from the ideals of Manuel.

Kevin of Nointel's dream journey is an underground one in search of all knowledge or truth as a gift for his wife. The ultimate truth that he discovers after studying all recorded knowledge under the tutelage of Sclaug the Vampire, is that nobody knows why life is given to human beings. The acquisition of all knowledge leads to skepticism. When Kevin returns to Poictesme, he immediately becomes a convert to the great cult of Manuel. He blindly accepts "the sublime truths about Manuel the Redeemer" and "turns his interest again to life's unimportant superficial, familiar tasks, and on his food" (III, 212).

In Kevin's quest Cabell depicts the nature of skeptical belief and acceptance which grows out of knowledge, but disavows the truth it knows while believing a dynamic illusion. These myths or illusions generate good and can be accepted as truth even though they are not. Kevin accepts and compromises; as a result of this compromise he lives and his progeny live, dutifully embellishing the legend of Manuel.

Donander's quest takes him to Valhalla, the Hall of the Chosen. There he accepts the heaven of the heathen though he continues to believe in the legend of Manuel. In Valhalla he fits out a chapel, a place where he can pray for "the second coming of Manuel and for the welfare of Donander's soul upon the Holy Morrow of Judgment" (III, 266). After a while in pagan eternity, Donander becomes a demiurge and begins to create worlds, planetary systems, and universes. All of these diversions of Valhalla, however, seem to him to be only "illusions planned with some evil spirit's aid to tempt Donander away from respectability and the true faith" (III, 277). The Demiurge, here represented as Donander Veratyr, creates dynamic illusions which are worlds and universes; but he has a human heart which makes him a devout believer in another illusion which he did not create, the legend of the redeemer, of hope and salvation for mankind as well as God.

All of these journeys and those sections of The Silver Stallion which are not quests become a part of the legend of Manuel. The episodes are described in the nine books as they happened but within the legend of Manuel they assume the form of poetic sagas. Horvendile, the fictive Author within The Biography and the all-knowing creator of these events, returns to call attention to discrepancies between the legends and actuality. With a cruel smile he says:

> So does it come about that the saga of Manuel and the sagas of all the lords of the Silver Stallion have been reshaped by the foolishness and the fond optimism of

> mankind; and these sagas now conform in everything to that supreme romance which preserves from insanity [sic]. For it is just as I said, years ago, to one of these drolly white-washed and ennobled rapscallions. All men that live, and that go perforce about the world like blundering lost children whose rescuer is not yet in sight, have a vital need to believe in the sustaining legend about the Redeemer, and about the Redeemer's power to make those persons who serve him just and perfect. (III, 293)

The journeys of those who deny Manuel or make a compromise with reality in order to accept his legend or carry that belief into the pagan cosmology become integral parts of Manuel's legend as a Redeemer and the symbolic vicarship of man to God. They in conjunction with Manuel's own actions are the raw materials out of which the poets construct the myths that guide men toward that which they cannot attain.

The theme of compromise and acceptance occurs again in Something About Eve, the story of the quest journey of the mind of a would-be poet. Gerald Musgrave's journey toward Antan is an allegorized version of the literary artist's temptations as he seeks poetic perfection. The episodes, like those in Jurgen and Figures of Earth, are complex objectifications of a man's mind internally facing and rejecting dynamic illusions. The impetus for this symbolic quest is not a dream, but a bargained exchange between the physical poet and the spirit of the poet. While Gerald's spirit travels, his body is occupied by a Glaum.

With Horvendile's aid, Gerald bypasses Manhood, pauses in the mirror of Romance, destroys the mirror of the flesh-colored veil of Reality, the mirror of the male and female principle; then he comes to his resting place with Maya and her rose-colored glasses, a compromise existence which he accepts even though it keeps him away from Antan, the misty final place of all myths and poets. During his stay on Mispec Moor, he spends his days conversing about literary matters with various myths and poets who are completing their journeys to Antan. When he leaves the Moor at fifty-eight, he accepts his body's non-romantic devotion to a study of the two truths, male and female. Like Jurgen he must content himself with studying these aspects of living, because his age no longer permits participation.

Gerald's spiritual journey comes to a climax when he turns from his goal, the ruling of Antan as the Lord of the Third Truth. His journeying was guided by Horvendile up to the time that he stopped at Mispec Moor. When Maya takes over Horvendile's demiurgic power over the mind ceases. Like Jurgen, Musgrave is in the end stripped of his romantic notions, his elaborate cloak of dynamic illusions. The implication at the conclusion of _Something About Eve_ is that this spiritual journeying toward Antan is always being undertaken by some poet's mind. As Gerald's spirit returns to Gerald's body, the Glaum starts toward Antan and he looks very much like Horvendile--the fictional Author of _The Biography_. Gerald, having given up the writing of that work about Dom Manuel's life, someone must take it up.

This device of the ending that is another beginning of the circular archetypal journey occurs in _Jurgen_, _Figures of Earth_, and _The High Place_. At the end of his life Manuel the Redeemer steps into the Lethe but it suddenly becomes the Haranton, a stream out of which he stepped at the beginning of the novel. Jurgen thinks of returning to the cave to begin his adventure in dreams over again. At the end of _The High_

Place Florian is back at the beginning of the life he has just dreamed of living. That each journey seems on the verge of beginning again and taking the same direction supports Cabell's notion of the journey as an archetypal pattern in great fiction. As the journey pattern suggests many classical journeys such as The Odyssey and The Divina Commedia, so in its endings it suggests constant repetition of both pattern and theme.

In The High Place Cabell again uses the dream journey framework, but there is a critical inversion of the pattern. Florian, the dreaming hero and the absolute sensualistic representative of the gallant attitude, attains his ideals of beauty and holiness at the beginning of his journey. The quest, then, is a series of trials performed to secure his release from the corroding influence of the embodiments of beauty and holiness.

The pattern of The High Place is a very symmetrical one; ten-year-old Florian dreams a romantic dream after finishing Charles Perrault's recently published collection of fairy tales (c. 1698). His dream is the story of his attainment of supposed ideal love, Melior, and supposed perfect holiness, St. Hoprig. His knowledge of these two leads quickly to disillusionment and to their destruction as his ideals. Out of necessity to rid himself of the perfect woman and the perfect saint, Florian bargains with Janicot in a kind of reversed Faust-Mephistopheles arrangement. To attain this freedom from his idols, Florian destroys his political illusion, ignores the mists of Antan, seduces Freydis, ridicules an optimistic literary gander, rejects religion, and finally seeks to destroy himself. At the moment he chooses to die rather than to live with Melior and St. Hoprig, the dream ends, apparently with Janicot keeping his part of the bargain; the much wiser but disillusioned ten-year-old Florian wakes with Perrault's tales in his lap.

As the other allegorical novels have associations with classical literary journeys, the form and content of The High Place is derived from the fairy tale. Perrault's tales are converted into dreams which are dominated by a theme of disillusionment and the destruction of fantasy-inspired dreams. Cabell transforms the Sleeping Beauty, the Prince, the King, and Puss-in-Boots into Melior, a shrewish wife, Florian, a sensualist, the King, an opportunist, and the Collyn in the pot, a peculiar creature that answers questions. Mother Goose becomes a gander who voices the essence of Beyond Life. And, in addition to these figures from Perrault, Florian meets the mythical gods of things as they are, Cabell's pantheon of realists: Koshchei, Janicot, Pan, and Grandfather Death. Florian's desire to accept in the gallant manner, defeats all those who tempt him away from his avowed purpose: to destroy his allegiance to beauty and holiness. Having journeyed through episodes which symbolically present the other attitudes and the dynamic illusions which men believe in, Florian finally returns from his disillusioning dream to Poictesme to shape his own standards in gallantry and to die a completely domesticated man with his ideals of beauty and holiness always out of reach.

Cabell has in these five major novels examined the dynamic illusions, the Demiurge spirit of Romance, and the auctorial virtues from many different points of view and in different contexts. Each allegorical journey has a similar ending: acceptance of the human condition, the compromise with the world as it is and the understanding of the nature of illusions. Jurgen exposes the illusions to reason, keeping his dream of perfection, Helen, intact as dream. Manuel exposes the illusions to the force of action and becomes the subject of a religion. The knights of the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion deny any belief or they accept the disparity between beliefs and actualities. Gerald exposes the illusions to imaginative self-consciousness and turns away from poetry to ethnic sexology. And Florian dissolves his ideals in an effort to live a life of self-sufficiency void of holiness and beauty.

Cabell's poet-heroes stop writing, his dreamers cease to dream without skepticism, and his sensualists become domesticated. The third truth in Antan, Pseudopolis, Heaven, or Hell, evades them; their lives subside in two truths: "We copulate and die." The pattern is simple: the hero is challenged (he dreams), he seeks (he journeys), and he falls short (he accepts and compromises). There are no happy endings and no final resolutions to Cabell's working out of the basic paradox of his literary theory. All the poet-heroes learn to live with the paradox: the dream and the reality will never be one though they are dependent on one another. The poet-dreamer imagines a world in which his imaginative characters and illusions function; his main problem is the necessity of distinguishing between the fantasy world and the real one. The novels discussed in this section are fictional examinations of the ways in which two poets, two ex-poets, five followers of a legend, and a man who leads a poetic life respond to this paradox.

Places

Cabell's fictive places are the most specifically allegorical aspects of his fiction, and for that reason they are essential parts of his fictionally expounded theory of literature. With the exception of Lichfield, Fairhaven, and Poictesme, he spends less effort on describing the physical details about places than he does in fully examining their abstract significance. This scarcity of descriptive detail is in itself an aspect of the literary theory for he speaks out against the intrusion of extraneous materials into fiction:

> For one, I confess that when any writer formally and impersonally sets out to describe anything, I find it hard to put up with his nonsense. When I am in my more amiable moods, then hurrying eyes glide by solid stolid-looking paragraphs; I incuriously accept on faith the probability that the description is being competently attended to: and I, unvexed, pass on toward such portions of the book as may conceivably prove remunerative reading. . . . But far oftener am I the prey of logic and of peevishness, when I consider the malversation of time involved in every attempt to convey the true efficacy of a regarded vista, or of any observed object, by recording seriatim such attributes as, in life, we note simultaneously with plural senses. (XVII, 227-228)

Cabell's aversion to lengthy descriptive passages is by no means a childlike desire for more action and less pause; it is a part of his concern for "a conscious point of view" in any novel. He believes that the novelist should only permit himself those descriptions "which would be noted, naturally, from that point of view at that especial moment. And all description will thus be converted into action, in the form, not necessarily stated outright, that so-and-so observed such-and-such phenomena" (XVII, 228). Cabell opposes the omniscient author and favors a limited omniscience with concentration on a central intelligence. He states what he calls a truism of the novelist's art: "that no scene or object can display any qualities unless there is some one to notice them; that, even then, these qualities stay undisplayed unless the potential observer have the needful interest and the time, just then to notice them; and that to present these qualities as existing impersonally--howsoever general in 'writing' may be the insane practice,--is to present (here again) an existence which is inconceivable"(XVII, 228). The statement only seems to argue for absolutely logical and realistic reflection of the plausible in fiction. In truth it is the theoretical basis that Cabell uses to avoid realistic detail; it is the principle underlying the romantic attitude toward place throughout The Biography. Cabell had early in his career trapped himself into using details about real places in his fiction and he found it too confining for his stories and ideas. At the moment of this discovery he began to create the imaginary places--Poictesme, Fairhaven, Lichfield, Antan, Audela--where the actions of his novels could occur unhampered by rules that govern actuality.

Though Cabell favors anagrams for place names, thereby locking their meanings in one term, some allegorical places of his fiction are not anagrams. Antan is literary in origin, and Philistia is a Biblical place name. The anagrammatic place names are frequent and characteristically Cabellian in Something About Eve, Gerald's journey toward Antan takes him to Doonham (Manhood), Dersam (Dreams), and Dersam's royal palace, Caer Omn (Romance); then to Lytreia (Reality) and finally to Turoine (Routine) on the outskirts of his last stop, Mispec Moor (Compromise), the home of Maya, the eternal female principle. These places are briefly described, but such passages are minimal and logically only what Gerald Musgrave might observe in passing. When he arrives at Doonham (Manhood), a river, the following passage occurs: "Directly before him the deep river sparkled and rippled eastward with unhurried, very shallow undulations. But, under the sun's warmth, mists rising everywhere above the waters streamed eastward, too, unhastily, and in such unequal volume that now this and now another portion of the wide landscape beyond the river was irregularly glimpsed and then, gradually but with a surprising quickness, veiled. Very lovely medallions of green lawns and shrubbery and distant hills thus seemed to take form and then to dissolve into the mist's incessant gray flowing, toward the newly risen sun. . ." (X, 57). Cabell's description serves to indicate Musgrave's sensual response and to clarify the symbolic river's meaning as a representative of the normal pattern of man's life. The river moves in time through various atmospheres and panoramas and into a mist.

Dersam (Dreams) is only described as being in desolation because its leige lord, Glaum of the Haunting Eyes, has departed to take up an earthly existence. The royal palace of Dersam, Caer Omn (Romance) has a walled garden and a golden mirror which glows with golden mists. Lytreia has one notable place, Peter's Tomb, and that has two relics: "An over-candidly carved and painted post which stood in eternal erection at the door of the tomb" (X, 113) and a flesh-colored mirror. Turoine (Routine) is described only as "a small free city given to sorceries of two colors" (X, 137). There is no description of Mispec Moor (Compromise). Clearly the main notions about the places are communicated through the anagrammatic names and the allegorical events that occur in them. Cabell sometimes complicates these meanings with esoteric and obscure learning, but in general the intent is clear and the meanings are sustained throughout each episode.

Audela (beyond) and Antan (yesteryear) represent the beginning and the end of poetry. Audela and its fire, the source of poetic inspiration that produces great poets, is one of Cabell's most elaborately conceived mythic places. In Figures of Earth he first describes its qualities through Freydis, its former queen, who has been called out of Audela by Manuel's magic. To her Audela alone is real. "Here (on earth) all is but a restless contention of shadows which pass presently; here all that is visible and all the colors known to men are shadows dimming the true colors; here time and death, the darkest shadows known to men, delude you with false seemings; for all such things as men hold incontestable, because they are apparent to sight and sense, are a weariful drifting of fogs that veil the world which is no longer mine. So in this twilit [sic] world of yours do we of Audela appear to be but men and women" (II, 102). Audela lies behind the veil of sight and sense. "This veil that separates Audela from earth may not ever be lifted; but very often the veil is pierced, and noting the broken places, men call it fire. Through these torn places men may glimpse the world that is real; and their glimpse dazzles their dimmed eyes and weakling faces, and through these rent places, when the opening is made large enough, a few men here and there not quite so witless as their fellows, know how to summon us of Audela" (II, 102). These figures from Audela work in the

the shadow world of man and sometimes they give "a spark of the true life of Audela" to earthen figures who are then great poets and whom all the other people "applaud as the most trivial of men and women" (II, 103).

This land, which Manuel rejects, is a mythic version of one of the most important ideas of Cabell's literary theory. Audela is the essence of romance, the force that emerges only in the poet. For Cabell it is the truth beneath the veil of life, the fire at the center and the source of poetic imaginativeness. Poets have access to the fire in two ways: by making the breaks in the veil themselves, as Prometheus, the archetypal artist did, and by having the gift of the fire of Audela bestowed upon them without their volition. Both ways reflect the traditional Romantic view of the poet as a special man--a man capable of seeing beyond the veil to the fiery heart of the matter. This divine and mystical poetic urge for the most part seems to come from outside the poet and it drives him to create. For Cabell all of those great literary figures discussed in Beyond Life--Marlowe, Congreve, Wycherly, Sheridan, Villon, Thackeray, and Dickens--are Audela-inspired. This divine nature of poetic inspiration has as its corollary the Romantic notion of the poet as a demon-haunted, God-touched individual who sees through the veil darkly. Audela is an absolute idea as the Demiurge is an absolute idea; only the poet, the maker, reveals the absolute truth, reality without the shadows of life. Such reality or truth is obviously not synonymous with actuality or a physical condition; it is essence, the urge to create, the force behind the dynamic illusions that have their most accurate shaping in poets. Cabell's reality is the spirit of Romance and the spirit of

Romance is represented by Audela and more philosophically by the Demiurge. Manuel's rejection of Audela's fire and his abduction of its queen amount to a rejection of art as a way of living and a preference for the chivalric and gallant illusions of Poictesme.

Antan, yesteryear, is less precisely defined than Audela, but it occupies an important position in the allegorical journeys of The Biography. None of Cabell's poet-heroes reaches Antan. Gerald stops short of it on Mispec Moor, which overlooks the valley Antan. Queen Freydis, exiled from Audela, now reigns, with the consort, the Master Philologist, over "the word as it was in the beginning," and supervises reinterpretation of past myths and poetry. Gerald's quest is an attempt to restore this resting place of dynamic illusions to the rule of a poet.

Antan, like Audela, is not an anagram; it is a word taken from the refrain of a Villon ballade: "Ou sont les neiges d'antan." The other places have specific unchanging qualities that are represented within names, thus giving them fixed positions in the allegory. Antan does not; it is an allusion to a line of imaginative literature. It is a hazy, misty land toward which great poets journey for absolute self-realization as poets. Antan is the final resting place of created illusions, the Elysian fields for completed poetic lives. No one returns from it and few reach it. Antan, yesteryear, is the echoing, illusory refrain of an old song. It alone is not ruled by the Two Truths with their teaching that "we copulate and die." The ruling truth of this realism is the unknown Third Truth.

Antan is also the final resting place of all past myths and legends.

In Antan, the Master Philologist explicates all myths, resolving their existence as dynamic illusions in pedantic analysis. Horvendile, the diabolical Author, explains this aspect of Antan while extoling the superiority of the two truths. "Men have found many gods, but these gods pass. They descend into Antan, and they do not return. One God and one Goddess alone do not pass. They remain eternally, if but to weave eternally a mist about the seeing and the thinking of the young, and thus to secure the existence of yet other young persons within a month or so" (X, 295). The two truths rule the Marches of Antan, and they alone cannot be evaporated into interpretations. Gerald answers this attack on his own which emphasizes his preference for the poetic imagination. For him a poet's dream of a place is always more lovely than the place. "So a logical poet will always destroy his appointed kingdom because in this way only can he convert it into a beautiful idea" (X, 297).

Those who travel past Gerald to Antan include Nero, Villon, Odysseus, Solomon, and Merlin Ambrosius; all of them so journey to find completion or to settle their discontent and to have possession of "the word which was in the beginning." They are driven by a desire for unknown possibilities; Antan is the mythical unknown, a future illusion based on the history and legends of the past; it is an end for those who are discontented with the present. It represents the impossibility of achieving all of the auctorial virtues.

The only Cabellian hero who ever enters Antan and returns is Florian. He goes in quest of a magical sword, Flamberge, and he seduces the Queen of Antan to get it; as an absolute sensualist he is immune to the mists and illusions of Antan. His actions are pragmatic: he must have the sword Freydis has in the storeroom of mythical swords, and she is a beautiful woman. Having dwelled so long on the mystical notion of Antan, Cabell characteristically undermines the illusiveness by having a man of action invade it and remain unchanged. Illusions are of no consequence to Florian, and Antan is a storehouse of past illusions.

Audela and Antan are allegorical representations of absolute truth and the past illusions which survive in the misty future. Two other places in The Biography are less abstract but nonetheless important to Cabell's theory of literature. Philistia and Pseudopolis must be considered together because together they reflect Cabell's critical view of his own literary age.

Philistia is ruled by Queen Stultitia, who like Sereda wears rose-colored glasses. The law of Philistia is that a man but do what is expected of him; "the Philistines were created after the images of Koshchei who made things as they are" (VI, 205). In Philistia babies are brought by storks--"even an allusion to the possibility of misguided persons obtaining a baby in any other way these Philistines consider to be offensive and lewd and lascivious and obscene" (II, 187). To Cabell Philistia is synonymous with the taste of the twentieth century and the prevalence of realism. The Philistines, self-appointed arbiters and realistic writers, are the corroders of taste and of the auctorial virtues in the United States. In Jurgen he unleashed a satirical attack on them, in Beyond Life and Straws and Prayerbooks he is more particular in naming these offenders against taste.

Pseudopolis, "a city builded of gold and ivory, now all dazzling glitter under a hard-sunning sky that appeared unusually remote from earth" (VI, 189), is ruled by Helen of Troy and populated by all of the Greek heroes. "Here was the house of Ajax Telemon who reigned in sea-girt Salamis, here that of God-like Philoctetes,much-counseling Odysseus dwelt just across the way, and the corner residence was fair-haired Agammemnon's: in the moonlight Jurgen easily made out these names engraved upon the bronze shield that hung beside each doorway"(VI, 220).

As the home of Hellenic culture, Pseudopolis is constantly under attack by Philistia. Finally Philistia captures Pseudopolis but not before Helen and the Greeks fly away, deus ex machina fashion, to the more conducive climate of the past. The gods of the Philistines, Sesphra (Phrases), Vel-Tyno (Novelty), and Ageus (Usage) enter the city as Queen Dolores Stultitia acclaims that they "open the door for Realism once for all" (VI, 227). For Cabell Philistia represents the absence of beauty, symmetry, and urbanity and the ascendency of dullness, hypocrisy, novelty for novelty's sake, slogans, and the governing force of usage. It is a place and a state of mind in which classical tradition, symbolized by Helen and the Greek heroes, cannot exist. Jurgen himself is tried for obscenity by the Philistines and condemned to Hell on the unchallenged evidence of the tumble bug, a thinly disguised caricature of John Summer, agent for the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (1919)--America's major Philistine.

Fairhaven, Lichfield, and Poictesme are not so much allegorical places as completely fictive worlds in which Cabell's heroes and heroines of Modern Virginia and Medieval France can dream and act according to the three dominant attitudes--chivalry, gallantry, and poetry. Like Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, these places have resemblances to real places (Fairhaven to Williamsburg, Lichfield to Richmond, Poictesme to Poitiers and Angouleme), but they are created to give the writer a world which accurately frames his fictive vision. For Cabell these meticulously conceived settings are denials of any possible realism; no one can question the accuracy of his imaginative realms, and he denies that they have any existence except in his mind and in the minds of his characters.

Fairhaven, Virginia, is conveyed through the eyes and opinions of its most famous inhabitant. His conception of it is clearly that of a novelist:

> Fairhaven, itself, I find, has in the matter of atmosphere deteriorated rather appallingly since the town's northern outskirt was disfigured by a powder mill. Unfamiliar persons, in new looking clothes, now walk on Cambridge Street, with an unseemly effect of actual haste to reach their destination; and thus pass unabashed by St. Martin's Churchyard, wherein they have not any great grandparents. Immediately across the street from the churchyard now glitters the Colonial Moving Picture Palace: and most of the delectable old-fashioned Aborigines 'take boarders' (at unbelievable rates) and time honored King's College rents out its dormitories in summer months to the munitions workers then, too, everybody has money. . . . In fine, there remains for the future historian who would perfectly indicate how incredible were the changes wrought by recent years, merely to make the statement that Fairhaven was synchronized. For without any intermediary gradation the town has passed from the 18th to the 20th century. (I, 3-4)

Charteris' romantic point of view dominates his examination of transition in the community that is the scene of most of his gallant behavior and his gallant novel. The attitudes of the eighteenth century are his attitudes and the changing community is used here to illuminate the conflict that Charteris feels with his world.

Lichfield, Virginia, Cabell's other modern setting, is also described by Charteris in answer to a question concerning his failure to use it as a setting for a novel.

> Why, no; if I were ever really to attempt a tale of Lichfield, I would not write a romance but a tragedy. I think that I would call my tragedy Futility, for it would mirror the life of Lichfield with engaging candor; and, as a consequence people would complain that my tragedy lacked sustained interest, and that its participants were inconsistent; that it had no ordered plot, no startling incidents, no high endeavors, and no special aim; and that it was equally deficient in all time-hallowed provocatives of either laughter or tears. For very few people would understand that a life such as this, when rightly viewed is the most pathetic tragedy conceivable. (XIV, 133)

Charteris says that he could only write of the memory of eighteenth century Lichfield that prolonged itself into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He finds the legend of Lichfield to have considerable vitality and he defines the immortalization of that legend. "And wherein, pray, have I harmed Lichfield by imagining a dream city situated half-way between the Atlantic and Avalon and peopled with superhuman persons,--and by having called the city Lichfield? The portrait did not only flatter Lichfield, it flattered human nature" (XIV, 131). For Charteris as for Patricia Stapylton, the heroine of The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, there are two Lichfields: the actual and the fictive. Patricia abhors the legend calling Lichfield "a hamlet of Hamlets . . . where actual tragedy isn't that their fathers were badly treated, but that they themselves are constitutionally unable to do anything except talk about how badly their fathers were treated" (XIV, 268). Both descriptions obviously have little to say about physical aspects of the town. The quality captured is the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the community. The point made by the descriptions is about the existence of paradoxical belief and reality. In his depiction of two modern places, Cabell develops two themes: the importance of fictive places and the clash between the ideal remembered place and the actual place. His characters act in idealized places but they frequently refer to aspects of the actual places, calling attention to the necessary compromise.

Poictesme, the most important of these places in relation to the theory of literature, is the setting for all of Cabell's medieval novels and stories. It is "a land wherein almost anything is rather more than likely to happen save only one thing; it is not permitted in Poictesme for anyone to cease, for one moment, from remaining a human being or ever to deviate from human society." Furthermore it is "a land wherein human nature kept its first dignity and strength, and wherein human passions were never in a poor way to find expression with adequate speech and action" (XVIII, 242). Poictesme is the setting in which Cabell presents and examines all of the attitudes as they came into existence or were brought into focus by the acts of men, supernatural beings, and women. There is not much in the way of physical detail about Poictesme except a map which Cabell sketched out in order to keep track of the distance between towns, moors, heaths and castles within the province. The realization of Poictesme comes entirely from the attitudes and experience of the characters who live there. The sense of the place, as is the case with Lichfield and Fairhaven, is communicated in various points of view.

The two most important responses to Poictesme and some of its atmosphere are those of Manuel and Jurgen. For Manuel Poictesme is something like a prison. When he enters it as the triumphant redeemer, he enters "into the imprisonment of his own castle and into the bonds of high estate, from which he might not easily get free to go a-traveling every whither, and see the ends of this world and judge them" (II, 234). Here in his castle he looks out over his land through the three windows of the Room of Ageus (Age us or Usage)--three windows which "had once been a part of the temple of Ageus, an immemorial god of the Philistines" (II, 252). "Through these windows Count Manuel could see familiar fields, the long avenue of poplars and the rising hills beyond. All was as it had been yesterday, all as all had been since nearly three years ago, Count Manuel had first entered Storisende" (II, 253). Storisende is the capital of Poictesme and its loftiest part. Through two of these windows, Manuel overlooks this pleasant domain but through the third window he looks into "a limitless gray twilight wherein not anything was certainly discernible, and the air smelt of spring." This is the extent of the description of Poictesme from Manuel's point of view. It is indicative of his self-absorption and the way in which Poictesme lends itself to that dreaming. When Manuel leaves Poictesme he exits through the third window to join Grandfather Death.

For Jurgen Poictesme is the starting point for his dream journey and the home where he accepts life as it is. As he leaves on the journey with his guide, Nessus the Centaur, his sense of place is phantasmagoric.

> For a while they went through the woods, which were composed of big trees standing a goodish distance from one another, with the Centaur's gilded hoofs rustling and sinking to a thick carpet of dead leaves, all gray and brown, in level stretches that were unbroken by any undergrowth and then they came to a white roadway that extended due west, and so were done with the woods. Now happened an incredible thing in which Jurgen would never have believed had he not seen it with his own eyes: for now the Centaur went so fast that he gained a little upon the sun, thus causing it to rise in the west a little by little; and these two sped westward in the glory of a departed sunset. The sun fell full in Jurgen's face as he rode straight toward the west, so that he blinked and closed his eyes, and looked first toward this side then the other. Thus it was that the country about him, and the persons they were passing were seen by him in quick bright flashes, like pictures; and all his memories of this shining highway were, in consequence, always confused and incoherent. (VI, 11)

Jurgen's vision of Poictesme is his own fantasy about his romantic past, a past which he now dreams of as "the garden between Dawn and Sunrise." The description of that garden, which is really the garden of Count Emmerick at Storisende, is Jurgen's state of mind:

> This was a wonderful garden: yet nothing therein was strange. Instead, it seemed that everything hereabouts was heart-breakingly familiar and very dear to Jurgen. For he had come to a broad lawn which slanted northward to a well-remembered brook: and multitudinous maples and locust-trees stood here and there, irregularly, and were being played with very lazily by an irresolute west wind, so that foliage seemed to toss and ripple everywhere like green spray: but autumn was at hand, for the locust-trees were dropping a Danae's shower of small round yellow leaves; around the garden was an unforgotten circle of blue hills. And his was a place of lucent twilight, unlit by either sun or stars, and with no shadows anywhere in the diffused faint radiancy that revealed this garden, which is not visible to any man except in the brief interval between dawn and sunrise. (VI, 12)

The garden is a symbolic representation of Jurgen's romantic life in his youth and his fading notion of that life in his middle age. It is a projection of what he was and what he is, commingled, as it were, in the dream. The Centaur defines the meaning of this real and imaginary garden and in doing so he clarifies the meaning of Poictesme.

> For in this garden . . . each man that ever lived has sojourned for a little while, with no company save his illusions. I must tell you again that in this garden are encountered none but imaginary creatures. And stalwart persons take their hour of recreation here and go hence unaccompanied, to become aldermen and respected merchants and bishops, and to be admired as captains upon prancing horses, or even as kings upon tall thrones; each in his station thinking not at all of the garden ever any more. But now and then come timid persons, Jurgen, who fear to leave this garden without an escort: so these must need to hence with one or another imaginary creature, to guide them about alleys and by-paths, because imaginary creatures find little nourishment in the public highways, and shun them. Thus must these timid persons skulk about obscurely with their diffident and skittish guides, and they do not ever venture willingly into the thronged places where men get horses and build thrones. (VI, 14)

Poictesme, then, is the romantic idealization of the past. Most men dwell in this world of ideals at some moment in their lives but they emerge and become useful citizens. Some men always live in this illusory world and they are the poets who accept the need for a fictive vision, for a world where imagination controls content and dreams is of greater consequence than actuality. Poictesme is governed by the Demiurge Romance as it takes earthly shape in the form of the fictive Author of The Biography, Horvendile. It is the place where myth, history, fairytale, fiction, and abstract theories can intermingle as in a dream. It is a major part of a fictive world that has its own laws and its own God, the Author.

Cabell's places function as specific terms and conceptions within the theory of literature and his mode of depicting place illustrates a basic tenet of that theory. His attitudes about the handling of place is in keeping with his sense of symmetry and order as well as his desire to reveal complex truths beyond mere observation or realistic detail. Place is a part of sensual impression and idea; as such it must be revealed through the minds of characters and not as though it were outside them. This approach to the matter of setting is sufficient justification for the heavy use of anagrammatic names and allegorical places. As the characters embody ideas and attitudes, so the places which they experience are further extensions of those ideas. Place intensifies the major conceptions of the theory of literature.

Emblems

The aspects of fiction heretofore discussed do not encompass all of Cabell's literary theory. I have categorized some of the other elements with the term "emblem," to suggest broader implications than symbol. Cabell's five significant emblems are mirrors, veils, animals, Manuel's tomb and statue, and the Sigil of Scoteia. Like witchwomen and places, these emblems embody complex notions about the creative process and the ends and means of fiction. With devices of mythical and critical origins, Cabell ornaments and extends his theory; as his major icons, however, they are sometimes the most illusively enigmatic details of The Biography.

The most frequent emblem in the novels is the mirror, which takes the forms of metaphors and of magical doors to the mythic, literary, or historical past. But, long before Cabell used this device, the mirror was a metaphor in discussion of art and poetry. Reflection recurs in major aesthetic theories from Plato forward. Abrams has carefully traced the mirror, the veil, and the lamp as metaphors in critical theory through the 19th century and into the 20th.[5] Traditionally the mirror has either suggested art as a representation--"a mirror held up to nature"--or art as self-expression--the mirror that reflects the poet's mind. The 18th century generally adhered to the former view, and the latter came into prominence during the 19th century. The veil consistently suggested the shadows which cover the essences, the Ideas, and which must be pierced by the true poet. The lamp as a symbol of the active, creative imagination, was the essence of truth within the poet, and therefore reflected in the mirror of art. Cabell's fictional mirrors, veils, and fire are allegorical developments of these figures.

The mirrors encountered, in Something About Eve, by Gerald Musgrove on his journey toward Antan are emblems of qualities within the poet's mind. Gerald must clean the Mirror of Reality (Lytreia) which is a flesh colored phallic painting, and the Mirror of Romance (Caer Omn) in Dersam (Dreams). After cleaning the Mirror of Romance, he is drawn into its golden mist like a middle-aged Alice. One by one, he transmigrates through the forms of great poetic figures. With this device of a mirror-journey, Cabell combines his notion of poetic evolution and archetypal poetic rebellion into a carefully modulated free-associative pattern. The figures of Prometheus, Solomon, Odysseus, Judas, Nero, Tannhauser, Villon, Faustus, Don Juan, and Jurgen share one common trait: they revolt against Heaven in the name of their own self-expression, and are pursued by omnipotence. This chapter emphasizes a recurrent concept of the poet in The Biography: with the devil's aid the poets in the mirror revolt against imposed order to create, but their rebellion is both the source of their vitality as poets and the agent of their destruction. The theme of rebellion from authority is the governing idea within the mirror of Romance.

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[5] M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and The Lamp, pp. 43-44. "Renaissance Platonism guaranteed the impersonality of the artist's vision by making metaphysical provision for linking the Idea to the individual mind to the universal and unchanging ideas of the world-pattern. The connection might be established by positing the existence of memory-traces of the divine archetype, said to have been stamped into the intellect before birth; it was sometimes supported by an elaborate optical analogy according to which rays of archetypal beauty, streaming from the countenance of God, are reflected in three mirrors, one in the angel, a second in the souls of men, a third in the material world."

Incorporating the traditionally symbolic figure three, the third mirror is the three inch square Mirror of the Third Truth, which is usually described in conjunction with three pigeons, the birds of Venus. The enigma of this mirror is that it reflects man as he might want to be (void of good or evil), his goals, and the perfection toward which he might move. But the mirror's reflection is in a language that he does not comprehend. Alternately, this mirror rests in Antan, belongs to Solomon (who sees unattainable wisdom there), and becomes one of the prizes brought to Queen Moryven by a suitor. All men must look into this mirror who would see the truth void of illusion. But such full self-realization occurs only in the presence of Venus's birds. Like Cabell's other mirror emblems, the magic of this one works to unify the poet's mind and to unlock secrets within his imagination. Poets see their goals and their deepest desires in the mirror three inches square because it is less a mirror held up to nature than it is one turned inward to clarify outward poetic achievement. In so doing it makes clear the self-projections of the poet, and, as in Gerald's case or Solomon's, makes the acceptance of less than perfect accomplishment bearable. As the ultimate container of the Third Truth, it reduces that truth to the mystical three inches, and then brings about a significant change in each poet who sees the reflection. Cabell leaves the mirror and the pigeons unexplained, both because he has a desire to puzzle and because of his sense of inexplicable truth. This emblem always titillates the mind, because the meaning is not quite clear. What I have offered is not so much an explanation as an examination of Cabell's most explicit commentary about the mirror and the pigeons.

The veils described in The Biography are more orthodox and traditional in their meaning than the mirrors. Consistently, Cabell's veils are synonymous with existence, the shadows which hide essence or Ideas. Breaking the veil has two possible meanings: a sexual ritual such as Jurgen and Anaitis perform in Cocaigne, a ceremony of consummation; and the creative impetus of tearing the veil that hides the fire of Audela, the spark that ignites great poets. For Cabell, this emblem, like the mirror, combines both a sexual and literary aspect. The veil of physical existence envelops two kinds of self-expression: love and art. The three truths, those absolutes of Cabell's concept of the universe, art, and the poet, are veiled. In his thinking, the poet must experience and be freed of the first two truths before he can experience the third truth. The veil over the two truths is easily broken or lifted, but few poets share the fire beyond the veil which conceals Audela.

These veils and mirrors are somewhat complicated emblems of the relationship between poetry, the poetic imagination, and actuality. But the Gander, who appears in one episode of The Silver Stallion and in The High Place, clearly states Cabell's theory of the spirit of Romance and dynamic illusions. This garrulous, caged gander--Cabell's version of Mother Goose--speaks out in favor of romance and in opposition to both knowledge and action. His ideas sound much like those of Charteris in Beyond Life. As Kevin of Nointel searches for "all knowledge," the aged Gander sings of ardors, raptures, and the future about which he knows nothing. The Gander, in other words, creates to divert. The effect of his singing is to fill his heavens with "a sentiment of their (man's) importance as moral beings and of the greatness of their destinies" (III, 196). He sings of what he considers to be the most important things in the universe, "the illusions of romance," while Kevin studies books.

Florian, in search of the instrument necessary for action, also meets the Gander, who further develops an absolute force in man's dynamic illusions: "the glory of love," "the felicities of marriage," "patriotism," "success in business," "the high assurance of religion," "optimism, philanthropy, social improvement," "man that is the child and heir of God," "the splendor of man's works," "the magnanimity of human nature," and "the wonder of man's living upon earth" (VIII, 239-240). The immortal Gander "leaves untroubled, at one time or another, the common sense of no man who has lived upon earth" (VIII, 240).

Florian accuses the Gander of not seeing the world as it is and the Gander answers with Cabell's basic fictive vision: "So much the worse for human beings. . . . It does not bother me here in my cage. Besides, the purposes and the effect of my singing is to fill my fellows with a sentiment of their importance as moral beings and the greatness of their destinies. So I do not mimic, I create" (VIII, 240). The Gander in the cage is the emblem of the spirit of Romance, the antithesis of "things as they are" realism. Isolated, limited in experience to his own capability for self-expression he projects dynamic illusions. Untouched by experience, he envisions the world "as it ought to be," but his singing is ignored by both the scholar and the man of action.

Another animal, the silver stallion, is a major emblem in Figures of Earth, The Silver Stallion, and Something About Eve. For Manuel it is the image of Kalki, the last of the avatars of Vishnu, the form in which the Hindu God will arrive to redeem mankind. For the Fellowship the Silver Stallion is a major icon, the horse on which their champion rode and the horse on which he will return. For Musgrave until he stops on Mispec Moor, it may be Pegasus, the Greek flying horse who created the spring on Hippocrene that inspire poets, or it may be Kalki. If the stallion is Pegasus he is, according to Horvendile, "the horse that bears romantics even to the ultimate goal of their dreams" (X, 29). If he is Kalki he "bears romantics even to the ultimate goal of all the gods" (X, 29). The nature of "the divine steed" depends on the attitude of its rider. Gerald Musgrave calls him Kalki, thereby choosing the religious aspect. When Gerald puts Kalki out to pasture on Mispec Moor, he becomes just another horse and Musgrave is surprised to learn the others riding toward Antan have horses very much like Kalki. Cabell has in this symbolic horse represented the close association between poets and redeemers. Both have romantic origins; poetic inspiration and religious redemption are interchangeable depending on the goal of the rider. The horse is a part of the legend of Manuel that becomes the base for the cult of Manuel and he is a part of the poet's notion that the origins of his dreaming are supernatural. Kalki, like Antan and the mirror of the Third Truth, is a romantic dream of unknowable perfection. He is a symbolization of a time "when the minds of men are as clear as crystal" (II, 229). As in Hindu mythology when Kalki comes all of mankind's mistakes will be blotted out and creation will begin again without the past.

The other important emblems suggest additional complexities in the relationship between actuality and fiction: Manuel's tomb and the Sigil of Scoteia. These emblems have a basic similarity in meaning: neither is what it seems to be, but both create illusions which have force far exceeding their substance. The Gander speaks of optimism, the highest dynamic illusion according to Charteris, but the tomb and the Sigil represent the ultimate achievement of man's faith in the possibility of salvation through two kinds of fiction: religion and dreams. The objects are not so important as the spirit of Romance, inherent in man, which causes him to respond with dynamic illusions, that in themselves guide men to strive for a world "as it ought to be" rather than "the world as it is." The Sigil may be a broken jar cap with meaningless markings; the tomb may be empty and its jeweled icons decorated with vari-colored glass, but imagination and aesthetic distance converts the appearance into a truth greater than actuality. Kennaston knows what the Sigil really is but he also knows the depth of the experiences that fill his dreams and his novels. Jurgen knows what Manuel was, how he died, the quality of materials used to immortalize him in stone, and the actual events of Manuel's life and of the lives of the Fellowship. But at a distance and in the workings of his memory, he succumbs to the power of the dynamic illusion that he helped to shape, however falsely. In neither case does the skepticism of knowledge or experience necessarily destroy the value of a fiction.

Cabell's fictive vision, revealed through these emblems, encompasses his conception not only of the poet's shaping of reality but also of its importance to both ethical and cosmological matters. Rarely is any element of allegory limited to matters of literature and literature's relationship to the universe. Folklore, literature, and critical theory are the impetus to broader discussions. Mirrors, veils, talking animals, and icons are commonplace (emblems) in aesthetics, ethical teaching and religion. For Cabell they are embodiments of the essential positions which he takes toward the imagination, the creative process, and the universe reflected in that process. The artist may reach self realization through the form and limitation of a three-inch square mirror or he may be as the gander, a caged creature in an underground world, isolated, optimistic and self-propagating.

PART III

HISTORICAL POETS AND THE THEORY OF LITERATURE

Historical poets or literary artists appear in The Biography as subjects of fictive literary discussion and as illustrative materials in non-fictional essays. The prologue and epilogue to the collected works are partly fictive and partly familiar essays. These books are potpouris of Cabellian opinion as it was shaped in the twenty years leading to the completion of the Storisende Edition and as it was finally arranged out of its multiple original forms--book reviews, college essays, satirical commentaries, and critical monographs--into a cohesive pattern. Most of the poets that Cabell uses in the expression of his theories appear either in the prologue or epilogue, but several worthy of attention appear in fictive episodes in the novels and short stories of The Biography.

Beyond Life and Straws and Prayerbooks contain Cabell's conception of literary history as well as his literary theory--the two are really inseparable. For Cabell certain authors in the history of letters are emblematic of his "theory as the working code of romance." Many writers are alluded to throughout the non-fiction section of The Biography, but a select few are given careful and detailed attention. The range of taste and literary periods is broad: Christopher Marlowe, Francois Villon, William Wycherly, William Congreve, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Booth Tarkington, and Harold Bell Wright; and the critical viewpoint is an amalgamation of biographical data, impressionistic opinion, and aspish condemnation. Very few individual works are examined in close detail because Charteris, the fictional Author-figure in Beyond Life, disavows any desire to write "that dreary thing called literary criticism." Marlowe's plays are a notable exception, though the discussion of them could hardly be called close. Charteris conceives of this group of writers as illustrative of major shifts in the history of the poetic attitude and Economist literature.

Christopher Marlowe and Francois Villon[1] epitomize the notion of the artist as Economist: both transcend their human conditions to create works of art. Marlowe's plays and poems must be set against their "purchase price, which at crude utmost was the flung-away life of a shoemaker's oldest son, very discreditably murdered at twenty-nine. All this, it must be remembered, was created--tangibly to exist where before existed nothing--by a young fellow who, as went material things, was wasting his prospects in pot-house dissipation. At the birth of much if not all this loveliness alcohol played the midwife" (I, 78). Whatever the life Marlowe led it is justified by the immortal works left behind. These works, however, enjoyed more success with other poets than with the general public which came to them after Marlowe's death. "It was by observing Marlowe that Shakespeare finally learned how to write: and Milton 'formed himself' on the same model" (I, 72). However, Marlowe had little talent in "voicing platitudes in unforgettable terms, by virtue of which Shakespeare 'comes home' to most of us and remains so universally quoted. Marlowe's utterance is lacking in that element of triteness without which no work of art can ever be of general appeal in a world of mostly mediocre people" (I, 72-73).

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[1] Both authors also appear in fictional episodes.

Charteris admires "the continuous stream of resonant verse" and "the compact of all outlandish splendors" in Tamburlaine the Great. In The Jew of Malta he sees a fiasco, but he finds that "every speech attributed to 'Barrabas glints something of the bright malignity of lightning'" (I, 74). Edward the Second is described as "an annoyingly 'adequate' piece of writing," that is merely a good example of the "chronicle history." Hero and Leander dwells upon bodily beauty with great skill and verbal craftsmanship. Dr. Faustus receives attention because of its evocation of Helen. "The apostrophe of Faustus to Queen Helen apart from the mere loveliness of words, thus pulsates with an emotion for which there is really no expression in human speech. In imagination the poet for one breathless moment stands--face to face with that flawless beauty of which all poets have perturbedly divined the existence somewhere, and which life, as men know it, simply does not afford, nor anywhere foresee" (I, 77). For that moment, according to Charteris, Faustus pawned his soul and only after that moment does he repent as he is engulfed by Hell.

None of the great works is considered except aesthetically: "and the most straitlaced may permissibly commend the Faustus with much of that indifference to the author's personal 'morality' which renders their enjoyment of the Book of Psalms immune to memory of the deplorable affair with Uriah's wife" (I, 79-81). This final estimate of Marlowe's fame is both an attack on literary scandal-mongering or moralistic criticism, and an attempt to consider the work as having an existence beyond the creator's limitations.

Francois Villon is an example of a poet whose degenerate life was an integral part of his work. "_The Grand Testament_ is a direct result of its author's having been, plus genius, a sneak thief, a pimp, and a cutthroat. From personal experience painfully attained in the practice of these several vocations it was that Villon wove imperishable verses, and he could not have come by this experience in any other way" (I, 80). The purchase price, again, may be said to be worth it: "We are heartily glad to have this _Testament_: and upon the whole, we are grateful to Villon for having done whatever was necessary to produce this poem" (I, 80-81). Villon's creed was that "life, not merely as the parish authorities order it, but as the laws of nature constrain it too, is so 'horrid' that the only way of rendering life endurable is to drink as much wine as one can come by. Besides wine gives you such stupendous notions for a ballade, and enables you to comprehend the importance of writing it, as you, who are so woefully unappreciated, who are so soon to die, alone can write it: and equally does wine sustain you through the slow fine toil of getting all the lovely words just right" (I, 83). According to Charteris, Villon's writing projects an abundance of both pity and terror--Aristotle's requirements for all great poetry. The source of this pity and terror was Villon's life and we all profit "directly by the fact that Francois Villon was in the flesh, plus genius, a sneak thief, a pimp, and a cutthroat" (I, 83). Where the biographical details are so important a part of the poetic expression they cannot be ignored, but they must in no way be reflected in the critical judgments imposed upon the work in later generations.

Marlowe and Villon are examples of the serious creative artist who attains his goal--immortality for his dreams--at any expense. Both, in Charteris's estimation, sacrificed life for the cult of art, thereby providing themselves with aesthetic importance far beyond their short physical existence.

In William Wycherly, Charteris sees the encroachment of gallantry on the poetic attitude. The substance of his plays is gallantry and the major portion of his life was spent in pursuing the gallant attitude: "The spendthrift had virile genius, which had he chosen, might have made his name one of the greatest in English literature. Instead, he preferred to enjoy the material things of life, and, in the end, got from his endeavors to do so, very little comfort" (I, 110). Wycherly was ashamed of his writing career--a trait which Charteris finds typical of many writers who feel that scribbling dreams is not adult employment. He relied heavily on the life about him and gained his popularity for the accuracy with which he described that life.

> For Wycherly and his confreres were the first Englishmen to depict mankind as leading an existence with no moral outcome. It was their sorry distinction to be the first English authors to present a world of unscrupulous persons who entertained no especial prejudices, one way or the other, as touched ethical matters; to represent such persons as being attractive in their characteristics; and to represent such persons, not merely as going unpunished, but as thriving in all things. There was really never a more disastrous example of literature's stooping to copy life. (I, 112)

Wycherly and the Restoration playwrights are, for Charteris, the beginnings of Realism which was carried forward in later generations by Jane Austen and in American letters during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

William Congreve inherits Wycherly's mantle at the close of the seventeenth century; he, very much as Wycherly had done, "leads fashion as well as literature." Congreve wove "the mode of his day, and permitted his art to be seriously influenced by the life about him" (I, 133). He depicts "a care-free land, where life, untrammeled by the restriction of moral codes, untoward weather, limited incomes or apprehensions of the police, has no legitimate object save the pursuit of amorous pleasures" (I, 137). Having devoted himself to writing beautifully of this land until he was twenty-one, Congreve quit art to live the gallant attitude which pervades his work. For the thirty remaining years of his life he shaped "an apostasy of romance."

Charteris considers Congreve greater than Wycherly because he transcended the world around him in his art, creating some of "the most entertaining company in literature," especially Mrs. Millamant, who obviously could have never existed in the flesh. In contrast to Marlowe and Villon who expended all of themselves for art, Wycherly and Congreve found the sacrifice not worth it and gave up art to pursue lives of gallantry in which they made the best of what life offered and shrugged off its inconveniences.

Charteris moves from Wycherly and Congreve to Richard Sheridan, the Mountebank, who gave up art to become a man of affairs much in the spirit of Dom Manuel. Sheridan's writing originated with his need for money; his plays were pot-boilers. "Over and over again Sheridan wrote and re-wrote his pot-boilers until they were masterpieces. . . . And then, like Congreve, he recognized that the word-game is not worth the candle" (I, 60). Charteris quotes Sheridan's summary of his reasons for giving up literature as a life work: "Deuce take posterity! . . . A sensible man will bear in mind that all the world's delicacies are to be won, if ever, from one's contemporaries. And people are generous toward social rather than literary talents, for the sensible reason that they derive more pleasure from an agreeable companion at dinner than from having a rainy afternoon rendered endurable by some book or another" (I, 160-161). The remainder of Sheridan's life is spent as a reputable member of Parliament, as noted orator, and as a drunk. The apparent point here is that he, as Wycherly and Congreve, is remembered as a literary artist even though they chose paths away from the sacrifice. Their immortality resides not in their lives but in their plays.

From the nineteenth century Charteris examines Dickens as an example of an artist who "unfailingly misrepresented the life he pretended to portray" (I, 188). He expurgated nature "so as to improve, aesthetically upon the original." "He has painted a clear-cut picture of the sort of world which he imagined he would like to inhabit" (I, 190). In this world he is able to regard life optimistically.

Thackeray, also, wrote "ingenious travesty of everyday life for artistic purposes" (I, 195). Both of these writers, according to Charteris, "succeeded in writing delightfully about their contemporaries by the simple device of not telling the truth." They support the major contention of Cabell's theory of literature that "art . . . must deal with contemporary life by means of symbols" (I, 202). Dickens' characters are "personifications of certain qualities," and Thackeray "explains the meaning of his symbols over and over again, with delightfully indefensible side-taking and moralizing" (I, 203). Both Thackeray and Dickens are writers who "handle facts religiously, in that particular mood of piety which holds that incomplete accord with a creator's will is irreligious" (I, 203).

From the twentieth century Charteris selects Booth Tarkington as the epitome of the novelist who courts the demands of the general reading public. He is a writer with considerable talent: "poetic insight," "the knack of story-building," "liveliness of fancy," "perceptive eyes" and "the dramatic gift of contriving and causing more convincingly a wide variety of puppets in nothing resembling the puppet master" (I, 228-229). In his talents Tarkington is said to display "a form of wealth which should not be exempt from fair taxation. He has not over-taxed that wealth: and while to write 'best - sellers' is by ordinary a harmless and very often a philanthropic performance, in Mr. Tarkington's case it is a misappropriation of funds" (I, 231). The necessity of being pleasant in order to keep an audience has corroded Tarkington, causing him to produce an image of the world suggestive of "a cosmic gumdrop variegated by oceans of molasses" (I, 231). With the terminology of the Economist, Charteris chastizes an author of talent for not ignoring the likes and dislikes of an audience. He mourns the loss of Tarkington's genius to the harbingers of the comfortable life.

In contrast to Tarkington's genius misspent, Harold Bell Wright is summarily dismissed by Charteris as "the most popular author typewriting today." Wright is "the worthy representative of our popular standards in reading matter during the opening years of the twentieth century." His stories "move through five hundred generous pages . . . with never an incongruous taint of liveliness or wit or imagination, narrating how the heroine decorously acquired an impeccable male admirer, and how the two of them, after suffering 'a number of other calamities', were eventually married to each other. . . . Mr. Wright's is precisely that conservative, and unblushingly platitudinous, dullness, of which every syllable reeks with 'wholesome sentiment,' such as we take comfort to see represented in our senate-chambers, and to nod under on Sabbath mornings, and to retail to our helpless children" (I, 235). The attack on Wright is in reality an attack on popular taste as promulgated by those Charteris calls "our true art critics" who are concerned with the communication of an idea and not the adroit style in which it is communicated. Wright's mediocre books are the best form of art for mediocre minds which make up the reading public. His books do accomplish for these minds what art should accomplish by bringing some assurance "that life is not a blind and aimless business, not all a hopeless waste and confusion." For these minds Wright does suggest something beyond life, something to combat dullness on their mental level; and, so long as they feel that it is "a pretty good story," it is some form of art.

Even with his recognition of the gradual deterioration of literary art into the mediocre popular art of Tarkington and Wright, Cabell still sees the Demiurge Romance at work creating fictional dynamic illusions which are productive of good in man's somewhat dull and limited physical existence. Very little about the contemporary literary world appeals to him, but he continues to see the demiurgic spirit of Romance in that world.

In Straws and Prayerbooks Cabell turns to contemporary literature and to his own book reviews of favored works to illustrate that part of his theory concerning the motivation of the literary artists to divert himself--to play with common sense, piety, ageless symbols, death, diverting ideas, and his own posterity. Again the approach is biographical and impressionistic; in these critical commentaries he turns more frequently to the contents of individual works, examining them for stylistic merits. The focal works and authors are Donn Byne's Messer Marco Polo, Charles De Coster's The Legend of the Glorious Adventure of Ty Eulenspiegel, his own Jurgen, Anatole France's La Rotisserie de la Reine Pedauque, Joseph Hergesheimer's works and George's Moore's Carra Edition.

With the exception of Moore's Collected Edition these works are chosen for discussion because they contrast with the realistic fiction of the 1920's and the 1930's. For Cabell, Realism is the enemy which must be combatted with exotic materials and elaborated style. Rather than succumbing to the actual world around him as depicted by Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and John Dos Passos, he chooses to turn away from the artist as social critic to be artist as a man who, to divert himself, plays with world values. His selections from contemporaries to illustrate his theories indicate that he sees the problems of humanity on a larger scale than that of immediate social need. Humanity he considers essentially unchanged and unchanging; he admires those who depict its foibles while remaining at a symbolic distance. The truth that might be revealed by the artist is not the truth of an instant in history; it is an absolute truth available to any artist's playing. These examples are meant to illustrate those among Cabell's contemporaries whom he thought successful or almost successful in such revelations.

Donn Byrne's Messer Marco Polo was for Cabell "a lot of unanticipatable flotsam washed up from the wide sunless sea of 'realism'" (XVII, 48). The book combined several qualities that attracted him: a concern for stylistic niceties and point of view which grow out of Malachi Campbell's Celtic telling of an oriental story; the elaborated diction, and the fact that the tale 'exposes' or arraigns nothing whatever" (XVII, 49). The story, Cabell feels, is less important than the way in which it is told: "its prodigality in the transforming magic which . . . quite incommunicably lends romantic beauty to this or that not necessarily unusual or fertile theme, somewhat as sunset tinges the wooded and the barren mountains with equal glamour" (XVII, 49). For Cabell the book approaches wizardry in its invocation of four worlds at once: "The tale . . . seems a fantastic and gracious pageant, saddened somehow by the known evanescence of its beauty, and regarded through three opalescent veils: or, rather, all that happens--just as we upon reflection prefer to have had it happen,--in the Chinese jasmine garden by the Lake of Cranes, is viewed through a rose-tinted gauze of mediaeval fancies seen through thin aureate Celtic mists observed through the unhued but glazing windowpanes of a Westchester, N. Y., drawing-room" (XVII, 51). The book suggests Cabell's own goals "to write beautifully of beautiful happenings." The tale, he thinks, has the true formula, the one he used in so many of his works: "the hero who wanders footloose and at adventure through lands which are to him and to the reader in nothing familiar. It is the formula of the Odyssey, the formula of picaresque romance, and of all fairy stories properly equipped with quests and an indomitable third prince. It is, of course, precisely the one formula which cannot ever lose its charm so long as men retain that frame of mind which seems coeval with recorded history, of being bored with the routine of their daily living" (XVII, 54). Cabell might well be discussing his own work and his own working code of romance in this analysis of the basic appeal of Donn Byrne's Messer Marco Polo. The elements of the Cabellian fictive world are apparent: mythology, legend, delicacy of style, and an insistent modern viewpoint framing it all with slight skepticism.

Messer Marco Polo is historical fiction. The next book that Cabell discusses at length is fictionalized legend. De Coster's The Legend of the Glorious Adventures of Tyl Eulenspiegel is illustrative of Cabell's observations about the rogue--the hero who defies all convention and law--as a favorite character throughout literary history. Tyl Eulenspiegel has for five centuries been famous in Belgium and the Netherlands as "mischief-maker, Jack-of-all trades, and by turns fool, artist, valet and physician!" Of himself Tyl says: "A Fleming am I from the lovely land of Flanders, workingman, nobleman, all in one,--and I go wandering through the world, praising things beautiful and good, but boldly making fun of foolishness" (XVII, 76). Cabell's attention here is devoted less to style and more to the nature of the hero, and a national one at that, "but what, above all, remains with us is the figure of the tall young rogue who passes hardly any alcove which hide-bound morality has labelled 'Keep Out,' without pausing for some dalliance therein" (XVII, 80). Tyl is, for Cabell, the best symbol of man's desire to break away from the conventions that surround him. Such a legend as this grows out of man's need to dream of being what he can never be--a rogue. "Everywhere, in fine, this or that pleasant action is forbidden or in one way or another restricted; and man, upon the verge of actual, sharp, zestful enjoyment is brought up short by a taboo of his own inventing" (XVII, 82). For all men "it is very pleasant to indulge in these sports vicariously through considering the exploits of the Eulenspegelian rogue who does do these things" (XVII, 82).

The literary artist has always shared mankind's interest in the rogue and through him ideas of revolution: "In all polities imaginative literature has tirelessly advocated revolution, by depicting the possibilities of a more pleasure-giving state of affairs; and in his diversion the artist has consistently tended to identify himself with the rogue and the lawbreaker" (XVII, 83). The rogue, then, is to Cabell the epitome of the literary artist's criticism of life and the piety which shapes life. He is the symbolic representation of the diabolical spirit to unsettle the conventional through ridicule and unconventional behavior. Tyl Eulenspiegel and his counterparts in other national literatures are the indications of this spirit.[2]

Cabell's Jurgen, which shares rogue-hero qualities with Tyl Eulenspiegel, is the story of an unconventional man who opens doors that conventional men keep shut. For opening these doors, Jurgen was suppressed by John Sumner. Cabell, however, does not wish in the theoretical context of Straws and Prayerbooks to prolong a discussion of censorship. His main concern here is the literary artist playing with piety. Of the right of Jurgen to exist as a book he says: "If Jurgen contained the right constituents it would live; and if it lacked the stuff of longevity it would in due course die: either way, the outcome was to be decided neither by me nor by societies dedicated to the suppression of frankness, nor even by a judge and a petty jury" (XVII, 134). Through his discussion of Jurgen's merits and the validity of its censorship, Cabell further demonstrates his feeling that all truly great art corrupts "in its continual playing with piety and with common-sense." He acknowledges that best-thought-of citizens who would keep art clean are right: "If art were not very cruelly restrained it would impoison and wreck all civilizations, not here to speak of reordering heaven. But there is no need to worry, because art, as it happens, is always, and probably always will be, just thus restrained, by the inefficiency of the artist. So art may never ruin America, after all" (XVII, 138). Having admitted to the roguishness of his hero, Cabell deals one further blow to American letters of the time by giving clear indication where he thinks The Biography fits; he calls attention to the fact that at this time the representative of the art of letters in the National Hall of Statuary is General Lew Wallace, the author of Ben Hur, which is "the perfected expression of the best-thought-of American ideals in literature" (XVII, 193). "When judged by these ideals, Jurgen and all the rest of The Biography should be decreed 'offensive, and lascivious, and lewd, and indecent'" (XVII, 139). Apparently Cabell considers Jurgen to be the most likely candidate for the position of American national rogue hero; for a brief season the novel was at least the cause celebre of the anti-Puritan, anti-conventional literary forces in the country.

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[2] Cabell lists Robin Hood, Cartouche, Rob Roy, Guzman d'Alforache, Shinderhannes, Schubry, Lovelace, Tom Jones, Jack Sheppard, and Paul Clifford.

Cabell turns from examples of the artist playing with common sense and piety to the artist playing with death. The exemplary book is Anatole France's La Rotisserie de la Reine Pedauque, which Cabell finds to be like Dumas in content but unlike Dumas in that "between assignation and combats," they "toy amorously with ideas." Again Cabell's interest is less in stylistics and story than in one character who represents an attitude that coincides with his own theories. That character in La Rotisserie is l'Abbe Jerome Coignard whose creed is extremely urbane: "Always bear in mind that a sound intelligence rejects everything that is contrary to reason, except in matters of faith, where it is necessary to believe blindly" (XVII, 143). Coignard's thoughts always concern the relationship between God and His children. In this concern Cabell sees the importance of belief in something after death, for to attempt to divert oneself by thinking that there is nothing which is a waste of time. The nature of celestial architecture has long been one of man's major dynamic illusions:

> These conjectured kingdoms were, of course, the earliest chosen subject matter for poetic adornment everywhere: poets were, of course, the first to guess at what it would be most interesting to find beyond the black door: and every ancient religion--again, of course--grew up from out of our remote ancestors' indulgence in the two habits, now equally obsolete, of reciting poetry and of taking it seriously. They had at least the excuse that this poetry was magnificent, because in surveying and populating these post mortem countries the creating romanticist has displayed his most imposing reach of power. . . . Here he, indeed, has

> need of power: for he is here intent to make sport with his third great opponent, and to play with death; intent to bereave the tyrant of all terribleness, intent to color roseately the dreadful face of doom, and intent to detect in the skeleton's multidentate grinning a smile of reassurance. (XVII, 147)

Coignard's concentration on God and His children leads Cabell to one of his clearest statements of the relationship between the spirit of Romance and one of man's major dynamic illusions, Religion. "Men have, out of so many thousand years of speculation, contrived no surer creed than Coignard's that in matters of faith it is necessary to believe blindly" (XVII, 154).

The final two literary artists, other than himself, used to clarify his literary theory are Joseph Hergesheimer and George Moore--two more completely different writers it is hard to imagine. Cabell surveys Hergesheimer's whole career as an example of the literary artist who becomes a commercial success and gives up self-diversion for audience approval. For fourteen years Hergesheimer wrote without having one story published and in that fact Cabell finds what he considers to be the key to Hergesheimer's art. In this time he, like all creative artists, is "an anchorite whose actual living is given over to his diversions in a withdrawn and not overwholesome country whereinto no other person can ever enter; and whence he, tired out for the while by his playing, deviates now and then into normal human life. . . as a talking and laughing and amorous and blatant animal, very much as other wearied persons deviate into sleep and into sleep's strange dreams" (XVII, 182).

Cabell's explanation of the fourteen years is that Hergesheimer was writing for his own diversion, "playing at the game the artist must always play." In Hergesheimer's early novels he finds what he calls "a queer analogue" to Christopher Marlowe's writing "men laboring toward the unattainable, and a high questery failed" (XVII, 185). He summarizes the basic plot of Hergesheimer's first four novels[3] and discovers that they all have the same basic theme: "That which one, for whatever reason, finds most beautiful must become one's diversion from all other interest; it is a goal which one seeks futilely, and with discomfort and peril, but which one seeks inevitably" (XVII, 186). The theme of the novels and the theme of the fourteen years are obviously the same. "Beauty is divine; a power superior and somewhat elfinly inimical to all human moralities and rules of thumb, and a divinity which must unflinchingly be served. . . ." (XVII, 187). This is the divinity that Hergesheimer also served "with strangely patterned evocations, in striving to write perfectly of beautiful happenings." Linda Condon (1919) is viewed as a modern instance of domnei, "the worship of woman's beauty, as, upon the whole, Heaven's finest sample of artistic self-expression, and as in consequence, the most adequate revelation of God" (XVII, 188). After the appearance of these five novels, Hergesheimer becomes a popular success; he compromises his art for magazine audiences even though, admittedly, he continues to write well. Cabell finds it difficult to sense that he has no other purpose than to direct himself. The ideas of the first five novels "are not his idols but his playthings; and are the diverting toys with which the anchorite has entertained his stay in that withdrawn, queer, lonely country to which also I recently referred" (XVII, 202).

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[3] Those novels are The Lay Anthony, Mountain Blood, Java Head, and Balisand.

Cabell checks his criticism of any but the first five books because he came to be friends with Hergesheimer and talked at length with him about the later works; in such a relationship he finds that he can no longer be sure of his opinions. For purposes of the literary discussions only Hergesheimer's fourteen years of self-diverting play and his concern with Beauty interest Cabell.

For the idea of self-perpetuation as a main goal of the artist, he chooses to discuss George Moore's Carra Edition. This idea is the main tenet of the Economist, and in Straws and Prayerbooks as Cabell completes his own Collected Edition, he satirizes the twentieth century end of this idea of immortality and permanence through literature. Eight of the first fourteen volumes are Realistic Novels which must not be taken too seriously: "that sort of realism--the realism of 'the human document'; and the selected 'corner of creation' here to re-echo that for time's old fangled catchword" (XVII, 221).

Indirectly, Cabell seems to be poking fun at himself as well as the literary trend of producing collected editions. To him the basic drive of the Economist is immortality through literary efforts. In George Moore's expensive subscription edition he sees the final modern form of that theory--the preservation of worthless realistic fiction. "George Moore, at last at ease in the exclusive company of one thousand subscribers only, can now speak freely without bothering about such finicking contemporareous notions of delicacies and indelicacy as, we now learn, had until the printing of this Carra Edition somewhat hampered him. And for the rest, even in their most tedious passages of brilliant psychology, Mr. George Moore's Realistic Novels really do remain interesting relics. As museum pieces their value is plain" (XVII, 224). Cabell dislikes Moore's style, his point of view, and his subject matter. To him Moore lacks a conscious point of view and an adequate vocabulary. Of his style Cabell says: "George Moore is . . . so convincingly the great prose artist everywhere in manner and gesture that we are rather generally apt to overlook his frequent omission to be anything of the sort in his writing" (XVII, 224). He finds Moore's omniscient author technique--his constant intrusion into the text to discuss himself--an unwieldly device in fiction. He dislikes Moore's extensive use of description and he abhors the use of "ready made and time-battered phrases." The Carra Edition is an attempt to perpetuate Moore's Work by giving it a facade of permanence where there is none. It is an attempt to extend an egotistical artist's fame far beyond its temporal value by giving it beautiful uniform bindings, excellent print, and prefaces. The Carra Edition, is to Cabell, a travesty of his Economist notions and one suspects that indirectly his ridicule of it is a self-judgment upon his own attempt at immortality in the Storisende Edition.

Cabell's examination of these particular writers extends and complicates his theory of literary art as self-diversion while, at the same time, clarifying his highly individualistic conception of the literature of the 1920's and 1930's. As he discusses the individual writers and works, it becomes clear that his literary theory includes more than a series of abstract statements about _Romance_, _dynamic illusion_, _Beauty_, and *diversion*. It is also a practical critical theory which leads him to examine point of view, symbolism, fictionalization of ideas, stylistics, characterization, and structuring. The commentaries can not be called detailed textual studies, for there is too much emphasis on biographical detail and sophisticated joshing, but they are apparently based on rather close readings of the works and an understanding of how these works fit into the world of letters as seen from this particular theoretical viewpoint.

Cabell concludes *Straws and Prayerbooks* nostalgically by having the editor and author of the Storisende Edition meet the author of *The Eagle's Shadow*. Together the young and the old Cabell agree that the goal--to write beautifully of beautiful happenings--has been worth the expense of time and life. The playing with common sense, piety, death, and ideas that is represented in the uniform edition, *The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel*, has been diverting and at least fifteen hundred subscribers will help to perpetuate Cabell.

The major uses of literary personages in fictional episodes occur in *The Line of Love*, *A Certain Hour*, *Jurgen*, and *Something About Eve*. Christopher Marlowe appears as a poet-hero courting Cynthia Allonby in a short story, "Porcelain Cups." In Jurgen, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain are referred to as a part of a satirization of the censorship trial of *Jurgen*; in *Something About Eve*, two poet figures, Nero and Villon, visit Gerald Musgrave on Mispec Moor and engage in a literary discussion with him ; and *A Certain Hour* is a collection of ten short stories dealing with the ten figures Manuel shaped out of clay in

Figures of Earth. These ten writers are Robert Herrick, Alexander Pope, Bishop Ufford, Raimbant de Vaqueriras, Shakespeare, Allesandro de Medici, William Wycherly, Richard Sheridan, Paul Vanderhoffen, and John Charteris.

Marlowe appears in "Porcelain Cups" as a scorned suitor who decided against giving up his career in poetry for a woman. The story is a simple one about the courtships of Cynthia Allonby by a gallant hero, a chivalrous hero, and a poet; significantly the gallant hero gains Cynthia's hand. Davis finds this story to be one of the most cogent fictional presentations of the three basic attitudes and their relationships to each other as symbolized in the courtship of Cynthia.[4] Cynthia burns one of Marlowe's poems, and he denounces her by comparing her values to two porcelain cups. Of the three heroes, only the poet according to Davis grasps Cynthia's true essence as a stupid, well-meaning, pretty, scented animal.

Most of the tales in A Certain Hour are less about the poetic attitude than about chivalry or gallantry. This is true of the tales about Raimbaut de Vaqueriras, Allesandro de Medici, William Wycherly, Bishop Ufford, and Richard Sheridan. All but the Raimbant de Vaquereras tale about honor and woman worship are tales of gallantry. The poetic achievement of the individual writers is given little attention; in effect, these stories depict the recurring theme of the literary artist who decides that he would prefer to live his attitude than to write about it. Each of the stories depicts some gallant episodes which illustrate this choice: Allesandro enjoys his lust, Ufford commits adultery, Wycherly makes love in his waning years, Sheridan tries his hand at burglary with a female partner. In a sexual episode with an old flame, Judith, the story about Shakespeare symbolically represents the inability of the poet to capture the fire of his earlier creations. The same pattern occurs in the story about Charteris, when for a moment the poet thinks that he might be able to stir up the old creative impulses. In each case a woman is the symbol of artistic and romantic achievements. Each is rejected as being worthless in the artist's present creative imagining. Literary art and the immortality provided by it overcome physical limitations in the stories about Herrick, Vanderhoffen, and Pope. Herrick, after returning from death to examine his literary reputation, decides in favor of death over continuation of human existence. His literary immortality is apparently enough. Vanderhoffen gives up his life as a man of affairs to write poetry; and Pope withdraws from a love affair in favor of true love between a country girl and a swain, only to have that love end in tragedy. Out of that tragedy he shapes a poem, "On Two Lovers Struck Dead by Lightning," which immortalizes them and himself, achieving far more valuable results than could have been accomplished by a consummated physical relationship.

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[4] Davis, pp. 112-113.

The theme of A Certain Hour is that true poets are not very acceptable human beings and that truly gallant or chivalrous men do not make very conscientious poets. Poets' lives are touched by the irrationality and passion of Audela's fire, Freydis' magic. As some of Cabell's favorite real and fictional poets, the ten are given brief examinations at certain hours when they fail as human beings to succeed as poets or forsake poetry for doubtful success as human beings. The poets are isolated from society; their failure to adjust to convention is instrumental in the imaginative self-expression which produces a work of art.

Cabell never completely abandoned the idea of the isolated, suffering but worldly-wise artist and his ineptness as a human being. Indeed, Charteris' theme in Beyond Life and the essence of the Economist theory of literature is that the poet must use his life and if necessary sacrifice it for the sake of his poetic expression. The stories that he writes about the ten poets are consistently stories of mutually exclusive failure in either life or poetry. A Certain Hour contains narratives about those poets who did not compromise their art and those who did. In some ways being touched at all by the poetic attitude results in failure. With the exception of Shakespeare, no one of the poets discussed achieves absolute success in living; some achieve success in poetry, but those who give up poetry generally live lives of dissipation in which they constantly shrug off the importance of life and immortality. Pope is Cabell's example of complete expression of the poetic attitude; Wycherly, Congreve, and Sheridan are examples of lives that might have been put to better use had they been sacrificed for art.

Cabell satirizes this theme of poetic unconventionality in one of Jurgen's episodes. Significantly this episode ridicules the censorship trial of Jurgen. Jurgen is captured by the Philistines after they have laid siege to Psendopolis, the capital of Leuke, the country of Greek Heroes ruled by Helen. The only witness against Jurgen is "the tumble bug," a rather obvious representation of John Sumner, an agent of Anthony

Comstock's New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, who brought the case against Jurgen. The tumble bug comes in "rolling in front of him his loved and properly housed young ones. With the creature came pages, in black and white, bearing a sword, a staff, and a lance" (VI, 239). He says: "Now, by St. Anthony! this Jurgen must forthwith be relegated to limbo, for he is offensive and lewd and indecent" (VI, 239). Then parodying the accusations brought against Jurgen, the tumble bug defines the position of the moral arbiters: "You are offensive . . . because this page has a sword which I choose to say is not a sword. You are lewd because that page has a lance which I prefer to think is not a lance. You are lascivious because yonder page has a staff which I elect to declare is not a staff. And finally, you are indecent for reasons of which a description would be objectionable to me, and which therefore I must decline to reveal to anybody" (VI, 239).

Continuing his attack on unconventional behavior in literature, the tumble bug recites precedents in the past: "the only three detected makers of literature that have ever infected Philistia, thanks be to goodness and my vigilance, but for both of which we might have been no more free from makers of literature than are the other countries" (VI, 240). The tumble bug--Cabell's symbolization of the arbiter of American literary morality--outlines how he handled Poe, Whitman, and Twain, the three writers for whom Cabell had respect: "Yes, there was Edgar whom I starved and hunted until I was tired of it: then I chased him up a back alley one night, and knocked out those annoying brains of his. And there was Walt, whom I chivied and battered from place to place, and made a paralytic of him: and him too, I labelled offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent. Then later there was Mark, whom I frightened into disguising himself in a clown's suit, so that nobody might suspect him to be a maker of literature: indeed, I frightened him so that he hid away the greater part of what he had made until after he was dead, and I could not get at him" (VI, 240). The concentration here is obviously on biographical generalization and not on individual works except perhaps in the statement about the offensiveness of Whitman and the posthumous publication of some of Twain's work. Slyly, Cabell places his own work in the ranks of Poe, Whitman, and Twain, but he also uses this episode to lambast the censoring forces who were seeking to mold literature into agreement with the conventions of a general public. The militant voice of this conventionality is suitably a tumble bug that lives on dirt. There is no doubt that the censorship of Jurgen, in this episode represented by the Philistine's trial of the character, Jurgen, left Cabell feeling a close kinship with the other isolated, suffering, and maligned artists of American letters.

In Something About Eve two historical poet-figures are used to fictionalize aspects of the theory of literature. While Gerald Musgrave is visiting Maya on Mispec Moor before journeying to Antan, he receives poets, legendary, and mythical figures who are completing their journeys. Among the visitors are two representative poets: Nero and Villon. Musgrave questions these men and they in answering his questions discuss each other.

Nero's life had been a poem--"a unique masterpiece in the way of self-expression: he, above all other men, had served the one end of every poet's art by revealing the true nature of man's being":

> The legend of Nero was in a world wherein every other man stayed more or less unwillingly an unfulfilled Nero, the supreme type of the literature of escape. The legend of Nero was a poem which men would not forget: it was a poem familiar in all languages: and it was a poem which, now, everybody could cordially admire and delight in, because time had removed the need of considering any current moral standards or one's own physical safety in judging the poem, now that Nero was only a character in a book, like--as the Emperor said, with a quaint revealment of his retained interest in literature--like Iago or Volpone or Tartuffe. For whether you called any particular book a history or a poem or a drama did not, of course, affect the impressiveness and vigor and complexity of the character drawing in it, nor the value of the author's apt and edifying revelations. (X, 178)

Villon says of his traveling companion, Nero, that his life lacked one necessary ingredient which he, Villon, had: "a touch of tenderness without which no work of art is of the first class." Villon's life, too, was a poem; he was a "hog with a voice." Villon

> . . . had become a never-dying myth of vagabondage with its heart in the right place, and a parable which revealed how much of good always survived in the most vile and abandoned of criminals and even in persons unsuccessful in business life. The legend of Villon thus proved exactly the contrary to that which was proved by the legend of Nero: as the one demonstrated the real nature of man to aspire only to lust and cruelty the moment that inhibitions were removed, so did the other legend show the real fundamental nature of every man to be incurably good and lovable under all possible surface stains. And the legend of Villon, Villon repeated, had in it tenderness,--that indispensable flavor of tenderness and of a sentimentality, without which no work of art can ever really be of the first class so far as goes its popular appeal. (X, 182)

Villon is Cabell's version of the poet maudit, a favorite image of the creative artist's character at the fin de siecle.

The legends of Nero and Villon are opposites: one demonstrates "the real nature of man to aspire only to lust and cruelty the moment that inhibitions were removed," and the other shows "the real fundamental nature of every man to be incurably good and lovable under all possible surface strains." Villon had lived in the gutter, but his eyes had been on the stars. In this idea Gerald sees all human aspirations, sung loudly, beautifully, and with tenderness, but nonetheless foiled. Nero, on the other hand, calls attention to the fact that we are moved by such a figure without knowing why--which is "the image of poetry." Asked what truth they, Villon and Nero, hope to find in Antan, they answer that for the poet "there exists always just as many truths as he cares to imagine" and that "there exist more truths than any poet cares to imagine."

Notably the legendary Villon and Nero travel together toward Antan, although they are divergent in their teaching. Cabell uses these mythic-historical figures to express allegorically and critically that relationship between the realistic point of view (absolute self-expression) and the romantic point of view (self-expression which looks to the idealized vision of itself) as not being diverse at all. Just as he says in a letter to Dreiser that they merely say the same things about human nature in divergent manners, so he shows Villon, the romantic medieval poet, and Nero, the archpoetic realist-egotist, walking compatibly toward Antan together, each veiling the central mystery of self-expression under variant methods, both touched with skepticism. They reflect the paradoxical truth both of romanticism and naturalism, of illusion and mechanistic reality.

Most of the salient points of the theory of literature, the poetic attitude, the Economist artist, Demiurge, dynamic illusion, romantic-naturalism, and diversion, are augmented by fictional symbolic representation within The Biography. These points and others more closely concerned with individual works and the ideas in those works are clarified in the non-fictional sections. The prevalence of such materials in the ideational and fictive content of The Biography is indicative of Cabell's consistently and meticulously developed literary theory. The Cabellian method draws his whole literary output; fiction, criticism, reviewing, and autobiography, into his completed work.

CONCLUSION

James Branch Cabell makes literature the radix bonorum of The Biography. For him literature and the literary artist are the earthly analogues of the idea of creation. The act of creation, the work of the poet whether human or supernatural, is one of his central motifs. Man lives by his creations, more specifically the intangible shapings of his mind. Most men make something with their minds and adhere to that something which poets make for publication; they shape their dreams and free them to effect changes or experiences in the minds of other men. The process of imaginative making lies at the center of human behavior at the center of literature.

Cabell's The Biography of the Life of Dom Manuel is in part an examination of mankind's poetic powers and their interrelationship with the other patterns of history. Cabell sees all fiction as escapist: but in that term he does not exclude realism.[1] Fiction is imagined and it is addressed to the imagination; the imagination is the mental process whereby man gets out of himself and his physical limitations. So, logically, fiction is in essence, escapist, no matter what its theme.

The poet is a maker who uses all that he is and all that he experiences in his work. It is inseparable from him, hence, the constant autobiographical references throughout The Biography[2] Cabell clearly associates his own poetic endeavors with those of Horvendile, Charteris, Musgrave, and Kennaston. The author of any work is its demiurge, holding a position analogous to that of an omnipotent God. As such he, the author, is never completely outside the fiction. Like God in pantheistic theory, the creator and his creation are one. Cabell views _The Biography_ as a cosmos that is the result of an act of self-expression. The audience who experiences that work must in its reading experience the same creative process as the artist. In essence the work must be valued on its own terms and not on the basis of any preconceptions.

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[1] Cabell, As I Remember It (New York, 1955), p. 155.

[2] Cabell, Ladies and Gentlemen (New York, 1937), p. 193.

Cabell does not always obey his own dicta for he frequently applies his critical preconceptions to the work of realism. However, in many cases he is able to overcome his bias and admire works such as those of Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser. Even then he neatly fits those who write of contemporary life into his own vision of what fiction should accomplish. Sinclair Lewis's myth-like midwest and Dreiser's belief in naturalism and the myth of success are to Cabell fictional exploration of modern life by means of symbol. Even in George Moore's works he sees a situation akin to his own--the artist's ego as the focal point of his creations. And much best-selling fiction he thinks necessarily mediocre, to supply the needs of mediocre minds.

No part of his writing fiction, essays, book reviews, or critical articles, escaped from the final shaping of his literary theory. His life and his literature were one and he never ceased to use himself and those within his circle as subjects from which to form ideas or fictions. Cabell is always meeting Cabell throughout the works and neither ever takes the other too seriously. The end result of this artistic mirrorgazing is a critical theory of literature which is the more worthy because it is never dogmatic without reminding itself of that dogmatism. Cabell lays no claim to originality; he calls forth his sources regularly: Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Sidney, Thackeray, Schiller, Wilde, and Stevenson. The Biography is itself an illustration of the theory that it postulates. Cabell constantly writes of his more theoretical essays as though they were fiction no less than the stories, allegorical journeys, and places.

The Biography remains unique in American letters because of its independence from dominance by any literary movement. It has been common practice for critics to say that Cabell lived after his time as a literary artist; presumably more suitable times could have been Ancient Greece, Medieval France, Elizabethan, Restoration, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England, and Twentieth Century American. His theory is even as timeless for it suggests the aesthetic principles of Plato and Aristotle, Renaissance Platonism, nineteenth century romantic critical theory, twentieth century New Criticism,[3] and the twentieth century aesthetics of Cassirer, Langer and Collingwood. Cabell broke the boundaries of time and literary movements by seeming to incorporate some parts of the major literary periods into his fiction and his theory of literature. He is not of another age; his eclectic nature makes him an emblem of modernity.

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[3] Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York, 1958), p. 284.

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VITA

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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