A SURVEY OF CRITICISMS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE FROM 1914 to 1920, BASED ON A SELECTED LIST OF FRENCH PERIODICALS

by

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introductory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. French Criticisms of Recent American Fiction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. French Criticisms of Recent American Poetry</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. French Criticisms of Recent American Drama</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following study, the author has attempted to make a survey of French criticisms of contemporary American literature, the survey being based on a selected list of French periodicals to be found in the University of Kansas library. In a few instances, the material in these periodicals was supplemented by articles by French authors in American magazines, or books by French critics published in America.

The periodicals from which material for this thesis has been drawn are: Journal des Débats, Les Langues Modernes, Mercure de France, La Nouvelle Revue Française, La Revue Anglo-Américaine, La Revue Bleue, La Revue des Cours et Conférences, La Revue des Deux Mondes, La Revue Hebdomadaire, La Revue de la Littérature Comparée, and La Revue de Paris.

The renaissance which took place from 1912 to 1914 made the American literature written since the World War a unit separate from that which preceded it. Because French criticisms of this new American literature form a unit in themselves, it has seemed best to limit this study to criticisms of American authors of the contemporary period. The interest of the French critics of the present day, however, is in no degree limited to the literature of the years following the war, but numerous articles on the writings of American
authors of all periods were found in a survey of the magazines used in the preparation of this thesis. There were also scores of articles on American government, finance, politics, and social conditions, showing the widespread interest that the present-day Frenchman is taking in the United States.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor J. H. Nelson for assistance in the choice of a subject and in the writing of this thesis.

G. D.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The interest of the French nation in America, which began early in the life of this country and was furthered by the friendly intercourse of a century and a half, was probably intensified by the World War. France and America were drawn closer together in the years from 1914 to 1918 just as England and France, and England and America were. The attitude of the United States toward Europe since the war has undoubtedly discouraged French eagerness to cultivate intellectual kinship with her sister republic, but, in spite of this, the deep feeling of sympathy, fostered by similar institutions and a like devotion to progress, still exists.

Professor Charles Gestre says that the French understand the psychological processes now going on in the United States because they are passing through similar experiences. An avid curiosity has been aroused in French minds not only concerning our writers but concerning American civilization as a whole. They have been particularly impressed by American enterprise and daring, and by American innovations in architecture and machinery, as well as in modes of life. The wholesale invasion of France, moreover, especially of Paris, by American tourists and students has intensified the French interest in this country. As a result, they have become curious to know something of the character and

home life of those who live in the United States. Frenchmen who have not visited this country in person are eager to read the reports and the impressions of those who have crossed the Atlantic to study our theories of government, our folk-ways, our history and constitution, our social problems.

Among the recent best sellers in France are books on America, among them books of travel, social, political or economic studies, and fictional accounts of life here. Paul Morand's *New York*, for example, had a sale of more than two hundred thousand copies. Better, however, than these books are those by American authors to which the French turn to get a closer view of this country. They read them in the original or in the numerous translations which have appeared in French magazines, and in books emanating from French publishing houses recently. Professor Oestre, an authoritative student of American life and civilization, thinks it significant that the French public has called for more information about American writers and asked for more translations of works from the pens of American authors since the war than ever before, although the movement had begun earlier.

The interest of the French in our literature, is of two kinds, one of which has been suggested by the foregoing paragraphs—that is, interest in literature as a

2. Ibid.
reflector of American life and manners. The other interest, which is the chief concern of this study, is in its intrinsic value as art. No definite line, of course, can be drawn between the two.

Criticisms of the American industrial system, social conditions, schools and colleges, political institutions and other phases of our present day civilization are as numerous in French magazines as criticisms of American literature. The latter, however, have the greater appeal in that they give pictures of men rather than of systems, and the observations they make are humanized rather than statistical or scholarly.

One new development in particular the French critics believe is seen in contemporary American drama, poetry and fiction, namely, that it is autochthonous, a product of American conditions and American minds. Nineteenth century literature, they say, was romantic, even exotic, and pictured life as the author wished it were, rather than as it really was. Those among the French who have followed the development of American literature have noted that realism, possibly under the stimulus of French novels, began to creep into the fiction of the latter part of the nineteenth century, and that this movement has grown until the twentieth century has turned almost entirely to realism. These critics see in the poems, plays and novels of the present day a new, distinctive, and more native
literature than America hitherto had known.

In viewing the American literary scene, the French are, on the whole, optimistic and hopeful. They consider America to be at the opening of a new era of greater economic, social and literary development. The works of realism they approve whole-heartedly, yet they hold that there is a place for other types of writing— for romanticism, for example, of the type developed by James Branch Cabell.
CHAPTER II

FRENCH CRITICISMS OF RECENT AMERICAN FICTION

No French critic of contemporary American literature has failed to take cognizance of the new movement in fiction which, like that in poetry and drama, began to assert itself after the first ten years of the twentieth century. The French critics agree almost unanimously as to the characteristics of this new movement and in their comments on the leading American authors who have had a part in it.

The three French critics who have made the most valuable contributions to the study of American fiction, in the periodicals on which this study is based, are Regis Michaud, for more than twenty years professor of French at the University of California, Charles Cestre, the first exchange professor from France to the United States and a former member of the Faculties of both Harvard and Yale, and Mlle. Léonie Villard, professor of American literature at the University of Lyons. Mlle. Villard has, incidentally, written the most complete study of the American drama which has appeared in France recently.

Professor Michaud's series of articles on Le Roman Américain d'aujourd'hui which ran from March 30, 1926, to January 30, 1927, in La Revue des Cours et Conferences, was first delivered as a series of lectures at the
sorbonne, and later was awarded the Moynton prize by the French Academy. The lectures have been translated by the author into English and published in this country under the title of *The American Novel Today, A Social and Psychological Study*. His book contains timely and exceedingly readable studies of the leading contemporary American novelists and their contributions to the development of this type of literature in the United States. His articles are the most inclusive and valuable criticisms of all those on which this study is based. His discussions of American literature are sound, for the most part, but he seems to have placed too much emphasis on the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis on the contemporary novelists. His sub-title, "a social and psychological study," suggests the nature of his articles. Professor Michaud shows an intimate and thorough knowledge of all types of American literature from Colonial times to that of the present day, and with the different movements and tendencies which have had a part in its development.

Professor Cestre has not written at as great length on American prose as he has on American poetry, in which field his contributions will be discussed separately. His criticisms of American novelists and contemporary novels are contained in a number of articles, usually brief, which have appeared in the French magazines on which this study is based. His criticisms of fiction, like those of poetry,
are usually sound and readable. Like Professor Michaud, he writes both in French and English and has published articles on American literature both in the United States and in France.

Mlle. Villard's criticisms of American fiction show the same fault as that shown in her studies of the drama, which will be treated in a later chapter, namely, that she usually approaches the subject from too theoretical a viewpoint. Her criticisms, however, show that she has made a comprehensive study of that of which she writes, and that her knowledge of our literature has been gained from a first hand study of it.

The studies of the other critics who have written on the subject of current American fiction do not approach the proportions of the three just discussed. The critical articles of these lesser commentators, however, show the widespread interest that the more important American novelists and novels have excited in France and serve to indicate the authors who are most widely known among the French reading public.

Like the American critics themselves, the French see in the writings of the past decade a tendency to picture America realistically, to react against the Puritanism and the materialism which have been a part of American life for decades, and to defend the right of the individual to disregard traditions and customs. They also find the new
movement in fiction to be concurrent with the wave of pessimism which has followed in the wake of the World War.

Not that, in their opinion, realism is a new factor in American fiction, but that it has taken on a new meaning which tends to make the American novel more precisely a picture of American society. Never before, the critics assert, has realism been as prevalent in American fiction as it is today. As opposed to the American novel of the nineteenth century which was not only romantic but exotic, "le nouveau roman est strictement autochtone. Les nouveaux romanciers ne sont plus sentimentaux, ils ne sont plus romanesques. Une problème les hante, une agoisse les étrent... Si peu traditionnels et si desenchantes qu'ils paraissent, ils ont une conscience, des aspirations, des regrets, un ideal, et cet ideal est americain." The author of this statement, Professor Regis Michaud, has written on many phases of American literature from a background supplied by twenty years of teaching in an American university, knows adequately that of which he writes, and speaks of our literature with confidence. He finds that the renaissance in American literature, and especially that which has taken place in the field of fiction, "est contemporaine d'une vague de desillusion, de pessimisme et de critique... On peut faire remonter ce pessimisme grandissant aux dernières années de l'administration Roosevelt, aux

1. Michaud, Regis, "Le roman americain d'aujourd'hui," Revue des Cours et Conférences, XXVII (March 30, 1926), 724.
As a background from which to view American literature of the present age, the French critics go back to the days before the war and find the beginnings of realism in the novels of Stephen Crane, William Dean Howells and George Washington Cable. M. Firmin Roz, in writing of Sinclair Lewis and other contemporary novelists, traces the beginnings of the novel of realism back several decades and finds that it was deliberately created by a group of young Americans who had come under the influence of Zola and Tolstoi. This group, he says, believed that "on pouvait créer un type plus neuf de roman, conçu avec hardiesse et écrit avec courage.... Conformément à ces théories, les nouveaux réalistes américains donnerent au public une variété de roman plus réaliste que celle-ci n'en avait encore connu.... Le roman américain reflète dans une nouvelle phase, qui est comme la deuxième étape de réalisme, ces nouveaux aspects de la société américaine."

Closely associated with the realistic novel in the minds of the French critics of American literature, as just pointed out, is the wave of pessimism which seems to have engulfed the modern writer of fiction. Professor Michaud finds this pessimism a reaction against the excessive

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 56.
optimism of the preceding generation and a protest against
the utilitarian and brutal philosophy of the struggle for
existence. The upheaval against optimism, he says, is
general among the thinking group in the United States. He
finds, as a curious paradox in contemporary thinking, the
modern novelist, despite his pessimism and cynicism, to be
a confirmed idealist, his books filled with the spirit of
reform and the dream of a better world and a better humanity.

Like M. Michaud, M. Roz sees the Americans turning
from the optimism of the preceding generation and believes
that they are now seeing their country without illusion and
judging it without indulgence. Until the new realistic
trend, he says, the life of the typical American had never
found expression in the novel.

Mlle. Leonie Villard believes that the new American
novel represents not so much a reaction against the con-
ventions as a desire for more serious realistic treatment
of modern social conditions, and that contemporary authors
strive to define and paint present conditions rather than
to judge them.

Not a few of the realistic novels, the French students
of our literature observe, take the form of satire or
represent obvious reaction against the Puritan forces in
American life. The Puritan way of life is wholly uncongenial

5. Michaud, Regis, "Le Roman americain d'aujourd'hui," Revue
des cours et Conferences, XXVII (Mar. 30, 1926), 721-35.
7. Villard, Leonie, "Les Tendances nouvelles de la littera-
ture americaine," Mercure de France CLXVI (Aug. 15, 1923),
49-87.
to the French mind, hence the French critics usually speak of it with undisguised contempt. They consider it one of the factors which have retarded the development of American literature, and unanimously welcome its overthrow. Professor Michaud makes no effort to disguise his dislike of Puritanism. Without attempting to define Puritanism, he nevertheless takes into account both the forces of Puritanism and the reaction against it in America.

Although Puritanism has given to American literature some of its greatest intellects, including Emerson, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, William Vaughn Moody, Robert Frost and Edwin Arlington Robinson, and although it has given a system of mythology and symbolism, for "le fantastique exploité par Hawthorne et même par Edgar Poe n'est, à certains égards, qu'un succédané de la démonologie puritaine." M. Michaud believes, that, with its prohibitions and restraints, it has limited the quality of American life and literature. He says, further, that the toll levied on human happiness by Puritanism has been great and that, for the average mind, at least, it has meant intellectual decadence. Puritan conceptions and Puritan ideals were the chief obstacles to a rational conception of life, for the Americans holding them saw only the flesh and the devil, and were suspicious of all happy instincts and human desires.

9. Ibid.
Professor Michaud sees that the reaction against Puritanism is not confined to novelists, alone, but that the number of critics who have rebelled against it is legion, and that both novelists and critics are supported by the best thinkers in the country. Both Mlle. Villard and Professor Costre find a similar present-day reaction against the conventions and prohibitions of the Puritans.

The French critics are not dismayed by the pessimism and cynicism which appear on every hand in American poetry, prose, and drama, for art, they say, in its highest sense has always had pessimism at its base. Michaud contends that it is better to have the blues than the banal optimism of a Babbitt after a good meal. M. Roz is enthusiastic over the American trend toward realism and pessimism and says that the awarding of the Nobel prize to Sinclair Lewis signifies "rien de moins qu'un moment décisif dans la littérature américaine."

For M. Michaud, the realistic American novel describes faithfully the stereotyped, conventional, still-Puritanical world in which we live. "Je crois très fidele, pour ma part," he says, "dans l'ensemble, la ressemblance entre les milieux ou les types décrits par les romanciers américains d'aujourd'hui

et les originaux qu'ils représentent." Such descriptions, he believes, are the first steps toward eliminating existing conditions.

Modern American fiction has not become conventionalized or standardized, in the opinion of French writers on the subject, but each novelist is an individual with individual methods, or, as Mlle. Villard puts it, "le transforme revêt une expression qui varie avec chaque œuvre et chaque homme." For Theodore Dreiser, that revolt is rugged realism and independent searching for individual expression. For James Branch Cabell, it is criticism in medieval disguise of prejudices in contemporary life and thought. For Sinclair Lewis, it is a realism devoted to a satire of middle-class America, a realism that is not new but one which shows true observation.

Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson are the three American novelists of the present day who have found greatest favor with contemporary critics in France, as well as popularity with the French reading public. Scattered articles and critical reviews of the novels of William James, William Jean Howells, Edith Wharton, Jack London, and others of a generation now just passed, continue to appear in French periodicals, but the chief interest of the present day French critics is in the more recent American novelists, especially in the three listed here.

Of the contemporary novelists who attract the notice of critics in France, Theodore Dreiser seems to be the best known. Mlle. Villard characterizes him as being "le plus discuté, certainement l'un des plus originaux et peut-être le plus grand des romanciers contemporains," and Professor Michaud says that his novels have been more widely discussed during the past ten years than those of any other American author. He says of him, "romancier, essayiste, contour, dramaturge, il déroute, il étonne, il lasse, Dreiser, c'est le realisme incarne." Other students agree with these two in their estimates of Dreiser.

All the critics realize that Dreiser is the chief of American realists, that he is sincere and absolutely independent in thought, the latter quality being present to such an extent that he sacrifices style to it. "Dreiser jette pêle-mêle observation, satire, psychologie, dans un fouillis qui semble inextricable, mais où l'on découvre bientôt des choses belles et profondes."

Cestre has studied Dreiser's career for years, and finds that for a quarter of a century Dreiser has followed the formula of literal realism, that he is above all a critic of American social life, and that he paints with severity and sincerity, making no concessions to the public.

16. Ibid., p. 61.
and appealing almost entirely to the highest classes. Another French critic, Rene Galland, writes that the reason for Dreiser's success is that he "est essentiellement un écrivain naturaliste... ne recherche pas l'étrangeté ni l'exotisme." He also finds that Dreiser is the American novelist most read in France of the group which has raised the standard of revolt against American Puritanism.

Professor Michaud sees an excuse for the extreme to which Dreiser carried his realism in that he is "l'historien de l'Amérique désechantée, inquiete parmi l'embarras de ses richesses, sceptique malgré son idealisme traditionnel du confort et du luxe." He feels that Dreiser is not a social novelist because he has never tried to reform society, but that he has a passion for facts and the creed of a realist, believing that the world is a mixture of good and evil. Dreiser's outlook may not be cheerful, but it is genuine. M. Michaud believes, and he is very American, loving his country at the same time that he scolds her.

All the French critics who write of Dreiser's novels are impressed by "l'ampleur de l'observation, l'entendue de l'enquête, la richesse d'expérience" of the author. Despite the faults of Dreiser's writing, pointed out as consisting chiefly of a certain heaviness, a use of too many details,

and a limited imagination, a style "lourd, encombré," a style which "ne possède ni le don de concentration, ni le don de composition, ni le don de relief," a majority of the French critics admit him as the greatest of contemporary American novelists—great for his virility, for his courage, for his "truth above all," and for his defiance to the sentimentalist.

Second in number only to the critical comments on Theodore Dreiser are those on Sinclair Lewis and his novels satirizing American life. He has been called by one of his French critics, Joseph Aynard, the most American of all American writers of the present day, and, assuredly, he is recognized in France as one of the master novelists of the United States.

Firmin Roz, for example, finds him the first American novelist to satirize with power the customs, ideals, and traditions of America, her social philosophy, and the conceptions on which the life of the average citizen of this country is based. Both Main Street and Babbitt contain "la même intolérable prétention que dénonce M. Sinclair Lewis avec une rigueur toujours renouvelée et une impitoyable ironie." If Dreiser is accepted as the master realist

25. Ibid.
of a broad comprehensive view, Lewis is accepted as the master in a kindred field, that of satire, as one who would awaken the middle-class American from his placidity, by satire and caricature.

M. Michaud feels that Lewis goes so far as to sacrifice the pleasure of telling a story to the satire of character. To Mlle. Villard, he is a realist who explains and interprets the most characteristic tendencies of the era. He criticizes "sous une forme non point nouvelle, mais qu'on peut dire renouvelée par un art fait de simplicité, de patience observation et d'émotion vraie."

Both Babbit and Main Street have been discussed in some detail by French writers. The latter, Mlle. Villard calls "le récit d'une vie...un tableau de mœurs contemporaines qui sert à révéler, une vérité plus large et d'une portée plus générale." She thinks it one of the most significant novels ever inspired by American life and that it is "l'exposition la plus complète, la plus directe de la revolte de la génération actuelle contre l'optimisme traditionnel et contre les illusions flatteuses engendrées par le développement magnifique et la prospérité croissante de l'Amérique."

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 67.
30. Ibid., p. 72.
M. Roz writes that the book represents "l'esprit nouveau d'une élite intellectuelle en révolte contre l'optimisme traditionnel, nourri, déformé, par la prospérité croissante de peuple américain."

Professor Michaud finds Main Street a description of a typical American village and the characters representative of typical American individuals. In all of Lewis's novels, he points out, the plots have given way almost entirely to character portrayals. It is this critic, also, who finds Lewis at first the most optimistic of all contemporary American novelists, this optimism giving way more and more to disillusionment in his later books, and to a broadening of the scope and virulence of his satiric attacks.

Another American novelist with aims and attitudes similar to those of Dreiser and Lewis who seems to have found equal favor with the French is Sherwood Anderson. More critical reviews of the novels of Anderson have appeared in the French periodicals examined for this study than of any other contemporary American writer. Anderson's debt to Whitman and his mysticism are recognized by at least two of his critics. Professor Costre, for example, finds him "de la lignée d'un Walt Whitman, représentatif de groupe américain contemporain où se retrouvent Dreiser et Lewis, ses livres... respirent une simplicité un peu brutale et aussi un fraîcheur parfois lyrique."

Professor Michaud says that "il est peu d'exemples en Amerique d'un écrivain qui ait pris aussi au sérieux l'art littéraire, et qui se sait fait de son métier une idée aussi haute et aussi voisine du mysticisme. Peut-être n'en existait-il pas depuis Whitman. Je prononce à dessein le nom de Whitman à propos de Sherwood Anderson... Comme le bon Walt, Anderson est l'interprète de l'âme américaine dans ce qu'elle a de plus profond, de plus doloureux et de plus noble." In Anderson's Mid-American Chants, he finds authentic graftings from Leaves of Grass.

Emile Legouis, in a brief review of Dark Laughter, expresses the opinion that Anderson is not lacking in originality or ardor, but that his psychology, and especially that dominated by Freudian ideas, is a trifle disconcerting at times. Gestre believes that he is a realist, a psychologist, and a poet merged into one personality free from sentimentality, in revolt against standardization and the tyranny of the dollar, and completely opposed to the Puritanism which for two hundred years has been a dominant force in American literature and life. Anderson's critics in France select as the chief problems he has treated those of morbid psychology and sexual inhibition.

An estimate of the high regard in which Anderson is held in France is summed up in the following quotation from Professor Michaud, who has made the most penetrating study of the man and his novels: "L'écrivain qui a compose cela est

certainement un grand peintre et un vrai poète... Si la jeune Amérique réussit à créer un art original, elle devra son émancipation et son originalité plus qu'à tout autre à Sherwood Anderson, incomplètement émancipé encore, incertain et hesitant entre le mysticisme, le freudisme, et l'art pur, mais s'orientant de plus en plus vers ce dernier, penseur généreux, psychologue profond, friand de couleurs, inventeur de rythmes."

French critics turn to the novels of James Branch Cabell for contrast with the realism of his contemporaries. They describe his writing as an attempt to restore the imaginative element to the American novel, as an attempt to restore romanticism bereft of both exaggerated realism and Puritanism. Some of the modern American writers may be indifferent to style, but not so Cabell. "Ce qui frappe d'abord le lecteur européen et français dans Cabell, ce qui seduit de primo abord en lui," says M. Michaud, "c'est qu'il est un artiste, un stylistte, un écrivain de profonde culture, un homme de lettres conscient."

No other French critic has written at as great length on Cabell as Michaud, who asserts that Cabell is the only philosophical novelist in the United States, that his philosophy is decidedly Nietzschean, and that his work is so close to

35. Michaud, Régis, "Le Roman américain d'aujourd'hui," Revue des Cours et Conférences, XXVII (July 15, 1926), 542.
36. Ibid., 675.
European, and especially to French, models as to make him almost unamerican. This critic believes Cabell's chief gift to be his imagination, for everything in his novels is fictitious, even the mythology.

Professor Cestre, Professor Michaud, and Mlle. Villard all see in the romantic-medieval tales of Cabell a deeper purpose than that of story telling alone. They believe that he wished, at the same time that he was weaving his fantasy, to parody and criticize ironically certain traits of American life which are to him uncongenial.

There are a number of other novelists in present-day America who claim the interest of the French critics of our literature in a lesser measure than the four just discussed. Professor Michaud has treated these at greatest length in his articles on the American novel which have already been referred to several times. Among the lesser novelists he included are Waldo Frank, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Ludwig Lewisohn, Ben Hecht, Robert McAlmon, Joseph Hergesheimer, Floyd Dell, and the two women novelists, Willa Cather and Zona Gale.

Waldo Frank and Joseph Hergesheimer are pointed out by Professor Michaud as notable artists whose books fall outside the ranks of realism. Frank is partially a realist, transposing, so Michaud says, his realism into an atmosphere of fantasy and lyricism. A number of reviews of his books have been published in France recently.

Hergesheimer "se révelait admirable artisan du style. Il mettait l'imagination en liberté, inventait des themes
surrealistes et cultivait avec un talent consomme l'exotisme. Son style avait des profondeurs, des resonances et un eclat nouveaux... Tout n'était qu'art et volupte dans ces livres."

Mlle. Villard places him first among the novelists of artistic conception and independence from outside influence and believes that he approaches the classic writers in style. "Dans une serie deja nombreuse de romans," she writes, "Hergesheimer montre un art egal a une invention a la fois abondante et delicate."

Little has been written about the books of John Dos Passos, in formal articles, but many reviews of the best known of them have appeared in the critical sections of French magazines within the past few years. Manhattan-Transfer seems, from the reviews, to be the most popular piece of writing he has done. He is described by Chaumiex as one of the most popular of the young naturalists of this country.

Professor Michaud believes that Floyd Dell is one of the most original writers among the younger generation; Robert McAlmon one of the best interpreters of suppressed youth; and Ben Hecht so realistic that he approaches the point of melodrama. In the very recent novels of Carl Van Vetchen, Ernest Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald, he sees a move toward "art for art's sake" and hopes that this movement will result...

in freeing the American novel from pessimism. Zona Gale and Willa Cather have softened the stern realism of their male contemporaries. Miss Cather, to a greater extent than Miss Gale, has won a following among the French readers of American fiction.

One trend of contemporary American fiction which, with few exceptions, all the French critics have noted is that it has sprung from the midwest rather than from the East. The entire group of critics recognizes the significance of this change. Professor Oestre writes that "il se developpe une litterature de l'Ouest qui est une des plus brillantes ecoles litteraires de l'Amerique contemporaine....La veritable oeuvre litteraire de l'Ouest, c'est la creation du realisme exact, intense, parfois avec un teinte d'humor, ou une veine d'amer-
tume satirique." Among the writers of the West, sons and daughters of the prairies, who have brought honor to American literature he names E. W. Howe, Edward Eggleston, Meredith Nicholson, Booth Tarkington, Hamlin Garland, Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, and Sherwood Anderson. He believes that these writers will bear comparison with the best writers of England and France in bringing to American litera-
ture "descriptions pittoresques et dramatiques de la vie sans eclat."

Michaud, in particular, attaches great significance to this change in the geographical location of literary production. Literature manufactured in the eastern states was traditionally conservative. "Et naturellement," he says, "comme les places
était prises dans l'Est américain conservateur de tradition, ce n'est ni à Boston, ni à Philadelphie, ni même à New York que les nouveaux venus ont fait leurs débuts, mais à Chicago, à Cincinnati, à Saint-Louis. Le transfert d'influences s'est opéré dans ces dernières vingt années de l'est à l'ouest. C'est l'orientation traditionnelle de toutes les entreprises américaines, la direction naturelle prise par les pionniers et les novateurs."

The results of this shifting, he points out, are easily seen. The writers of the East leaned on Europe, and especially on Victorian literature. The new literature of the West is strictly indigenous, crude and primitive in many ways but written from contact with real life rather than from that of the drawing room. With the shift in scene, a new type of writer has also come into prominence. Modern American novelists, M. Michaud has found, are of a new social class. American literature is no longer the monopoly of scholars and gentlemen but of self-made men without any claim to blue blood, who write to earn a living rather than for pleasure. They are graduates, not of the universities, but of the news rooms. "Les nouveaux écrivains américains sont, en majorité, des 'self-made men', des parvenus littéraires, issues du peuple, très autochtones, très américains, quoique plusieurs soient de race mélangée du côté paternal au maternal."

41. Michaud, Régis, "Le Roman américain d'aujourd'hui," Revue des Cours et Conferences, XXVII (March 30, 1928), 725.
42. Ibid.
While they are aware that, to a large extent at least, America has freed herself from European models, French critics believe that they can, nevertheless, trace, indirectly, the influence of French, Russian and English novelists on the writers of the United States. Professor Michaud writes that "les jeunes romanciers des États-Unis n'ont appris leur art ni dans Hazimore Cooper, cela va sans dire, ni dans James, ni dans Edith Wharton.... Ils n'ont appris l'art du roman ni dans Dickens, ni dans Thackeray. Ils ont fait leur classes chez les Russes, chez Dostoievski, Andriev ou Chekov. Ils les ont faites chez nos realistes francais, chez Balzac, Flaubert, Maupassant; Huysmans, et Zola, plus récemment chez Marcel Proust, Paul Morand ou Jean Cocteau; en Angleterre ou en Irlande, chez Lawrence ou Joyce."

Professor Cestre believes that Norris and Upton Sinclair are true disciples of Zola and that Mrs. Wharton owes a debt to Stendhal, Alexander Dumas, fils, and Mme. Tinayre. M. Roz, in an article already quoted several times, attributes the growth of realism in this country to the influence of Tolstoi and Zola on Howells, Cabel, and other contemporaries.

Everything considered, contemporary students of American literature in France show a considerable knowledge of our fiction of the present day. They show a more than cursory acquaintance with both the important and unimportant novelists of this country. A really intense interest in the

43. Michaud, Régis, "Le roman américain d'aujourd'hui," Revue des Cours et Conférences, XXVII (March 30, 1926), 725.
naturalistic novels—although the French do not call them by that name—is displayed, Dreiser and Anderson appearing to be the favorite authors. The French critics who have been read for this study show a great deal of enthusiasm for our fiction and feel that a new era which promises much for the future of this field of literature has been opened. Above all, they see in the pages of recent American fiction a great deal of the spirit and a good deal of the soul of contemporary America.
CHAPTER III

FRENCH CRITICISMS OF RECENT AMERICAN POETRY

Without treating the subject at length or with originality and freshness, almost all the French critics of American literature included in this study have at least mentioned the revival of poetry in America, which had its beginnings from 1912 to 1914, and the arrival of distinctive poets. French writers are apparently familiar with critical literature in the field and their estimates of American poets are in substantial agreement with that of native critics. Usually, however, their remarks are not so penetrating. Four modern poets especially claim their attention, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, and Edgar Lee Masters.

In attempting to trace the development of American poetry as shown in the writings of these and other modern poets, the French critics review the movements in the poetry of this country during several generations past. When the average Frenchman thinks of American poetry, he seems usually to think first of all of Whitman and Poe. A number of critical articles have recently been written in France about these two and the critics of our modern poetry have attempted to find in them, and especially in Whitman, some explanation for the present direction of American poetry. They have had, however, little success, in tracing any relationship between the two groups.
Professor Michaud can find little evidence that either Whitman or Poe left any decisive marks on the younger generation of poets, and another critic, Jean Catel, likewise can find little in common between the groups. He says, "sauf Carl Sandburg, l'École moderne que nous avons passée en revue est une fille très émancipée de Whitman. Celui-ci n'était pas un précurseur."

Mlle. Villard believes that Whitman indicated to his successors a new and rich land, that he appealed to the new generation to break away from old traditions, and that the new generation responded to his appeal. Unlike certain of the contemporary French critics who find him exerting no influence, she believes that Whitman directed the thinking, although not the form, of modern American poetry.

Like the American commentators who have written on the subject, the French critics of our modern poetry see a number of tendencies and characteristics which have carried it in varying directions. M. Albert Feuillerat describes the new poetry of the period following 1912 when he writes: "On trouve toute sorte d'enthusiastes qui expérimentent avec un zèle presque religieux: des réalistes absolus, des romantiques déguisés, des symbolistes nébuleux, des coloristes éblouis-

3. Ibid.
issants, des melodistes obsedants, des vers-libristes seditieux, l'histoire, la vie, la legende, l'exotisme, l'industrie, la psychologie, la sociologie, tout est utilise, laconne, transforme en parler harmonieux. La vaste Amerique semble avoir ete changee en un bois plein d'oiseaux chanteurs qui gazouillent etperdament dans la joie du renouveau."

The French are in fair agreement on the diversity of the characteristics of the modern movement. Professor Michaud writes that poetry is becoming "purement intuition rythmee, introspection en musique...L'effusion et la reverie ont ete remplacées par la lyrisme a base d'humor et d'ironie--ironie douloureuse en plein gaie science (voyez surtout Marianne Moore et Wallace Stevens.)"

M. Isore asserts that the new American poetry is "le fond emotionnel de la vie moderne, dans sa variete parfois fatigante que les Imagistes voulaient exprimer, sans en re-trancher quoi que ce fût. Pour respecter le principe de l'adaptation de la forme a la pensee, une complete liberte dans le domaine de la prosodie devenait done necessaire."

Mlle. Villard sees a different tendency, for she writes: "Les poètes du renouveau qui se manifeste a l'heure actuelle en Amerique tendant tous, a travers la diversite de leurs temperaments et l'originalite de leur inspiration, a un but unique: reproduire avec force, avec sincerite, les aspect les

plus familiers de la vie nationale, et dégager ensuite de cette reproduction du réel une signification profonde." Later, she adds that "la nouvelle génération demande à la réalité immédiate et familière, et non plus au passé ni à des contrées fabuleuses ou lointaines, le sujet et l'atmosphère de ses œuvres." For this reason, she believes, modern poems are not pure lyrics, yet they are not lacking in beauty and originality, for their makers enter with all their souls into their work.

At the present time, says M. Pierre Isore, American poets have made a conquest of the French reading public. This has come as a result of the freshness, the originality and the high quality which have marked our poetry since the renaissance of 1912-14. The French writers on contemporary American poetry make a good deal of the dates which mark its rebirth, and of the authors who have had a part in the movement. M. Isore dates the renaissance from 1912 and says that the new movement was marked by a deluge of poetry from the pens of "un groupe de poètes que se trouvaient attirés l'un vers l'autre par une affinité des tendances et une culture commune."

Mlle. Villard found, likewise, that American poetry took a new surge forward after the first ten or fifteen years. 

9. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
of the present century. She represents the end of the nineteenth century and the first dozen years of the twentieth as "un périod d'attente, marquée seulement par les premières œuvres de quelques poètes comme Edwin Arlington Robinson et Edwin Markham, où l'on voit la floraison précoce du renouveau prochain," and adds, "soudain, de 1914 à 1916, plusieurs poètes dont les noms étaient jusque-la inconnus ou à peu près ignorés, publient des vers d'une inspiration si originale, d'un accent si imprévu que, public et critique à la fois, reconnaissent en eux des ouvrages d'œuvres maîtresses et proclament le triomphant renouveau de la poésie nationale."  

The year 1912 is also recognized by René Taupin as a significant date in American poetry, for it is "l'année même d'ou l'on fait dater la révolution poétique américaine, année ou les jeunes poètes devenaient conscients de leur force et apercevaient des chances de succès."

Another French critic who recognizes that an awakening took place in the poetry of this country is M. Albert Feuillerat who writes: "La poésie qui, au début de ce siècle, semblait se mourir de langueur, revient à la vie, plus vigoureuse que jamais; et jamais, à coup sûr, elle n'avait tenu une aussi grande place dans l'estime du public qui lit. Ce mouvement a éclaté avec la brusquerie d'un printemps abnomalement chaud. Just avant la guerre, une troupe de poètes ardents et déterminés, déchirant le demi-silence où s'assoupissaient les versificateurs..."  

d'alors, apparut tout à coup et s'imposa à l'attention de la
foule d'abord surprise."

As members of the group that first dared to intro-
duce into poetry an original note, Feuillerat names Amy Lowell,
Edwin Arlington Robinson, Vachel Lindsay, and Robert Frost.
Others were not slow to respond to their voices, he adds, among
them Edgar Lee Masters, John Gould Fletcher, Sara Teasdale,
Carl Sandburg, Alfred Kreymborg, H. D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington),
Conrad Potter Aiken, Maxwell Bodenheim, T. S. Eliot, Wallace
Stevens and Louis Untermeyer.

Professor Michaud, who, as pointed out before, shows
in his criticisms a knowledge of the entire field of American
literature, enumerates a list of modern American poets of
worth which differs from that of M. Feuillerat. He includes
"combien désinvoltes, souples, clairvoyants et désenchantés
ces poètes américains d'aujourd'hui: Malcolm Cowley, Hart
Grande, E. E. Cummings, T. S. Eliot, Laura Riding, Matthew
Josephson, Wallace Stevens surtout et Marianne Moore, et combien
15
d'autres."

Professor Charles Cestre has written a greater number
of articles on contemporary American poetry and has written
with greater insight into its nature than any others of the group
of modern French critics. To a large extent, Professor Cestre
has concentrated his attention on Edwin Arlington Robinson, con-

14. Feuillerat, Albert, "Poètes américains d'aujourd'hui: M.
15. Michaud, Regis, "La littérature américain d'aujourd'hui,"
Mercure de France, CV (July 15, 1928), 317.
cerning whose life and poetry he has written several articles and one book published in this country, *An Introduction to Edwin Arlington Robinson*. Professor Cestre has been an admirer of Robinson's poetry since the appearance of *The Children of the Night* in 1897 and hails him, despite the exceptional efflorescence of good poetry which has appeared in America in recent years, as not only the dean but the prince of American poets.

He styles Robinson a modern classic because he believes what he combines "in harmonious union the old-time qualities of intellectual acumen, broad humanity, universal appeal, decorum, sense of proportion and art of composition, with powers more recently developed as means of literary expression: imaginative coloring, sensuous richness, suggestive foreshortenings and word melody. A survey of his work yields the impression of wealth of vision, felicity of technique... all of which remind us of ancient Greece and Rome, and of the Augustan age in France and England."

M. Cestre analyzes with exactness and sympathy the character of Robinson's poetry in general, of the individual poems and of the poet, himself, both in his book and in the numerous articles he has written for the *Anglo-Américaine Revue* which he co-edits with L. Gazamian. He writes in detail of the main themes treated by Robinson and notes the tendencies and excellencies of each. He is the author of a series of two

17. Ibid., p. 5.
critical articles on the Tristram of Robinson which he finds least defective and the most finished in structure and dramatic force of Robinson's trilogy of poems drawn from the Arthurian legend. Cestre's criticisms of Robinson are valuable because they are free from any pre-conceived prejudices and because they point out the defects as well as the beauties he sees in the poems.

In L'Oeuvre Poétique d'Amy Lowell, and a discussion of the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, M. Cestre shows that he is familiar with the entire field of modern American poetry and that he has not limited his interest to Robinson, alone. He has also written brief critical reviews of the poems of Robert Frost, Sara Teasdale, Samuel Hoffenstein, Edwin Markham, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, T. S. Eliot and Carl Sandburg.

M. Cestre finds Amy Lowell's chief contributions to be her artistry, her imaginativeness, her penetrating visions of humanity: "c'est surtout par l'imagination...curieuse des multiples reflets...et penetrant pourtant jus qu'aux vérités générales de la vie interieure," which will give her the place she will merit in the judgment of posterity.

He describes Frost's poetry by saying, "quand il publie, son âme passe entière dans le metal de ses verses, purs

He praises Sara Teasdale for her melody, her fresh and original images and her music. Of Edgar Lee Master, he says "l'Amérique n'a pas oublié la sensation que causa dans le monde des lettres, en 1914, la publication de Spoon River. Le volume...créait un genre nouveau et révélait une personnalité forte, quoique souvent rugueuse....La forme est toujours le vers irregulier, non rime à la manière de Walt Whitman....Sous la forme originale de voix d'outre-tombe, ce qu'il exprime, c'est la courageuse protestation d'une conscience contre les iniquités du monde, l'attachement d'un esprit ferme à la vérité, et la fois d'une âme délicate à la beauté." He calls Vachel Lindsay "le poète de la foule....il y à chez Lindsay, une poète d'imagination délicate" of rich variety, and with the marks of an independent originality.

M. Albert Feuillerat has contributed two articles of criticism on modern American poets to the Revue des Deux Mondes in recent years, the first on Robert Frost appearing in 1923 and that on Emily Dickinson in 1927. In the article on Frost, M. Feuillerat sets forth briefly his views on the new movement in American poetry in which he shows an understanding of tendencies current in this country and an acquaintance with the
group of poets who are accepted by all the French critics as leaders in this movement. In both articles, he devotes several pages to a discussion of the background and ancestry of each poet. He shows, in addition to an understanding of Frost and Miss Dickinson, a knowledge of the characteristics peculiar to New England.

This critic would place Frost in the first rank of the leaders in the poetic renaissance and regards him as a master and a true poet, possessing the gifts of delicacy, of insight into the intimate emotions, of great sincerity and of perfection of technique. His poems are clearly American in character, "M. Frost n’a jamais senti naître en lui le désir de peindre autre chose que ce pays de predilection... C’est une poésie essentiellement locale." M. Feuillerat describes his poetry as being full of local color, of "des spectacles merveilleux, simplement parce que nous ne savons pas les voir," of "une façon assez particulière de sentir les spectacles du monde extérieur," of nature "muette et indifférente," of mysteries which the author does not try to clear away. His sensualism "est l’état normal d’un homme qui, dans son amour du sol et dans son contact avec la terre, a découvert le secret des sentiments naturels." In all his poems, "circule une joie de vivre exultante et comme enivrée d’air pur." New England.

M. Feuillerat says, will never die even though physical changes

25. Ibid., p. 132.
26. Ibid., p. 133.
27. Ibid., p. 136.
28. Ibid., p. 137.
take place, for "elle continuera à vivre dans l'œuvre de
M. Frost. Et les générations futures n'auront qu'à ouvrir
tele livre pour la retrouver telle qu'elle apparaît à nos yeux,
avec ses ardeurs réprimées...."

More effort has been expended by M. Feuillerat on
an analysis of Miss Dickinson's character and the events of
her life than to a criticism of her poetry to which he says
she turned for consolation; that poetry "bientôt emplit sa
vie." Rarely, he says, was poetry more spontaneous than hers.
She did not write for the public and felt free to express her
inmost soul in her poems. Of her technical ability as a poet,
he says, "la pensée est souvent incorrecte, le sens difficile
d'une phrase n'a rien de particulièrement mélodieux....
L'inspiration en est courte, limitée en général...mais ces poèmes,
dans la brusquerie des images, l'audace des expressions, ont
une fraîcheur singulière." The Puritan instincts which
surrounded Miss Dickinson throughout her life, M. Feuillerat
writes, directed her acts and thoughts and are reflected in her
poems.

Miss Dickinson is also the subject of two critical
articles by Jean Catel which appeared in the Revue Anglo-
Américaine in June and December, 1925. In his first article,
which M. Catel has given the title of Essai d'analyse
psychologique, he attempts to apply the critical method
of Sainte-Beuve, Taine and Angellier. Like M. Feuillerat, he uses as a source for his article the then-newly published Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson by Mrs. Martha Dickinson-Bianchi. He points out that Emily was never able to free herself from a paternal complex and that this, coupled with her Puritan ideals and standards, shaped the course taken by her life. M. Catel detracts from the value of his criticism of Miss Dickinson by seeming to be attempting to prove, throughout his articles, that the methods of psycho-analysis are applicable to her life and will explain her poetry, rather than to be attempting to write an unprejudiced criticism of her verse.

Of her poetry, M. Catel says that in it "nos moderns doivent saluer leur maître," and later, "car elle s'est créée, à force d'imagination et d'esprit, un univers factice, clair et équilibré comme ses strophes, mais, en sommes purement intellectuel. Et c'est pourquoi quelque chose manque à son œuvre. Elle est d'un marbre dont la toucher est froid.... Elle reste un divertissement d'un élégance un peu surannée et pleine de charme."

Another study of American poetry appearing in the Anglo-Américain review is the article by Pierre Isore entitled L'Originalité d'Amy Lowell. He makes, in general, the same observations about her poetry that M. Castre made in an earlier article. His study is clear, interesting and very

31. Ibid., p. 690.
readable. In one sentence, M. Isore sums up what he has to say of Miss Lowell and her originality: "C'est surtout là que reside la véritable originalité d'Amy Lowell: trouver à chaque sujet la forme qui lui est le mieux appropriée, faire que, dans la forme du poème, mètre, choix des mots et des images, syntaxe, tout sait comme la condition nécessaire au sujet traité."

In concluding his article, he says, "ce qui frappe avant tout dans l'ensemble de l'oeuvre d'Amy Lowell, c'est la présence continuelle de l'artiste, de l'esprit délicat et raffiné, pour qui d'important est la facture attentive de l'oeuvre."

The renaissance of 1912 in American poetry and the poets having a part in the movement are discussed also by M. Isore. The Imagist movement, begun by Miss Lowell, John Gould Fletcher, Hilda Doolittle, Edwin Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost, he finds to be continued by Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg and others who have come to the fore in recent years.

In reviewing the new tendencies in American literature for her French readers, Mlle. Villard touches on the contributions of Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Robert Frost, and neglects some of the other American poets of equal prominence, such as Edwin Arlington Robinson, entirely. She

23. Ibid., 321.
24. Ibid., 325.
introduces Lindsay as one of the most original innovators among the newer poets, and greets Edgar Lee Masters as one of the best poets of the United States. She writes of the latter's poetry that it is "une de ces œuvres qui fait époque dans l'histoire littéraire d'un nation." His poems, she asserts, show genius and mastery in choice of subject and execution, and the heritage of Whitman in the presentation of his age and his country. She adds nothing new to the criticism of Frost in her comments on his poetry but her attitude toward him is similar to that taken by other French critics.

A few other scattered articles on American poetry have appeared in the French periodicals on which this study is based but they contribute little to an understanding of French appreciation and understanding of the contemporary poetry of this country.

That his reputation as a poet is as false as it is great is the accusation made against Ezra Pound by M. René Taupin in an article published very recently. M. Taupin charges that Pound rode into popularity undeservedly with the younger generation of poets who came into prominence in 1912. M. Taupin discusses, in this interesting article, the sources of Pound's poetical works, and shows a familiarity with the entire field of both English and American poetry.

In a very brief article on La Classicisme de T. S. Eliot, M. Ramon Fernandez suggests that Eliot's French readers

might meditate fruitfully on his proposals for severe classicism. M. Fernandez discusses Eliot's criticisms and his judgments of modern poetry to the almost complete seclusion of his poetry, saying that there is no one better qualified by intellect and training for criticism than he.

Among the most interesting of these minor articles is that of Jean Dornis on Alan Seeger which appeared in the *Revue de France*. This article is eulogistic rather than critical and the feeling of gratitude that France felt for Seeger leads the writer to say that few poets have died for a higher cause or more beloved in France than this American. M. Dornis believes that Seeger was faithful to the traditions of English poetry, to those of Byron, Shelley, Keats and Swinburne, but that his inspiration was new and that his art was the fruit of his own vision and personal experience. Because the article was written soon after Seeger's death as a soldier in the French army, it is not impartially written but regards the poet as a hero and is, therefore, interesting rather than critical.

On the whole, the critical articles on American poetry written by the French commentators on the literature of this country since 1910 fall below the standard the American student might with reason expect them to meet. For the most

part, they are superficial and fail to show a real understanding of the spirit and objectives of the new poetry. A notable exception to the type of criticism just mentioned is that of Professor Charles Cestre, who shows in all his criticisms of our literature, and especially in those of Edwin Arlington Robinson, whom he knows intimately, a real and fundamental understanding of that of which he writes.

Critical articles on American poetry are not as numerous in the French periodicals as one might expect them to be. Because of their limited numbers and because many of that number are limited to a discussion of the poems of a single author, or at times to a discussion of a single poem, it is difficult to estimate the breadth of the French interest in and appreciation of the new American literature. However, it is easy to see that the French critics do appreciate that there has been a rebirth in American poetry in recent years and that they have an acquaintance, limited though it may be, with the major American poets of the present day.
CHAPTER IV

FRENCH CRITICISMS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA

Few studies of contemporary American drama have appeared in French periodicals in recent years, and less interest has been shown in this form of literature than in either poetry or fiction. The only detailed study of American drama, in fact, appearing in the French magazines examined for this study is that of Mlle. Léonie Villard, professor of American literature at the University of Lyons. Her study, including a brief critical history of American drama from Colonial days to the present time and a more detailed study of contemporary drama, with emphasis on the work of Eugene O'Neill, appeared in two series of fourteen articles in *La Revue des Cours et Conférences* in 1927-28, and was later republished in book form in France. Of her articles she says: "J'ajoute que cette vue d'ensemble du théâtre américain est cependant une exploration, tentée pour la première fois en France."

Professor Charles Cestre of the Sorbonne has also written recently on modern drama in America, and he, like Mlle. Villard, emphasizes the importance of the plays of O'Neill. The articles by these two, together with another brief one by Louis Gillot and a number of reviews of plays appearing in *La Revue Anglo-Américaine*, constitute the

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remaining French commentary in this field.

Mlle. Villard's work appears to be written by one accustomed to a study of American literature and keenly aware of the new trends which have been a feature of that literature in recent years. Her resumes of the history of American drama and of the contemporary developments in drama are brief and clear. She shows a familiarity with dramatic writings in America in all periods and with the innovations which have changed the direction of this form of literature from time to time. Because of the orderliness of presentation and the lucidity of views presented, her articles would be an excellent introduction to American drama for one unacquainted with its history.

Nevertheless, they have one serious fault, which has been pointed out by her contemporary critic, Professor Cestre. It is that her presentation is somewhat too theoretic and abstract, as though it were a scientific system she were presenting rather than a discussion of works of art and a contribution to literary criticism. This makes for meaningful commentary on the general characteristics of the age, on the trends and fashions which have been a part of it, but it is not conducive to a clear-cut discussion of individual plays and authors. Mlle. Villard's interpretation of the recent plays of Eugene O'Neill, for example, is unsatisfactory, although interesting on the whole.

The "new movement" in American drama Mlle. Villard finds to be a part of the admirable effort in the direction
of spiritual and artistic liberation which has been taking place in America since the opening of the twentieth century. To the European student of America, there seems to have been an awakening in all forms of literature, an awakening which has been keenly appreciated in France. This literary renaissance is seen by Mlle. Villard and others as a sign of a new era in the intellectual and spiritual life of the country.

Mlle. Villard points out that the years immediately following 1900 inaugurated a new era in drama. Langdon Mitchell, William Vaughn Moody, Percy MacKaye, and Edward Sheldon formed a young "pleiade" which, from 1900 to 1914, gave to the American stage a vitality hitherto unknown in this country, publishing a number of plays in which the signs of an intellectual and artistic awakening can be seen. MacKaye was the forerunner of O'Neill, Lewis and other social critics of the present time. Such plays as Romance by Edward Sheldon gave the public "le goût nouveau pour l'actualité et le réalisme des thèmes." She praises highly the work of William Vaughn Moody who, she says, gave a new originality to the drama.

The injection of new life into drama, which Mlle. Villard believes began about 1914, led to real interpretations of American life and character. For the first time in history, the drama of this country began to picture

life in this country. As a companion of poetry and fiction, it took a part in the revolt against commercialism and the quest for profits. Drama, which has found for itself in recent years a reading public more sympathetic than ever before, has taken its place beside that of other forms of literature as a medium for addressing the public. Because modern authors have dignified dramatic art and made it an interpreter of modern life and thought, it has won a place in moulding the intellectual life of the nation.

Until the twentieth century, dramatic work in the United States, says Mlle. Villard, was modelled on that of Europe and was European both in form and content. The best of American writers were American only in the choice of subject. She finds that this situation no longer prevails but that, on the other hand, there has been a definite revolt against European forms, so that, at the present time, the works of the best American dramatists are thoroughly American and are sincere and vigorous criticisms of life in the United States.

George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen and, perhaps, Brieux, are the European dramatists whom Mlle. Villard cites as possible sources of influence on contemporary American drama, while Professor Cestre says that the new movement in drama may possibly show the influence of Ibsen, Dostoievsky, Bataille, but that such influence, if present, is slight.
Both Mlle. Villard and Professor Cestre naturally devote the major part of their discussions of the most recent developments in American drama to Eugene O'Neill, whom both find to dominate the American theater today by his richness of imagination, his penetrating knowledge of human life and his authentic Americanism. Mlle. Villard goes to great extremes in her praise of O'Neill, saying that each new play is for her a new discovery, a new exploration into an unknown country; that his realism accords with life and is neither violent nor superficial, but that he pictures simply and accurately the most numerous class in this country. With a realism saved from heaviness by the poetical elements of his earlier plays, she sees "O'Neill a marché d'année en année, en cherchant toujours une route nouvelle, vers une interprétation plus imaginative du réel, vers une expression toujours plus complète de ce monde spirituel."

Professor Cestre shows his usual knowledge and critical ability in discussing O'Neill and some of his most recent plays. His articles on O'Neill, though rather brief and few in number, give an accurate interpretation of this writer's plays for the French reading public which is unacquainted or only slightly acquainted with them. He places O'Neill in the first rank of "la phalange des'insur-

gents' qui ont entrepris de libérer la société américaine des contraintes puritaines et de faire la critique des idéals terre à terre des philistines.\" Il croit que O'Neill est l'un des dramaturges les plus imaginatifs de l'Amerique, qu'il écrira un jour de grands drames et qu'\"en suivant une progression continue dans le sens de la divination, qui cherche à pénétrer les arcanes du subconscient, et vers la hardiesse, qui ne laisse inexprimé aucun des élans les plus éperdus ou les plus crus.\" O'Neill est un poète aussi bien que dramaturge, dit-il, et pour la perfection avec laquelle il construit et la vivacité avec laquelle il peint la vie doivent être placés à la tête du mouvement dramatique dans ce pays.

Un troisième critique français de M. O'Neill, Louis Gillet, adopte une position contraire à son œuvre et ridiculise plutôt que de le louer. Il ne limite pas son ridicule au poète, mais dans une discussion de Strange Interlude rit des Américains pour l'avoir accepté comme un grand dramaturge. Il conclut son article en disant que la littérature adolescente, comme celle d'O'Neill, est appropriée pour un pays d'adolescents, comme l'Amérique.

Although O'Neill is given far more critical attention than any other contemporary dramatist of this country, Mlle. Villard finds a place for a few others in her study. She praises Susan Glaspell for her sincere pictures of the life of the humble American; Lula Vollmer and Hatcher Hughes for their realistic pictures of local customs; Theodore Dreiser for his realism in such plays as The Girl in the Coffin and Plays of the Natural and Supernatural, and for the strange action and serenity of The Hand of the Potter; and Edna St. Vincent Millay for her contribution to poetic drama in Aria de Capa.

The small number of articles on recent American drama, and the failure of even Mlle. Villard and Professor Cestre to do more than echo conventional opinions, suggest that the French have been less impressed by American drama than have the Americans themselves. Possibly this is because much that Americans consider fresh and original derives indirectly from European sources and hence to the European is not striking. Whatever the causes, most of the French, like the English, have seen in O'Neill a man of power and promise and have in the main neglected the rest of our drama.
APPENDIX

THE PRINCIPAL FRENCH CRITICS

CESTRE, CHARLES—Professor Cestre holds the chair of American Literature and Civilization at the Sorbonne. He was born in 1871 and educated at the College of Auxerre, the Sorbonne, and Harvard University. In 1896, he came to Harvard as the first exchange professor from France, and returned in 1918 to hold the position for a second time. Since 1918, Professor Cestre has returned to the United States to give courses at the Universities of California, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. He holds honorary degrees from Harvard and the University of California and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. M. Cestre is the author of a number of articles on social, political, and literary topics dealing with both the United States and France. He writes in French and in English, and is a contributor to several English periodicals. Among his writings: La Revolution française et les poètes anglais (1906); Bernard Shaw et son oeuvre (1910); Production industrielle et justice social aux États-Unis (1921); John Thelwall, a Pioneer of Social Democracy (1906); The Ideal of France (1922); An Introduction to Edwin Arlington Robinson (1930).
MICHAUD, REGIS—Professor Michaud spent twenty years in America as professor of French at the Universities of Princeton and California and has written extensively on American literature. He also writes in both English and French. He is the author of: *Le Roman américain d'aujourd'hui* (published in both the United States and France); *Autour d'Emerson; La Pensee américaine; La Vie d'Emerson après son journal intime; L'Estétiq d'Emerson; Herman Melville, coureur des mers; etc.

VILLARD, LEONIE—Mlle Villard is professor of American literature at the University of Lyons. She has written the most complete study of American drama which has yet appeared in France, *Le Théâtre en amérique.*

FEUILLERAT, ALBERT-GABRIEL—M. Feuillerat is professor of French at Yale University. He was born in 1871, educated at the Universities of Toulouse and Lyons, and holds honorary degrees from the Universities of Louvain, Manchester, and Yale. Like Professor Cestre, he was formerly French exchange professor at Yale. Professor Feuillerat is a student of
English drama and is the author of works on Elizabethan England, John Lyly, the history of the English theater, and Shakespeare. He has edited editions of Shakespeare and the works of Sir Philip Sidney and is vice president of the Shakespeare society of London.

CHAUMEIX, ANDRE—M. Chaumeix is director of La Revue de Paris. Before his association with this periodical, he was editor of the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, literary editor of Debats, and editor in chief of the Journal des débats.

BALDENSPERGER, FERNALD—M. Baldensperger, writer and professor, was educated at Saint-Die, the universities of Nancy and Paris, and various foreign universities. He has served as a professor at the Universities of Nancy and Lyons, the Sorbonne, Harvard University, Columbia University, and at Strasbourg.
A CRITICAL LIST OF MAGAZINE ARTICLES
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Listed under the names of the authors arranged in alphabetical order, when there are two or more articles by an author, these are listed chronologically under his name.
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*Revue Anglo-Américaine*, VI (February, 1929), 235.


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