

# 1925 and All That: Review of a Year

P. K. Pehda

This article is respectfully and affectionately dedicated to my friend and colleague, Professor Koji Oi, who, when asked what writers he preferred to deal with in his seminar, answered smilingly, "1925."

If I had to choose the most dramatically poetic moment in cinema, for me it would probably be the one in Fellini's lovingly autobiographical *Amarcord* wherein the young hero, his even younger brother, and his grief-stricken father are riding in the funeral procession immediately behind the black hearse carrying the mother of the family, and the mourners pass the local cinema emporium that is exhibiting with large posters outside the theatre a Norma Shearer movie and a Stan Laurel & Oliver Hardy comedy. Sad-faced Stan gapes moronically and roly-poly Oliver laughs heartily at the funeral cortege. One was immediately reminded of Auden's "Musée de Beaux Arts" — and I, somehow, of 1925.

My father died in January of 1925 when I was almost four years old. It was such a cold winter that the ground was too frozen for graves to be dug. The coffin was kept in a strange sort of place that had a red-brick front and was built into the side of a hill. Poe-like though the scene was, this was actually at the site of Brook Farm, that noble Transcendental experiment sponsored (but not indulged in) by Emerson and immortalized by Hawthorne in his *Blithedale Romance*. In the early spring of the year, the severity of my mother's grief was duly renewed when the earth allowed an official funeral ceremony replete with all the floral arrangements. Someone of Slavic temperament took a picture of my mother crying at graveside with a thoroughly bewildered and beshawled me wide-eyed at her side.

At about the time my father was laid into the earth, the first issue of *The New Yorker* (February 21), irreverent, humorous, and seemingly of endless life, appeared on the newsstands (15 ¢ a copy) in various large cities. Eustace Tilley gazed at a butterfly through his monocle and in the editorial comment of Harold Ross's brainchild (advisory editors: Marc Connelly, Rea Irvin, George S. Kaufman, Alice Duer Miller, Dorothy Parker, and Alexander Woollcott) appeared the famous comment that this weekly was not aimed at or for the old lady in Dubuque. Yes, this was aimed at a suddenly very cosmopolitan audience that in that February was able to see in the Broadway theatre such items as Molnar's *The Guardsman* with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne; Pauline Lord giving one of the legendary performances of American theatrical history in Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted*; Fred and Adele Astaire singing and dancing to Gershwin tunes in *Lady, Be Good*; Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings' powerful war drama *What Price Glory?*; Al Jolson at the Winter Garden (ah, even the names of the theatres seemed glamorous) in *Big Boy*; Fannie Brice and Bobby Clark cavorting in *The Music Box Revue*. In a brief capsule review of *Rose Marie* appeared a comment akin to the one about the old lady from Dubuque: "a musical comedy of the kind that was popular when Aunt Fanny was in high school." Off-Broadway theatre was already healthy at a time when off-Broadway theatre was probably not necessary: James Joyce's *Exiles* was being offered at the Neighborhood Playhouse at 466 Grand Street. For movie fans, the *New Yorker* recommended Von Stroheim's *Greed* (based on Frank Norris's *McTeague*) then playing the Loew circuit and *The Lost World* (dinosaurs, *etal.*) at the Astor. The music critic reminded one that Fritz Kreisler would be at Carnegie Hall on Saturday afternoon, February 21 ("You can't get tickets for this, but try to squeeze in somehow"). But most of all, this was a time for BOOKS.

That summer, my mother took a job as a cook in a girls' summer camp in New Hampshire. She was very busy, but I was there, too, albeit usually under the care of at least ten or twelve young and

enthusiastic baby-sitters. I don't remember much of that summer other than there were skunks under the piazza, wild strawberries that were sour in taste but delightful to eat, and pin-wheels on an oak tree on the Fourth of July. That was the summer that the most prestigious of all American literary magazines, the weekly *Saturday Review of Literature*, celebrated its first birthday.

The first issue of the *Review* had come out under the editorship of Doctor Henry Seidel Canby on Aug. 2, 1924. For the first few years of its life, the magazine (at 10¢ a copy) had an extremely simple and formal format, much like the (London) *Times Literary Supplement* of today. Each issue offered but a single illustration; each issue (except a special Christmas number) offered a single poem in addition to the reviews. That first issue had carried a review of Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* as a published play ("Shaw is mystic as Joan is mystic, with sudden apperceptions of the human race"), a London Letter (contributed by Hamish Miles), and most interesting for me, a review of Roy Campbell's *The Flaming Terrapin*. The style of the review offered a simplicity that was not, I think, necessarily indicative of the simplicity of the period itself. The reviewer stated: "Of Mr. Campbell I know nothing beyond the facts that he is a South African by birth, and that he has been painted with appropriate energy of expression by Mr. Augustus John." He went on to say the book of poetry was "emphatically an achievement." In the Twenties, and even into the Thirties, Campbell was often to be likened to Byron. Campbell, however, was later an avowed Fascist, and surely the most famous (the only?) literary personage of note to fight on the side of Franco in the Spanish Civil War: no Byron, this!

A "letter to the editor" reminded one that the vogue of Emily Dickinson is of *this* century. The writer was Miss Dickinson's niece and literary editor, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, whose *Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson* would be reviewed by the magazine along with the *Complete Poems* four issues later. Said Mrs. Bianchi: "...That Emily loved, was loved, went on loving, in spite of time or separation, is

too difficult, too noble perhaps for the prevalent emotional agility of our day to comprehend.”

This paper, however, is most concerned with 1925. There were exactly fifty-two copies of the *Review* issued during this Year of Years. Of fifty-four poems printed during this time, thirty-three were by thirty poets who are to be found in the definitive Kunitz-edited *Twentieth-Century Authors*. They are as follows :

Auslander, Joseph	Ficke, Arthur Davison	Reese, Lizette Woodworth
Bacon, Leonard	Fletcher, John Gould	Ridge, Lola
Benét, Stephen Vincent	Freeman, John	Sassoon, Siegfried
Bynner, Witter	Frost, Robert	Smith, Chard Powers
Church, Richard	Gorman, Herbert S.	Speyer, Leonora
Coatsworth, Elizabeth	Lindsay, Vachel	Starrett, Vincent
Conkling, Grace Hazard	Lowell, Amy (3)	Sterling George
Damon, S. Foster (2)	Marquis, Don	Strong, L. A. G.
De La Mare, Walter	Millay, Edna St. Vincent	Van Doren, Mark
Dunsany, Edward (Lord)	Nathan, Robert	Wylie, Elinor

Nearly all of the poems utilized during this year could easily be classified as products of the imagist (Amy-gist?) movement that had anything but petred out at this time. The prose style, too, tended to reflect an already-mentioned simplicity that was ornamented by the choice of hard, clear images. 1925's *Saturday Reviews* were “an easy read.”

In the first issue of 1925 (Jan. 3), the lead editorial may have been aimed a bit at Roy Campbell — or was it meant to deflate Scott Fitzgerald, who was also likened by many fans to Byron? “A Lord Byron flourishing in 1925 is an impossibility. A Lord Byron, to be born in 1925, is by no means improbable.” One of the most popular novelists of the period, Joseph Hergesheimer (almost unread now), reviewed George Moore's *Pure Poetry*. Havelock Ellis's *Impressions and Comments* was given a title, “A Gallant Rebel,” but a stinging line was that “sometimes he seems to be writing with the solemnity of a dying man.” In the back pages, Leon Trotsky's *Problems of Life* was considered, and an advertisement for Forster's *A Passage to India* carried a blurb from the *New York Evening Post* that said, “It seems

to us the best novel of the year" and was already then in its tenth printing. The price was \$2.50.

The issue of January 17 carried a review of Lowell Thomas's *With Lawrence in Arabia*. "Interesting reading," said the critique, "though one regrets that the book as a whole is not better written." As a book, much more controversial was a collection of essays by James Branch Cabell, *Straws and Prayer-Books*. "Let us try not to be irritated by his occasional condescensions," said the obviously irritated reviewer, who also complained of "gratuitous affectations." Perhaps under that label the reviewer would include Cabell's list of the ten dullest authors that included Cervantes, Walt Whitman, George Meredith, and Nietzsche.

On February 14, an Amy Lowell poem was published in conjunction with the review of Miss Lowell's *John Keats*. The reviewer had reservations but admitted the book was "stimulating, even when the reader dissents." Amy claimed her hero to be "the great forerunner of modern poetry." "I do not mean that he *wrote* as the modern poets do but that he *thought* as they do." In the same issue, Amy Loveman reviewed Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph*, which has always been one of my favorite novels and is, in my mind, the BEST novel ever written about the world of music. Said Miss Loveman: "A novel unglossed in its portrayal of sordid relationship shot through with a deliberate and outspoken vulgarity, *The Constant Nymph* paradoxically stands out by reason of its beauty." Sordid? Vulgar? What could better demonstrate the difference in values between Then and Now than that slightly less than half a century later, *Penguin* reissued this book in its *Puffin* series, meant for children?

In the issue of Feb. 28, Ohio-born novelist Louis Bromfield wrote, "If there have been two characteristics strikingly evident in the American novel of the past five years, one might safely say that they were the predominance of autobiographical first efforts and of fiction by writers out of the Middle West dealing with their own country." In the same issue there is almost a foreshadowing of the summer to

come when down in Tennessee, in the famous Monkey-Scopes trial, Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan would virtually debate Science vs. Fundamental Religion. Max Planck's revolutionary ideas on energy had made possible the calculation of the orbits of electrons inside an atom, which became the foundation of new physics from 1925 onwards.<sup>1</sup> S. Foster Damon's poem in this issue is ironically entitled "Rock of Ages":

Divide the Leaf, and I am There,  
Perceived by all, beheld by none;  
Break the great mountain, split the hair,  
And at the center there is One.

One substance indivisible,  
The uncreated urge incessant,  
The only thing past miracle,  
Imperishable, omnipresent...

(—Excuse me, sir, at this my baulking;  
But no God's found within my stratum!"  
—Excuse *me*, sir, but I was talking  
Not about God: about the Atom!"

But while the two harangued and cursed,  
Suddenly God Atom burst.  
Electron! Be not cleft for me!  
Let me build my faith on thee!)

The following week's issue (March 7) carried what has proved to be the most famous poem of those published during the year, Vachel Lindsay's "The Flower-Fed Buffaloes." Doctor Canby himself reviewed Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*. ("As with *Main Street*... a state of mind is the center of the still area. *Main Street* was the *miasma* of the small town; in *Arrowsmith* it is the stifling of science and all search for truth everywhere in a country mad for success.") He thought it superior to *Main Street* but inferior to *Babbitt*.

Interestingly, what must have been William Faulkner's first Important Review appeared in this same issue—the book, *The Marble Faun*, Faulkner's poetry: "An attractively-made book by a young poet

who has led a varied and venturesome life...his verse is fluent and meditative, with an occasional phrase of beauty and an occasional flaw in the rhyming. Not much more can be said. He does not strain for effects, but, on the other hand, his sensitiveness to the poetic possibilities of the language is not sufficiently developed."

March 21 brought a review of Somerset Maugham's *The Painted Veil* (destined to be one of Garbo's lesser movies in the Thirties). The not overly-favorable reviewer did comment that the first page contained 169 words and there wasn't another writer around who could set the scene and get into the story as quickly and as economically. (Graham Greene had not yet arrived on the literary scene!)

March 28's issue mentioned a J. P. Marquand novel, *The Black Cargo* ("a romantic costume-adventure novel"), written many years before Mr. Marquand achieved considerable more fame among higher brows with his social satires of the New England scene and among the lower brows with his novels featuring Mr. Moto, a Japanese detective. A novel I had never heard of before, *Bobbed Hair*, has me highly intrigued, not because the title reminds one that this *was* the era of the flapper but that this "mystery story of a riotous sort" was the creation of TWENTY authors, including Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, Kermit Roosevelt, Louis Bromfield, Rube Goldberg, and Frank Craven (the original Stage Manager in both stage and screen versions of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*).

The issue of May 9 must be one of those most-thumbed in public libraries that don't offer microfilm. William Rose Benét reviewed *The Great Gatsby* (to many, 1925 *is* Gatsby!). "An admirable novel," he praised, yet inconsistency is implied when he added that *parts* (my italics) of it could not have been better written. After singling out Chapter Two, he praises as possible only from Fitzgerald Chapter IV with its list of guests. He singles out as superior achievement to Gatsby or the narrator, Tim Buchanan. "The 'great, big, hulking specimen,' is an American university product of almost unbearable reality." Ironically, on opposite page to Gatsby, in a sort of literary

*innen*, is Louis Untermeyer's review of Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Dionysus in Doubt*. If American writers were questioning the American Way that went with American politics and politicians, the largest reason may well have been the post-Wilson presidents that occupied Washington. *The New Yorker* of May 30 told of a reporter who asked Mr. Coolidge, "Why not recognize the arts, Mr. President? You have had leaders of almost every line of endeavor in the White House; why not invite some of the leaders in one of the arts — some poets, perhaps?"

"Who are the leading poets?" came from the appropriately-named Calvin after what the *New Yorker* describes as his customary silent interval. (Note: *silence* can be an image, too!) "Oh, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edgar Lee Masters, Elinor Wylie," the reporter tossed off. The President considered this. "When I was in college," he observed presently (there's that image again!), "there was a man named Smith who wrote verse."

The following week's review (May 16) brought another giant — or giantess. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* was reviewed by novelist Richard Hughes (whose *High Wind in Jamaica* was to become one of my favorite novels of all time). He likened Mrs. Woolf to Cezanne and also said: "The present writer has 'known' London all his life, but Mrs. Woolf's evocation of it is of a very different world from his own memories: a world which answers the farmer's question when he was puzzled as to why folk would pay five hundred guineas for a painting of his farm, when they could have the house itself for two hundred."

May 23rd's issue carried William Rose Benét's eulogy following the sudden death of Amy Lowell ("a great lady, a great opponent, a great friend!") nor did the mourning cease. The following week the lead editorial went to her death — and then the week after, one of her poems, "Slippers of the Goddess," was utilized — alas, not one of her better ones ("They clatter, clatter, clatter on the floor"). This

issue (June 6) also carried a tribute written by William Lyon Phelps for Thomas Hardy who, on June 2, celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday. Michael Arlen, who had written the #1 best-seller of 1924, *The Green Hat* (towards the end of 1925 it would be an equal sensation on the Broadway stage with Katherine Cornell as Iris March and the young Leslie Howard, a matinee idol long before his Ashley Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind*, as the unfortunate hero with an equally unlikely name: Napier Harpenden), had a new book reviewed that reminds us today that 1925 very definitely had its jet set, too. His new novel: *These Charming People*.

An essay by the bad boy of American literature, Maxwell Bodenheim (in 1954, virtually a vagrant in New York's Bowery, to be murdered by a madman), "Criticism in America," charged indifference of the critics to "four of the most astonishing qualities discovered in literature": (1) nonchalance, (2) conscious irony, (3) deliberate emotion, and (4) the romping of intellect. In a later issue, this essay was cut to pieces by critic-poet Allen Tate. No one seemed to love Bodenheim. The following year, Ben Hecht made him the subject of a scathing novel, *Count Bruga*. Poet Margaret Widdemer did not include him as a *friend* in her reminiscences, *Golden Friends I Had*, but told how at the MacDowell Colony, in Peterboro, New Hampshire, Bodenheim was often unclean of body and clothing to the extent that he gave off a bad odor. A group of ladies took him one day (he was a slight man) and dumped him into a nearby river, after which he silently disappeared from the environs of the Colony.<sup>2</sup> At Bodenheim's funeral, poet Alfred Kreyborg eulogized: "He need not worry about the future. He will be read."<sup>3</sup> Even in this regard, Fate does not seem to have been kind to Bodenheim.

In the issue of June 27 began a *Saturday Review* novelty, a serialization of Joseph Conrad's unfinished Napoleonic novel, *Suspense* (he had died the previous year), with a prize contest (first prize: \$500) for the writers of the best essays in regard to the novel's ending. Given a rave review was a translation of Thomas Mann's

*Death in Venice*: "... full and spread out yet sculptured in its economy."

July 4 brought a review of Virginia Woolf's essays in *The Common Reader*: "They are not so much literary criticisms as little Virginia Woolf novels about Defoe, Chaucer, Sir Thomas Browne, and the others." America's Independence Day notwithstanding, a review of a translation of *Mussolini's Diary, 1915—1917*, appeared in the same issue.

On July 18, another giant of a novel was treated. Archibald Henderson headed his review of Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* "Soil and Soul." Said he: "Dwelling in Richmond, that whispering chamber of sectional failure and a lost cause, she has turned her face, with resolute courage, toward the new day of economic and industrial rehabilitation for the South."

All year, the *New Yorker* consistently sniped at William Jennings Bryan, the defender of Fundamental Religion's cause in the Monkey-Scopes trial that took place in the mountain town of Dayton, Tennessee, after Scopes had been discharged from his high-school position for teaching (contrary to Tennessee law) the theory of evolution. As early as May 23, in a lead editorial entitled "The Great Altruist," Eustace Tilley's cohorts chortled:

Prices, by nature, interest everybody, even such an altruist as William Jennings Bryan, who added an appreciable mite to the merriment of the nation by denying lately that he had made the proverbial million as a Florida realtor. It was only five hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Bryan indignantly averred.

In another issue appeared four panels illustrating Primate Man, Neanderthal Man, Socrates, and Bryan. The title above these pictures: "The Rise and Fall of Man"!

Nothing in the *Saturday Review* was quite as cruel as that, but there was no doubt where the *Review* stood on the issue, too. Even in a review (July 25) of a novel that was very obviously British and had nothing to do with Tennessee territory, Christopher Morley commented: "There is admirable wit in this irreverent, trivial, and

thoroughly mondaine fairy tale. Mr. Bryan I dare say could not believe that a book can be so deplorable withal being offensive. I suppose it *is* deplorable. But you can't very well deplore it until you've read it, can you?" The book being discussed was *Serena Blandish* by A Lady of Quality. Its wit made many readers and reviewers suspect the Lady to be a coy Max Beerbohm, but succeeding years revealed it the work of Enid Bagnold, a lovely and lively lady who half a century later was writing similarly sparkling dialogue. She has my nomination for being the most under-rated writer of that era—or this era.

In the August 1 issue, which was designated the Anniversary Issue (one year old!), appeared Virginia Woolf's now well-known essay about contemporary American fiction in which she said that while Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson were the most widely-read American writers in England, she had to reserve her highest praise for Ring Lardner, who "wrote the best prose that has come our way" and who "has talents of a remarkable order." The book she singled out, *You Know Me, Al*, is about American baseball, and the professional variety at that. *Virginia Woolf and baseball?* Yes, I would like to insert *my* comment that I have learned more about Japan and the Japanese way of life from my soccer associations in this country than I have from all other sources combined.

Louis Kronenberger reviewed "Lawrence's latest," *St. Mawr*, but of more interest to me were the many congratulatory letters and telegrams submitted to the infant magazine by men of letters. My favorite was Sinclair Lewis's "My deepest bow to the *Saturday Review* on its year of success in maintaining that great literature may actually be as important as balloon tires and as interesting as crossword puzzles."

August 8 saw Maxwell Bodenheim's *Replenishing Jessica* receive thumbs down from Ben Ray Redman, who sounded a bit pontifical when suggesting the writer obviously knew his lowlife characters but nothing of society's upper strata. The book was suppressed in many places, guaranteeing then—as now—instant financial success. "Ban-

ned in Boston" instantly meant that thousands of additional copies would be sold.

In the August 29 issue, Irish poet Joseph Campbell (inexplicably not to be found in Kunitz) reviewed *Two Plays (Juno and the Paycock and The Shadow of a Gunman)* by Sean O'Casey. Campbell thought Juno "...a feminist document" and said the play affected him in the same way that *Measure for Measure* or *Anna Karenina* did. "It points an accusing finger at men: it sets woman on a pedestal."

A month later (Sept. 29), Doctor Canby wrote about Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*. He had some reservations ("a technique that creaks a little") but said he liked it better than some of her more profound works. "Miss Cather believes what no Englishman or Frenchman can be convinced of, and no native novelist since Hawthorne, has practiced, that there is profundity in American life."

October 3 brought a new novel by Elinor Wylie (I've tried to obtain it for many years—in vain). Reviewer Carl Van Vechten may well have had his problems in reviewing *The Venetian Glass Nephew*, a "delicate fable" evoking the 18th century, for Mrs. Wylie was now Mrs. William Rose Benét, the wife of the Saturday Review's gentle associate editor. Van Vechten's review made one think of many a Wylie poem. He said her new romance is "like a silver whisper, blown and spun into iridescent crystal" and that "the odors of musk and peppermint permeate the air."

October 10 saw an Elmer Davis article on the doings in Tennessee but Doctor Canby gave almost as much space and attention to Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter*. "In American literature, he is opposed to the metaphysical Emerson, the moral Howells, the crafty Hergesheimer, and very different from his nearest of kin, the homely philosopher Mark Twain. His imagination is engaged by the instinctive emotions, and in this concern he is more penetrating and more profound than any writer in this country, or in England for that matter, with the possible exception of D. H. Lawrence."

An October 17 editorial by Rebecca West was about the three

novels she had most enjoyed in the year thus far. They were *The Constant Nymph*, *Serena Blandish*, and Edward Sackville-West's *Piano Quintet*. It indeed seemed like British Week what with the week's most interesting new novel Hilaire Belloc's *Mr. Petre*—with illustrations by G. K. Chesterton. A short review of Liam O'Flaherty's *The Informer* claimed it a failure "because the author has applied to the material of Dostoievski the method of DeMaupassant." It was later to become a key movie of the Thirties, a John Ford success definitely more Dostoievski than De Maupassant.

Autumn brought a more international potpourri. October 24 saw the review of Noel Coward's *The Vortex* in which Coward was lauded in a contrast with Michael Arlen. "His point of view is saved from snobism by his very real humor." The reviewer correctly labelled him already as "a master of the brevity that is the soul of conversation." The *Collected Poems* of Vachel Lindsay brought forth Louis Untermeyer's comment that here was "an often cruel exhibition of the various elements which provoke Lindsay to be one of the most exciting as well as one of the dullest of living poets." Untermeyer decried Lindsay the Missionary, lauded Lindsay the Minstrel. Louis Kronenberger reviewed what was surely the first modern Japanese novel to receive the *Review's* attention. The book was Toyohiko Kagawa's *Before the Dawn*, about which Mr. Kronenberger said, "To read this book is to see how superficially Japan has been Europeanized, as though with plumbing and telephones, while her outlook upon life remains untouched." Unfortunately, the reviewer thought that compared with a Western novel of equal magnitude, Mr. Kagawa's novel lacked both variety and intensity of experience.

The issue of December 5 was designated the Christmas number. Indeed there was a cause for celebration. I do not refer to an alliteratively-titled John Galsworthy editorial ("Time, Tides, and Taste"), but to the fact that Sinclair Lewis reviewed John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, a fitting climax to any year. "It *may* be the foundation of a whole new school of novel-writing," cautiously advanced America's

most famous literary redhead. It was a book "more important in every way than anything by Gertrude Stein or Marcel Proust or even the great white boar, Mr. Joyce's *Ulysses*... But the difference! Dos Passos is *interesting!*" Lewis ended his review by saying, "I met Dos Passos once. I have a recollection of lanky vitality and owlish spectacles. That was many years ago, and it was not till now that I found the feathers, the eagle's feather — and I forget the rest." Another novel reviewed was one by the *Review's* own Christopher Morley which I remember doing as my first book report in high school, impressing my English teacher very much. The title given to the review of Mr. Morley's *Thunder on the Left: "Rainbows of Imagination."* The images prevailed.

There was still more to come. In December 12's issue, Stark Young dismissed Booth Tarkington's *Women*. The last sentence of the review: "Of the human life in the town it displays a sensible working knowledge, as one might know its waterworks or lighting system pleasantly and without much wonder." Mr. Tarkington, the most popular author of the decade before, had lost his *wonder*. That talent, too, runs down like the proverbial tired clock does not mean that the talent never existed. *Alice Adams*, *The Magnificent Ambersons* — these had wonder. Or was it, equally simple, that Mr. Tarkington did not fathom the New America?

In the issue of December 19, Amy Loveman lovingly reviewed Walter De La Mare's *Broomsticks and Other Tales*, but more space was given to one of the more popular successes of the decade, John Erskine's *Private Life of Helen of Troy*, which reviewer Lloyd Morris found "gay, sophisticated, and a trifle malicious." His comment that "it will disconcert the Puritans but delight the intelligent" is *New Yorkerish* in style in its implication that the Puritans and the Intelligent are antonymous. Morris also said that this novel was "outside the main tradition of the English novel, which having borrowed from poetry the function of communicating emotion, has seldom been concerned with ideas." Mr. Morris thought this book stemmed from the

French tradition, "which admits, as appropos to the novel, a substance of ideas."

The last issue of this vintage year (Dec. 26) saw Edgar Lee Masters, whose *Selected Poems* was being reviewed, described, as "a too prolific poet." "A really satisfactory selection from his works would have to be confined to little more than a hundred of Mr. Masters' two thousand pages." The comment that "verbal beauty and music have never been Mr. Masters' strong points" and that his sketches of odd characters in an ugly world still appear as his best work ("strange enough, it is in such poems that beauty most manages to break through") make one think of Masters' seeming agreement if we are to identify his "Pettit the Poet" as a self-portrait.

On a happier note, William Rose Benét reviewed Robert Benchley's *Pluck and Luck*. It would still be a few years before America's leading humorist of the day (Thurber was still a few years away) turned to acting in the movies to delight an even larger audience, pluck and luck, indeed.

So the year wore down. Will we ever have such another? One thinks not. Not even with pluck and luck...weariness has replaced wonder. One understands Anouilh's *Madwoman of Chaillot* who daily read a newspaper of her youth whose news and gossip she was most fond of rather than the scandal sheets of the day. A memory of my New Hampshire summer of 1925 is a rare hour when my mother was free from her chores: we went walking over green meadows that were so filled with flowers one could not help but occasionally trample on some. Literarily, I think 1925 was like that, too.

#### NOTES

1. Barbara Cartland, *We Danced All Night* (London: Arrow Books, 1973), p. 365.
2. Margaret Widdemer, *Golden Friends I Had* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 89.
3. *Twentieth Century Authors, First Supplement* (Stanley Kunitz, ed., The H. W. Wilson Co., 1955), p. 96.

All references to the *New Yorker* and the *Saturday Review* have been identified in the article. The writer is very grateful that the Kobe College Library has all issues of these magazines from their inception on, on microfilm.