Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 42

TOPICS VOLUME

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Preface

Since its inception more than ten years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC.* In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these authors' works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and excerpting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC.* For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 12-16 authors or 4-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, excerpts of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and followed by a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- The **author heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.

- The **biographical and critical introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References are provided to past volumes of *TCLC* and to other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism, Children's Literature Review, Contemporary Authors, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* and *Something about the Author.*

- Most *TCLC* entries include **portraits** of the author. Many entries also contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs of important people, places, and events in an author's life.

- The **list of principal works** is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors with both foreign-language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. Some of the excerpts in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as publisher names and book prices) and parenthetical numerical references (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editors' discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.

- Critical excerpts are prefaced by **annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the excerpt, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference excerpts by critics who discuss each other's commentary.

- A complete **bibliographic citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book follows each piece of criticism.

- An annotated list of **further reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **author index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross-references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography.* For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC,* yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC.*

- Each *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **nationality index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.

- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **topic index,** which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC, TCLC, LC 1400-1800,* and the *CLC* Yearbook.

- Each new volume of *TCLC,* with the exception of the Topics volumes, contains a **title index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. The first volume of *TCLC* published each year contains an index listing all titles discussed in the series since its inception. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included in the *TCLC* cumulative index.

A Note to the Reader

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

[1] T. S. Eliot, "John Donne," *The Nation and the Athenaeum,* 33 (9 June 1923), 321-32; excerpted and reprinted in *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800,* Vol. 10, ed. James E. Person, Jr. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989), pp. 28-9.

[2] Clara G. Stillman, *Samuel Butler: A Mid-Victorian Modern* (Viking Press, 1932); excerpted and reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 33, ed. Paula Kepos (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989), pp. 43-5.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to excerpted criticism, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

Readers who wish to suggest authors or topics to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

Acknowledgments

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Contents

The Golden Age of American Popular Song

INTRODUCTION

Popular music in America underwent a period of unprecedented artistic development in the years between World War I and World War II, an era known as the Golden Age of American Popular Song. Characteristic songs of the period are collectively termed "Tin Pan Alley." These works share a tendency towards wordplay and an adroit coupling of lyrics and music that distinguish them from both the sentimental ballads and minstrel tunes of the nineteenth century and from the songs of the rock and roll era, which began in the 1950s. Often written for musical comedies, Tin Pan Alley songs now are perceived as independent works and are studied for the ways in which they define American culture.

Musicologists have traced the sources of Tin Pan Alley back to such African-American styles as blues and ragtime, and to such European traditions as the operetta and the art song, but most agree that its most direct ancestor was the sentimental ballad—characterized by simple, poignant melodies and typified by the songs of Stephen Foster. The expression "Tin Pan Alley" was invented in 1900 by the songwriter Monroe Rosenfeld in reference to the din produced by hundreds of composers in New York's song publishing district, though Charles K. Harris's "After the Ball" (1892) is often viewed as the first song of the genre. While popular music in the nineteenth century was introduced to the public in the form of stage revues and sheet music, the early years of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of musical comedy, an entertainment wherein the majority of Tin Pan Alley songs originated. Additionally, technological innovations, including the phonograph record and the "talking" motion picture, created the means to reach a larger audience. Such performers as Ethel Waters, Fred Astaire, and Al Jolson, whose interpretations of Tin Pan Alley songs are preserved in these media, helped define an era beset by two wars and an economic depression.

The most successful Tin Pan Alley songwriters exhibited particular genius for reinventing and popularizing existing music styles. Irving Berlin, the era's most successful composer despite his lack of formal musical education, had his first hit in 1911 with "Alexander's Ragtime Band," a song that was inspired by, but not technically related to, ragtime's syncopated meter. George Gershwin's enthusiasm for jazz and blues contributed to his musical ideas in composing the music for his opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935). Similarly, Cole Porter incorporated a variety of foreign styles into his melodies, ranging from the West Indian beguine ("Begin the Beguine," 1935) to the music he heard in the cafés of Paris ("I Love Paris," 1953).

The most distinctive feature of Tin Pan Alley songs is the ingenuity of their lyrics. Though the songs can be as nonsensical as Johnny Mercer and Harry Warren's "Jeepers Creepers" (1938), or as lyrical as Hoagy Carmichael and Mitchell Parish's "Stardust" (1929), they commonly celebrate romantic love and demonstrate a facility for wordplay and clever analogies. The poet Philip Larkin expressed particular admiration for the "middle eight" of Leo Robin and Lewis Gensler's "Love Is Just around the Corner" (1934): "Venus de Milo was noted for her charms. / Strictly between us, / You're cuter than Venus / And, what's more, you've got arms." Because the lyrics were usually written after the music, lyricists faced the challenge of writing words to fit a melody. The musicologist Charles Hamm has written, "One is reminded of similar restrictions embraced by writers of sonnets, by the Japanese poets of *haiku* verse, and by the great American bluesmen." Oscar Hammerstein II, the lyricist who collaborated with Jerome Kern on the landmark musical *Show Boat* (1927) and with Richard Rodgers on *Oklahoma!* (1943), concurred with this statement: "It is difficult to fit words into the rigid framework of a composer's meter, but this very confinement might also force an author into the concise eloquence which is the very essence of poetry." While some of the era's most popular lyricists, especially Cole Porter and Ira Gershwin, strongly resisted the idea that they were writing poetry, established literary figures have expressed admiration for Tin Pan Alley lyrics. Many examples are included in the *Oxford Book of American Light Verse,* and recording artists continue to perform material from the Golden Age, affirming the lasting appeal of the songs.

*REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

"After the Ball," by Charles K. Harris, 1892
"Alexander's Ragtime Band," by Irving Berlin, 1911
"All the Things You Are," by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, 1939
"Always," by Irving Berlin, 1925
"Begin the Beguine," by Cole Porter, 1935
"Blue Moon," by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, 1934
"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" by Jay Gorney and E. Y. Harburg, 1932
"Embraceable You," by George and Ira Gershwin, 1930
"God Bless America," by Irving Berlin, 1911
"I Can't Get Started," by Vernon Duke and Ira Gershwin, 1936
"I Love Paris," by Cole Porter, 1953
"Jeepers Creepers," by Harry Warren and Johnny Mercer, 1938
"Let's Do It," by Cole Porter, 1928
†"Love Is Just around the Corner," by Leo Robin and Lewis Gensler, 1934

"My Funny Valentine," by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, 1937
"Ol' Man River," by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, 1927
"Over the Rainbow," by Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg, 1939
"People Will Say We're in Love," by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, 1943
"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, 1933
"Someone to Watch over Me," by George and Ira Gershwin, 1926
"Stardust," by Hoagy Carmichael and Mitchell Parish, 1929
"Stormy Weather," by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler, 1933
"Summertime," by George Gershwin and Du Bose Heyward, 1935
"They All Laughed," by George and Ira Gershwin, 1937
"White Christmas," by Irving Berlin, 1942
"Yesterdays," by Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, 1933
"You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby," by Harry Warren and Johnny Mercer, 1938
"You're the Top," by Cole Porter, 1934

*When two writers are credited, the name listed first indicates the composer of the music, the second the author of the lyrics.

†Robin and Gensler cowrote both lyrics and music.

BACKGROUND AND MAJOR FIGURES

David Ewen

[Ewen was an American biographer and music critic who wrote extensively on popular music. In the following excerpt, he chronicles the trends in popular song that led to the flourishing of the form in the twenties and thirties.]

There would have been no Tin Pan Alley if a new generation of song publishers had not come into being in or about 1880. These publishers had the courage to invade what thus far had been a conservative stronghold, and they had the foresight and the imagination to introduce into their business a new aggressive method of operation.

While there had always been publishers to issue popular songs and popular-song lyrics, most of the song hits before 1880 came from music-publishing establishments specializing in serious music and in instruction books for students; others came out of print shops and music stores.

Stephen Foster was published by Firth, Pond and Company in New York until it was dissolved in 1863; and Firth, Pond and Company had been organized in 1831 to publish materials for serious musicians and students.

After 1837, the Oliver Ditson music store, in Boston, became one of America's leading publishers of classical music and instruction books. This firm also brought out, however, a good deal of popular material, including "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" during the Civil War, the dusky ballad "Nicodemus Johnson" in 1865, and Harry Kennedy's tearjerker, "A Flower from Mother's Grave," in 1878.

Two other publishers of comparatively serious music in Boston brought out minstrel-show tunes on the side. They were C. H. Keith and John F. Perry, publishers of Dan Emmett and James Bland, respectively. John Church Company, still another Boston outfit, issued, together with their staples, the popular nonmilitary Civil War ballad "Aura Lee" and one of the leading sentimental ballads of the 1870's "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen."

Root and Cady in Chicago was also a publisher of musical classics, as well as a music shop, until it became a power in the song industry by issuing George F. Root's "Battle Cry of Freedom" in 1863 (George F. Root was a brother of one of the firm's partners). And Carr's was just a music store in Baltimore when in 1814 it published for the first time the song that was later to become America's national anthem—"The Star-Spangled Banner."

These were just a few of the publishing houses scattered all over the country who issued serious music with one hand and popular songs with the other. All such houses followed a pattern of operation that for many years left little room for initiative or experiment. These publishing executives sat in their offices waiting for successes to hatch. Composers, performers, even the public had to beat a path to their doors. To go out in search of song material, to manufacture songs for specific timely purposes or events, to find performers and even bribe them to introduce such songs, to devise ingenious strategy to get a public sufficiently interested in the songs to buy the sheet music—all this was not then in the philosophy of conducting a music-publishing venture. Song hits happened. Publishers themselves did little or nothing to create them.

A few early American song hits point up the rather apathetic way in which publishers seemed to go about their business. Measured by sheet-music sale—the yardstick that the industry used for many years—Stephen Foster's "Swanee River" and "My Old Kentucky Home" were substantial successes for their time. The *Musical World* of 1852 reported that "the publishers keep two presses running and sometimes three, yet they cannot supply the demand [for 'Swanee River']." "My Old Kentucky Home" sold over 50,000 copies of sheet music in less than a year after its publication in 1853. The publishing house of Firth, Pond and Company thus hit pay dirt, although it had done very little hand digging of its own. It was Stephen Foster himself, not his publishers, who interested the minstrel Ed Christy in using these songs in his shows.

The Hutchinsons—a popular troupe of singers touring the country in the middle 1850's—made "The Battle Cry of Freedom" a national success. But it was accident, not the planning of the publishers, that led the Hutchinsons to sing this patriotic ballad. The Hutchinsons had come across the song by sheer chance a few days after it had been introduced in Chicago by the Lombard Brothers.

The song chronicles of this period overflow with accounts of singers accidentally stumbling over numbers that they then introduced and made famous. The premières of many another popular song came about because their composers, such as Dan Emmett and Henry Russell, were performers as well. Certainly, the publishers took full advantage of the interest in sheet-music sale aroused by performance by popular singers. But finding ways and means of getting such performances, or stimulating public interest, did not come within the sphere of their activities. Advertising of popular songs was completely unknown. Promotion and song-plugging were nonexistent. To pay a performer to sing a song would have been regarded by some of these older die-hard publishers as an indiscretion only a degree higher than street soliciting.

But in or about 1880—and continuing right through the 1890's—a new concept of popular-song publishing was being crystallized. This unconventional, even revolutionary, concept could have come only from young men with the iconoclasm and the recklessness of the novice. Some of these new publishers had been printers, and some had worked as salesmen in other businesses. They came to popular-music publishing to seek out a rich area they shrewdly felt could reap a harvest if properly fertilized and tilled. Many of these new publishers were themselves songwriters who had grown weary of earning fifteen or twenty-five dollars from a number which later brought fortunes to the publisher. As publishers of their own creations, these neophytes would stop at no length to get their work across to audiences.

One of the first of the new publishing breed was Frank Harding, who took over the direction of his father's publishing establishment on the Bowery in New York City in 1879. Frank Harding represented the new age of music publishing for two reasons. He specialized in popular songs and through them became successful; and he was one of the first in the industry to realize that song composers had to be nursed and coddled into writing hits.

He had learned the music business by operating a hand printing press for a number of years in his father's firm, after which he became his father's assistant. Once he took over the control of the business, Frank Harding broke precedent by shattering the insularity of music publishing. He made his office a hangout for the city's composers and lyricists. They came there to drink liquor, play poker, or just to gab. But along the way they also wrote songs for Harding. Realizing that there was no stimulus so potent to creation as thirst, Harding would pay his writers the price of several rounds of drinks each time they handed him a manuscript. "It was no use giving them more than ten dollars at a time," he explained. "A man could get damned drunk on ten dollars. I used to buy beautiful songs from J. P. Skelly for from six to twenty-five dollars, excellent manuscripts." Skelly, James Thornton, Charles Graham, Monroe Rosenfeld—we'll talk a good deal more about them in pages to come—were some of those who could usually be found loitering around Harding's office. Thornton's celebrated ballad "My Sweetheart's the Man in the Moon" was published by Harding; so were Joseph J. Sullivan's "Where Did You Get That Hat?" and J. W. Kelly's "Throw Him Down, McCloskey."

T. B. Harms and Willis Woodward were two other young publishers to concentrate successfully on popular songs and to bring a new vision to their endeavor. Between 1881 and 1883, the firm of T. B. Harms had several minor hits to its credit, the most important of which was Frank Howard's "When the Robins Nest Again" in 1883. Introduced by Howard himself (a famous minstrel with Thatcher, Primrose, and West), this song immediately became a huge favorite with minstrel-show audiences.

The T. B. Harms company did not hit its full stride until Alex and Tom Harms, both of them perspicacious and indefatigable promoters, began tapping the New York musical theater for publications. Some publishers before Harms had issued stage music—William A. Pond, for example (successors in 1863 to Firth, Pond and Company) had released most of the songs that David Braham wrote for the Harrigan and Hart extravaganzas. But T. B. Harms exploited the sheet-music distribution of stage music more extensively than any publisher had done up to this point. Between 1885 and 1891, the firm published several songs from *Shane na Lawn* and *Wang,* the latter a spectacle starring DeWolf Hopper. Then, in 1892, Harms became the first Tin Pan Alley publisher to discover that the rights to the sheet music of a successful Broadway musical production were almost as profitable as striking oil. This valuable lesson was learned by Harms through *A Trip to Chinatown,* an extravaganza that had the longest run (650 performances) of any stage presentation in New York theatrical history up to this time; it also toured the country for more than a year. Among its songs—most of which were written by Percy Gaunt—were three winners in "Reuben, Reuben," "Push Dem Clouds Away," and "The Bowery." In fact, it was "The Bowery"—far more than Loie Fuller's sensational butterfly dance or the singing of J. Aldrich Libbey—that enabled *A Trip to Chinatown* to settle down for a long and prosperous run after a shaky beginning at the box office. For several weeks the show had floundered. Then, to bolster the material, Percy Gaunt wrote "The Bowery" and slipped the song into a scene in which Harry Conor impersonated a rube from the sticks who was surrounded by Bowery drunks and thieves. After he had delivered the six verses and chorus, the thunder of approbation compelled him to sing it again from the beginning. "The Bowery" is still remembered—one of a handful of songs by which the city of New York or districts of it have been immortalized.

In 1892, Harms published "The Bowery," "Reuben, Reuben," and "Push Dem Clouds Away," and sold what for that time was the astronomical figure of several hundred thousand copies of each of the three numbers. This was the first time in Broadway history, and in that of American popular music, that a stage production provided such a source of revenue for a publisher. Henceforth, following the lead of Harms, publishing houses would reach out to the musical theater ever more hungrily to cash in on its best musical numbers.

The sentimental ballad proved as rich a source of financial

rewards for the house of Willis Woodward & Company as the musical theater was for Harms.

The sentimental ballad was, to be sure, nothing new in the 1880's. As a matter of fact it was as old as America itself. America's first sentimental ballad and the Revolutionary War came hand in hand. "The Banks of the Dee"—John Tait wrote the lyrics and adapted them to the familiar Irish melody, "Langolee"—described a Scotsman's sad farewell to his lass before embarking with the British troops for the colonies. After that, the sentimental ballad flourished in the 1830's mainly through the efforts of Henry Russell, a visitor from England. He began his career as an American popular-song composer while he was touring the country as a concert singer. In his lyrics and music, Russell shed many a tear over a tree, Mother, an old family clock, a ship afire, alcoholics, the insane, and a gambler's wife. "The Old Arm Chair," one of Russell's most popular, is probably America's first "mammy" song. "Woodman, Spare That Tree!" was one of the most widely sung and best loved sentimental ballads before the Civil War.

After Russell's time, hardly a year passed when men did not sing to women who sighed, a sad tale of woe narrated by a popular ballad. These were some of the more celebrated of these songs: "Darling Nelly Gray" in 1856; "Aura Lee" in 1861; "When You and I Were Young, Maggie" in 1866; "Sweet Genevieve" in 1869; "Grandfather's Clock" in 1876; "A Flower from Mother's Grave" in 1878; and "Why Did They Dig Ma's Grave So Deep?" in 1880. (In 1956, Elvis Presley borrowed the melody of "Aura Lee" for his song "Love Me Tender," which he introduced in the motion picture of the same name, and recorded for Victor in a disk that sold more than a million copies.) To these, of course, must be added the sentimental ballads of Stephen Foster and those by other composers inspired by the Civil War.

Many a mighty publishing establishment in Tin Pan Alley, and many a fortune, was built on the foundation stones of the sentimental ballad, whose greatest era opened in 1890. Before 1890 it was Willis Woodward that became one of the first establishments to help bring about this development by concentrating its prime efforts on such ballads. One of the first releases of the then newly organized firm of Willis Woodward was "White Wings" by Banks Winter. Winter himself had previously introduced his song at Huber's Gardens, a German beer hall on Fourteenth Street. Though the song was well received, it found no takers along publisher's row—that is, not until Pat Howley, an employee at Willis Woodward, accepted it for publication in 1884. The song became a huge success after Banks Winter tried it out in Boston with the Thatcher, Primrose and West Minstrels. Soon after that it was heard and acclaimed at Niblo's Gardens in New York. There was still another hit ballad in the Willis Woodward catalogue in 1884—Jennie Lindsay's "Always Take Mother's Advice." Charles Graham's "If the Waters Could Speak as They Flow" was one of Willis Woodward's best-selling songs of 1887.

That year of 1887, as a matter of fact, proved providential for the Woodward publishing house. For in that year it released "The Outcast Unknown," thereby acquiring under its roof perhaps the most successful creator of sentimental ballads of his time, Paul Dresser.

His name originally was Paul Dreiser, and he was the brother of Theodore Dreiser, one of America's most distinguished novelists. Paul was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1857. In his boyhood he learned to play the guitar and the piano. Because his father wanted him to become a priest—and because his own inclinations drew him to the stage—Paul ran away from home when he was sixteen and joined a medicine show that marketed a "wizard oil." One year later he became a member of a troupe making one-night stands, and from there he went on to a stock company by whom he was billed as "the sensational comique."

Already Paul Dresser was writing songs. His first, "Wide Wings," was issued by a small Indiana firm with profit to neither publisher nor author. Several of his other songs were grouped into the *Paul Dresser Songster* by a small Chicago publisher. Then, in 1885, while appearing as "Mr. Bones" with the Billy Rice Minstrels, Dresser started writing sentimental ballads for that company.

Dresser, a man who quivered with sentimentality in every tissue and muscle of his huge body, would burst into tears at the sound of a touching song, and especially at one he had written. Inspired by a frustrated love affair, he produced in 1886 the words and music of "The Letter That Never Came," which he sold to T. B. Harms for a few dollars. Though this ballad did not do well, Pat Howley of Willis Woodward was astute enough to buy Dresser's very next ballad, "The Outcast Unknown." The song brought in a profit. Now convinced he had a "find" in Dresser, Howley urged the composer to give up acting in minstrel shows and to become a staff composer at Willis Woodward. The wisdom of Howley's offer was proved decisively with two extraordinarily successful ballads issued by Willis Woodward in 1888 and 1891: "The Convict and the Bird" and "The Pardon Came Too Late."

If the Willis Woodward firm was directly responsible for the successful appearance of Paul Dresser in American popular music, it was also instrumental (though indirectly) in the founding of a new publishing organization. Because that house became one of the most adventurous in the early history of Tin Pan Alley, and was to set some of the patterns that would govern the Alley for many years, this achievement by Willis Woodward was no minor one. This is how it came about.

Willis Woodward had begun the practice of bribing performers to do his songs. He asked young Jay Witmark, a successful performer of ballads in variety and minstrel shows, to include in his repertory "Always Take Mother's Advice." Mainly due to Jay Witmark's effective rendition, the ballad amassed considerable sales. When the time of reckoning arrived, Willis Woodward, in place of the sizable sum he owed Witmark, presented him with a twenty-dollar gold piece. In retaliation, Jay Witmark swore he would enter publishing to become Willis Woodward's chief competitor.

At the time, together with his brothers Isidore and Julius,

Jay Witmark operated a little printing establishment at his home on West Fortieth Street. This firm did miscellaneous printing jobs such as Christmas cards and advertising throwaways. It now occured to Jay that if he was able to make songs into hits by singing them, he ought to go into music publishing and work this magic for himself. There was one obstacle, however: the Witmark boys had no songs to publish. The mother of invention—necessity—compelled them to produce one of their own. Seizing upon an announcement in the papers that President Grover Cleveland was to marry Frances Folsom, Isidore Witmark wrote the instrumental number *President Cleveland's Wedding March,* hoping that the publicity attending such an event might work to the sales advantage of his brain child. By the time the wedding ceremony took place at the White House in 1886, the young Witmarks had printed a "de luxe edition" of their march, ready for immediate distribution; they were the only publishers with such a timely item. They could hardly have realized it at the time, but with their maiden effort the Witmarks had begun a trend: to manufacture popular songs for a specific event.

Thus the house of M. Witmark and Sons stepped boldly into the publishing arena. (The letter "M" in the name stood for Marcus, the boys' father. Marcus had no interest in the firm, but his signature was needed for all business documents since the Witmark boys were all under age.)

The march did well enough to convince the Witmarks that they were in the song-publishing business for good. The better-established houses referred cynically to the newcomer as "The Hatchery," because its proprietors were just fledglings; indeed, Willis Woodward prophesied (with more bitterness than vision) that the Witmark establishment would collapse in less than six months. But having started out on a solid footing with a minor hit, the Witmark boys had no intention of losing ground.

Their second publication was an Isidore Witmark song, "I'll Answer That Question." Since Jay's experiences as a singer had taught the boys that the best way to make a song successful was to get it featured by some prominent performer, Isidore set for himself the task of placing his new song to its best advantage. He finally got Mademoiselle Renée—a foreign music-hall star then touring America—to use the song in her act. (Mademoiselle Renée became the wife of the Broadway producer William A. Brady and the mother of Alice Brady, star of stage and screen.) In the same persuasive way Isidore Witmark induced Daniel Sully, a vaudevillian, to interpolate the firm's "Sassy Nolan," into his comedy routine. "Sassy Nolan" sold even better than the preceding Witmark songs, not only because of Sully's popularity but also because Sully, whose act was also called "Sassy Nolan," helped swell the sheet-music sale by purchasing forty-five thousand copies for distribution among his friends and wellwishers.

It was not long before M. Witmark and Sons outgrew its little printing shop at home. In 1888 it opened an office for song publishing at 32 East 14th Street. It was not the first music-publishing house to come to the vicinity of Union Square. Willis Woodward had preceded them there by setting up shop in the Star Building on Thirteenth Street. But if the Witmarks were not the first, they were certainly among the first to come to Union Square. Here, too, they proved pioneers. For Union Square was about to become the mecca of American popular music, the birthplace of Tin Pan Alley. . . . (pp. 3-14)

The movement of popular-music publishers toward New York City's Union Square, begun just before 1890 by Willis Woodward and M. Witmark and Sons, continued throughout the 1890's. The trail blazers were joined by the better-established houses as well as most of the newcomers.

This was the first time that the popular-music-publishing business—formerly scattered all over the United States—became centralized. This, then, was the real beginning of Tin Pan Alley.

There were sound practical reasons why publishers should now want to settle in or near Union Square. The song industry had become fully cognizant of the importance of the entertainment world to the conduct of its affairs. The older publishers as well as the neophytes wanted to center their activities, and their very presence, in what was then the entertainment capital of America.

By 1890, here in Union Square could be found Tony Pastor's Music Hall, the foremost vaudeville theater in America. Its footlights were continually throwing their luminous glare on such fabled celebrities of show business as the Four Cohans, Lottie Gilson, the first Pat Rooney, May Irwin, Weber and Fields, Eddie Foy, Emma Carus, Maggie Cline, Ben Harney, Lillian Russell, and many others. In Union Square was located the Union Square Theater in which in 1886 Lillian Russell had dazzled her audiences with the operetta *Pepita,* the music of which was the work of her husband, Edward Solomon. Also in the Square, the Academy of Music was still the home of grand opera, even though in 1883 it had found a formidable competitor in the then newly opened Metropolitan Opera House "uptown" on Thirty-ninth Street.

In Union Square there was a proliferation of burlesque and sporting houses, beer halls, penny arcades, restaurants. Across the street from Tony Pastor's was the Dewey Theater, favored home of burlesque shows, and Theiss's Alhambra, for varied forms of live entertainment. A few doors from the Alhambra stood the street's most celebrated restaurant, Luchow's, to this day a landmark on Fourteenth Street. Huber's Prospect Gardens Music Hall (a replica of an English music hall, even though its staff was mainly German) catered to its faithful clientele at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Fourteenth Street.

Just a short distance from East Fourteenth Street were clustered a number of theaters in which minstrel-show and variety troupes performed regularly. Just around the corner from Irving Place and fashionable Gramercy Park were two hotels—the Trafalgar and the Academy—which, however rundown and weatherbeaten, were the homes of visiting entertainers.

In the Union Square of 1890, as elsewhere in the United States, one form of stage entertainment was on its way out and another was on its way in.

On a sharp decline was the minstrel show, which had been flourishing since 1846 when its format had been set and established for all time by Ed Christy and his Minstrels. The end men, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones, became for years just about the most famous pair of characters in the American theater. The sight of these performers—faces blackened by burnt cork; dressed in frock coats, striped trousers, white gloves; with large flowers in the lapel—was calculated to arouse in audiences anticipations of nostalgia, gaiety, and hilarity: gay double-entendres; puns; absurd answers to provocative questions, repartee; solo comedy songs and sentimental ballads; choral numbers; dances; and walkarounds (the last being the strut of a performer around the stage during the presentation of the concluding musical number). All this was blended into a wonderful triple melange: the "olio," the fantasia, and the burlesque. The "olio" consisted of variety entertainment with a standardized pattern; the fantasia, with no standard format, permitted individual performers to strut their stuff; the burlesque satirized some of the highlights of the earlier two parts.

During the first half-dozen years of its activities, the Ed Christy Minstrels gave more than twenty-five hundred performances. Its success inevitably inspired imitation. All over America, minstrel troupes sprang up like wild mushrooms. Cool White (John Hodges) was the head of one group; many considered him America's foremost minstrel after Ed Christy himself. The Bryant Minstrels was organized and led to success by Dan Emmett, the most important popular composer in America before Stephen Foster. Other groups included the Virginia Serenaders, the Ethiopian Minstrels, the Harrington Minstrels, the Ordway Minstrels.

But by 1890 the demise of the minstrel show was imminent. With the growing intrusion of girls and sex into the musical theater, all-male companies began to lose their hold. A few troupes were still able to keep the hallowed traditions of minstrelsy alive: the Lew Dockstader troupe, for example, or Thatcher, Primrose, and West (later called Primrose and West), or the last of the great minstrels, George "Honey" Evans and Eddie Leonard.

While it flourished, the minstrel show did more than please its audiences for a half-century with the most delightful stage entertainment; it also immeasurably enriched the storehouse of American popular music. Some of America's finest popular songs had been written for—and were introduced and made famous by—these great dusky-faced minstrels. Dan Emmett's "Dixie," today remembered mainly as the leading song of the Southland during the Civil War, started out as a "walkaround" for the Bryant Minstrels in 1859. Emmett wrote other delightful and famous songs for the minstrel show, some of them only slightly less familiar than his "Dixie." Among these are "Old Dan Tucker" and "The Blue Tail Fly," the latter probably better known to most people today as "Jim Crack Corn." Cool White introduced "Lubly Fan" (occasionally identified today as "Buffalo Gals") with the Virginia Serenaders. One of America's first successful nonsense songs was largely made popular by the minstrel Billy Emerson—"Polly Wolly Doodle" (author unknown). The first "hi-de-ho" song ever written was a minstrel-show tune called "De Boatman's Dance," introduced by the Virginia Minstrels. Stephen Foster wrote some of his immortal Negro ballads for Ed Christy, who was the first to bring them to their nationwide prominence—classics such as "Swanee River" and "My Old Kentucky Home." Some years after Foster, his most significant successor as creator of immortal Negro ballads, James A. Bland, himself a Negro, produced "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," "Hand Me Down My Walking Stick," and "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers"—all of them staples in the minstrel-show repertory throughout the country. Banks Winter's "White Wings," as we said before, achieved its first success with the Thatcher, Primrose, and West Minstrels. And even as the minstrel show was gasping its last breaths, it had enough vitality to contribute several more permanent additions to our song literature—such favorites, for example, as songwriter Eddie Leonard's "Ida" and "Roly, Boly Eyes."

Eddie Leonard had just become a member of the Primrose and West Minstrels when, in 1903, he wrote "Ida." The manager of the company, Jim Decker, did not think highly of Leonard and was planning to fire him. When, therefore, Leonard insisted upon singing his new number, "Ida," in place of one previously selected for him, the company manager agreed as he fully expected this to be Eddie Leonard's last appearance. Singing with that slow drawl and those drawn-out vowels that were the salient characteristics of his style, Leonard created a furor. When he came back into the wings, Jim Decker told him: "Don't bother to pack, Eddie. You're staying with the company." Eddie Leonard now became the star of the troupe and stayed that way for over a decade. He always wore a white satin suit, white topper, and a frilled white shirt, a uniform that became as much a trademark of his as his slow drawl. His delivery of "Roly, Boly Eyes"—the last of his great song successes, published in 1912—was personalized by the way he drew out the words "eyes" to sound like "wawah-eyes." By the time "Roly, Boly Eyes" became popular, the minstrel show had lost its hold on theatergoers. But Eddie Leonard kept the song alive in vaudeville (where he was billed as "the last of the great minstrels").

While the minstrel show was dying out, vaudeville was beginning to reach a peak of national acceptance. It was to vaudeville, more than to any other branch of the musical theater, that the Tin Pan Alley of 1890 and the early 1900's owed its greatest debt. The history of vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley overlaps so frequently that it is hardly possible to speak of one without discussing the other.

Vaudeville (initially dubbed "variety") was a legitimate offspring of the minstrel show. Vaudeville, after all, was just a "fantasia" lifted out of the context of the minstrel show and stripped of minstrel costumes and burnt cork. The word "vaudeville" comes from *vau-de-Vire,* the French word that had taken on the meaning of "lively songs." The word "vaudeville" was used for the first time in the United States on February 23, 1871, at Weisiger's Hall in Louisville, Kentucky, when a troupe headed by H. J. Sargent presented a variety performance. In billboards and on programs the company identified itself as

"Sargent's Great Vaudeville Company from Chicago." In the 1880's a touring company of variety artists also used the term "vaudeville," to describe its entertainment; and the first theater to call itself a vaudeville house opened during the same period in San Antonio, Texas. . . . (pp. 20-5)

Vaudevillians, carrying a song on a circuit touching every major American city and many of the smaller ones, became a powerful agency for its promotion. Publishers could always tell when a certain vaudeville headliner played in a specific city: by the sudden spurt of sheet-music business from that place. And, because a vaudevillain retained a single act for a number of years (or until the circuit had been covered two or three times) a song could be kept alive in public interest for an indefinite period. The life span of a sheet-music publication was thereby extended. Even the older and more conservative publishers became convinced that it was important to place songs in vaudeville acts. And it was from their early experiences with vaudeville that the younger publishers in Tin Pan Alley came to realize that the first problem in their business was to get a vaudevillian to use their songs. (p. 29)

Second in importance to vaudeville (as far as placement of songs went) was burlesque. "To place a ballad . . . in a burlesque show was the infallible method in the nineties, and long afterward, of establishing a hit and insuring great profits," wrote Bernard Sobel, burlesque's distinguished historian. "The runs were long and by the time one show after another presented a song the whole country knew the tune by heart. Thus composers and song publishers went to great lengths to place their numbers and displace competitors." . . . (pp. 30-1)

Despite the immense popularity of the sentimental ballad in the 1890's, other kinds of songs, some of which were highly successful, were being produced in Tin Pan Alley in those years.

Still in a more or less sentimental vein—though much less so than dramatic ballads like "After the Ball" and "Mother Was a Lady"—were nostalgic little waltzes that projected a simply expressed sentiment rather than narrating an elaborate tale. In that style were such songs as "Daisy Bell" and "The Band Played On."

"Daisy Bell" (perhaps better known by its alternate title "A Bicycle Built for Two") was written by the Englishman Harry Dacre soon after he came to the United States in 1891. He arrived with a bicycle among his belongings, for which he was required to pay duty. Billy Jerome, a Tin Pan Alley lyricist, met him at the pier and remarked wryly: "It's lucky you don't have a bicycle built for two, otherwise you'd have to pay *double* duty." The phrase "bicycle built for two" stuck in Dacre's mind. He used it for the first song he wrote in America. Nobody in Tin Pan Alley was at first interested in it, since in 1891 cycling still had a limited appeal for Americans. But in England, where the song was introduced by Kate Lawrence, it struck home and became an instantaneous favorite.

Then, late in 1891, a revolution took place in the construction of bicycles in the United States. The former high wheel was made smaller, the frame was dropped, pneumatic tires were introduced. All this added up to a vehicle easier to handle and safer to ride. Women began leaving their kitchens to go cycling—encouraged by doctors who said the sport was beneficial to health and by ministers who maintained it was beneficial to the soul.

With cycling a national fad, "Daisy Bell" caught on. Tony Pastor was the first one to sing it in America—at his Music Hall. T. B. Harms published the song in 1892, and Jennie Lindsay caused a sensation when she sang it at the Atlantic Gardens on the Bowery. After that it seemed that the whole country was on wheels—and singing "Daisy Bell."

"The Band Played On" was inspired by the German brass bands that were roaming the streets of New York City in return for whatever coins appreciative listeners wished to shower upon them. Words and music were written by John E. Palmer after he had heard one of these bands playing outside his apartment. When Palmer's sister made a move to close the window he exclaimed: "Let the band play on." His sister replied: "That's a good song title for you." If this story is to be believed, Palmer agreed and went to work at once.

He showed his song to the vaudevillian Charles B. Ward. After Ward made some corrections and minor changes, he bought it from Palmer for a few dollars. Ward then published the song himself in 1895, taking credit for the music while crediting Palmer only with the lyrics. Ward introduced the song in a Harlem Theater. After that he used his influence among his stage friends to get it heard in leading vaudeville houses. The New York *World* also became interested in it, publishing both words and music in one of its Sunday issues and using its columns to publicize it. This was the first instance in which a Tin Pan Alley product was successfully promoted by a newspaper. The song sold a million copies within a few years, and Ward (much to Palmer's chagrin) was made wealthy by it. . . . (pp. 77-9)

A new century had arrived. It was rich in achievements and richer still in promises for the future. America had just emerged from the brief Spanish-American War victoriously, with flying banners and few casualties. It was about to extend its sphere of influence by leasing for perpetuity the Canal Zone on the Isthmus of Panama for the building of a canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Internally in the United States, expansion was the keynote. Industry, now grown to prodigious proportions, had created the billion-dollar trust. It was flourishing in spite of the efforts of the Sherman Antitrust Act to limit its giant growth. A survey early in the 1900's disclosed that more than five thousand organizations had been consolidated into three hundred trusts—one of the most powerful of these being U.S. Steel. These trusts were controlled by just a handful of financial barons, headed by the Rockefellers and the Morgans.

Prosperity was everywhere. In the West the successful application of science to agriculture had helped make the soil fertile and facilitated cultivation. Railroads linked hitherto widely separated and far-flung cities. In the South the rise of new factories and the development of natural re-