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Cabell's rational morality as expressed through the dream-vision technique in Jurgen

Ruth MacDonald Stevenson

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CABELL'S RATIONAL MORALITY AS
EXPRESSED THROUGH THE DREAM-
VISION TECHNIQUE IN JURGEN

A Study
offered as partial
fulfillment of the
requirements for
the degree of
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by

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PREFACE

The Present State of Cabell Criticism and Scholarship

Edward Wagenknecht divided the literary fortunes of James Branch Cabell into four acts, with the implication that a fifth might follow.1 Cabell began in the early 1900's to write "the very nicest kind of books ... whose exuberant romanticism won their admirers, notably Mark Twain and Theodore Roosevelt." But most of the books were soon on the bargain shelves of department stores, priced at nineteen cents. Their critical reception was unenthusiastic. That was Act One.

"Act Two began in 1919 with the suppression of Jurgen."2 This book often commanded a price of forty dollars in second-hand shops. Men of importance rushed to Cabell's defense; Carl Van Doren, H. L. Mencken, Burton Rascoe, and Vernon Louis Parrington. Mr. Cabell became a "great writer."

Act Three began in the thirties, when Cabell found himself at variance with the literary tastes (and the political convictions) of the majority of the great American


2 Ibid., p. 339.
reading public. He was then a writer of established reputation and had as few readers as he had enjoyed in Act One.

Wagenknecht considered Act Four to be in progress in or about 1952, but he makes no comment upon it other than that it had produced two novels and two works of non-fiction. So far as this writer is aware, Wagenknecht has not more recently characterized Act Five.

Prior to 1919, the year *Jurgen* was published, there was not any Cabell criticism or scholarship worthy of mention. *Jurgen*, of course, touched off a perfect barrage of comment and controversy. It also touched off some of the most unusual "scholarship" that any author has ever enjoyed. The following is an excerpt from Heywood's column in the *New York World*, October 21, 1922:

... The acquittal of *Jurgen* removes from our own shoulders a heavy burden. When Mr. Sumner brought action against the book he stated that his attention had first been called to it by an article on the Tribune book page, which we were editing at that time. This article was a letter from Walter Kingsley, who stated that *Jurgen* was by far the most popular book among the chorus girls of New York. According to the letter, competition was raging up up and down Broadway as to which girl could dig out of the book the greatest number of hidden meanings. This seemed to us innocent enough. It is easy to imagine ever so many ways in which chorus girls might be employed to worse advantage.

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Another unusual item of Cabell appreciation appeared in 1925, when the first performance of Deems Taylor's symphonic poem Jurgen was given on November 19 by the New York Symphony Orchestra, Walter Damrosch conducting.  

Many literary figures rallied gallantly to Cabell's defense, and such persons as Charles S. Summer, of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, attacked with venom and abandon. Out of all this came charges and counter-charges, not to mention a law suit, brought against Guy Holt, Robert F. McBride and Company, and its president, Robert F. McBride. This court action, it may be noted, produced (with two exceptions) the only sound and discerning item of Cabell criticism to be found in Act Two. Its importance seems to justify its inclusion here:

JUDGE NOTT'S OPINION

PEOPLE
VS.
HOLT, McBRIEDE & CO. ET AL.

The defendants herein, at the close of the People's case, have moved for a direction of acquittal and the dismissal of the indictment on the ground that the book "Jurgen" on the possession of which the indictment is based, is not an "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent, or disgusting book" within the meaning and intent of section 1141 of the Penal Law, for the alleged violation of which the indictment has been found.

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I have read and examined the book carefully. It is by Mr. James Branch Cabell, an author of repute and distinction. From the literary point of view its style may fairly be called brilliant. It is based on the mediaeval legends of Jurgen and is a highly imaginative and fantastic tale, depicting the adventures of one who has been restored to his first youth, but who, being attended by a shadow in the guise of the shadow of his old self, retains the experience and cynicism of age which frustrates a perfect fulfillment of his desire for renewed youth.

The adventures consist in wanderings through mediaeval and mythological countries and a sojourn in Hell and Heaven. He encounters beings of mediaeval folklore and from classical mythology. The most that can be said against the book is that certain passages therein may be considered suggestive in a veiled and subtle way of immorality, but such passages are delicately conveyed and the whole atmosphere of the story is of such unreal and supernatural nature that even these suggestions are free from evils accompanying suggestiveness in more realistic works. In fact, it is doubtful if the book could be read or understood at all by more than a very limited number of readers.

In my opinion the book is one of unusual literary merit and contains nothing "obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent or disgusting" within the meaning of the statute and the decisions of the courts of this state in similar cases. (See Halsey v. New York Society, 234 N.Y. 1; People v. Brainard, 192 App. Div. 116; St. Hubert Guild v. Quinn, 64 Misc. 336).

The motion, therefore, is granted and the jury is advised to acquit the defendants.

After the Jurgen episode had made Cabell the most discussed literary figure of the day, Cabell criticism

5 Colum and M.F. Cabell, pp. 268-9.
flourished with a rank luxurience, the great body of it being misguided and incomprehending. A few specimens of characteristic critical comments follow:

from Don Bregenzer --

Cabell is an incurable Romanticist, and hence an impeccable foe of Realism. (A Roundtable in Poetics, ed. Don Bregenzer and Samuel Loveman, Cleveland, 1924, p. 37.)

from Edward Hale Bierstadt --

Particular facts of life he is not able to face at all... Essentially he is an escapist from life and a Romantic. ("The Literary Spotlight: Mr. James Branch Cabell," in The Bookman, February, 1923.)

from Regis Michaud --


from Ludwig Lewisohn --

The trouble is there is nothing in all these romances for the mind to grasp; one fumbles in a sunny mist. (Expression in America, New York, 1932, p. 531.)

This brief sampling could be multiplied and re-multiplied without adding to the diverse repetition found here. The approaches of the critics are various, but one significant thing they all hold in common; none of them tries specifically to prove that Cabell is a romantic; mostly they hurl the term at him rather defiantly. One easy explanation for this of course lies in the fact that few critics have bothered to write a sustained piece of
criticism on Cabell, that their comments have been hastily evoked by literary editors who wanted book reviews for their columns or magazines. Another reason might lie in the fact that the ethos surrounding each book certainly conforms to that of fairy tales and that repeatedly the reader is presented with material with which it is easier to identify one's emotions than on which to exercise one's mind.

There is also, as an extension of this consideration, a less tangible point of interest to be noted here: most of his critics slip easily into an almost Cabellesque technique of style, a technique which in the hands of these men becomes transformed into a lyric imitation more concerned with words than with thought. A particularly good example of this transformation comes from the pen of Cabell's good friend, Joseph Hergesheimer, writing for the New York Sun:

The enchantment of Jurgen, conveyed in pulp and ink, rising from the gold vessel of Mr. Cabell's imagination, is both a figment and a reality; the gesture of a hand; the shrill or bland pitch of a voice, holds all of life, the belly and the instinct of propagation are the mechanical gods of existence; and at the same time, they are less than nothing; for the amazing jangle of fate, or chance, has its sweep not from the ample needs of animals but from the tyranny of that vision of the flawlessly Helen, the shining ineffable blue-

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6. The New York Sun, October, 1919.
Even Cabell's literary friends with whom he corresponded intimately and copiously, even though they expressed warm and genuine admiration for Mr. Cabell, for the most part they failed, in the opinion of this student, to grasp more than occasionally what he was aiming at. This seems true of (among others) Burton Rascoe, Joseph Hergesheimer, Sinclair Lewis, H.L. Mencken, and Hugh Walpole. Mr. Mencken, for instance, admired Cabell greatly but (as it seems to this writer) largely for the wrong reasons. 7

One exception to the generalization made in the paragraph above is Guy Holt, Mr. Cabell's editor with Robert F. McBride and Company. Seemingly he understood Mr. Cabell's artistic purposes. Holt had the discernment to see that Jurgen "embodied a plea for monogamy in the only convincing terms," 8 and that Mr. Cabell's "romanticism, like Jurgen's youth, is a queer sort of romanticism and not always what it appears." 9

Another exception is Carl Van Doren, who gives ample

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7 Cabell's correspondence with these men is to be found in the recently published Between Friends, ed. delightfully by Padraic Colum and Margaret Freeman Cabell.


9 Ibid., xviii.
evidence in Contemporary American Novelists, 1900 - 1920\textsuperscript{10} and in James Branch Cabell\textsuperscript{11} that he understands what Mr. Cabell's intentions are. To cite just one example, in the work first mentioned he says of Mr. Cabell that "His Poiicetesme is no less beautiful for having come to be a country of disillusion; nor has his increasing sense of the futility of desire robbed him of his old sense that desire is a glory while it lasts."\textsuperscript{12}

Of those critics and scholars detached from Cabell himself and the immediate Jurgen scene, brief mention might be made.

First, it may be noted that in the fourth edition of Century Readings in American Literature Fred Lewis Pattee, its editor, makes no mention whatever of Cabell. Not only does he fail to include any Cabell selection, but Cabell's name does not appear in the index of the volume.\textsuperscript{13} This detail is mentioned here principally to indicate the farthest withdrawal of the ebb tide of Cabellian appreciation, a withdrawal that continued through the 1940's and at least

\textsuperscript{10} New York, 1922.

\textsuperscript{11} New York, 1925.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 106.

\textsuperscript{13} This edition was published, by the Century Co., in 1932.
until the middle point of the 1950's. Mrs. Brewer's bibliography often lists for this period only one or two items pertaining to Cabell appearing during the course of a year; for some of the years there is no listing whatever.

Much more recently there have appeared a Cabell bibliography and discussions of Cabell by Professor Louis Rubin, who also is quite aware of the prevailing misconceptions about Mr. Cabell and his work. There is also Between Friends, mentioned above, edited by Padraic Colum and Margaret Freeman Cabell. For the future, the University of Pennsylvania has undertaken to publish the definitive edition of Mr. Cabell's letters.

In general, the great body of scholarship and criticism devoted to Cabell has been unperceptive, and more than a little of it has been not much short of stupid. One result of this situation is that the term "escapist" has time after time been applied to Cabell, often combined with the adjective "romantic." Both terms are inaccurate, as this study will attempt to show.

There are, as has been already noted, exceptions to be made to the generalization which begins the paragraph just above.

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14 See footnote 4.

One urgent need, which has existed from the very first of Mr. Cabell's publications, is for competent critical interpretation in detail. Mr. Cabell was familiar with almost every body of myth under the sun and used each, some occasionally and some extensively. Consequently, that fictitious person, the general reader, gets lost hopelessly in the jungle of Cabell's adaptations and therefore misses a great part of what Cabell supplied.

In the present thesis a modest attempt is made to meet in some measure the need as it concerns Jurgen. But this attempt is made in the full realization that only a specialist in myth and legend — and one who also possesses a feeling for exquisite style and felicitous treatment — can reveal with any completeness the real Cabell.
INTRODUCTION

In this thesis will be used with some frequency several terms capable of various denotations. It is desirable that their meanings — as they are employed in this study — be set forth.

By Cabell's morality will be indicated his recognition of what to him is good and of what is bad, involving the approval of the former and the disapproval of the latter.

In this study the term romantic will be used to indicate material which deals with the mediaeval; the chivalric; the far-away; the long-ago; the supernatural; the matter of Britain, of France, and of Rome the Great; and the personages and happenings of myths and legends.

By rational will be meant that which is based upon reason or the intellectual faculty, hence divergent from and opposed to the fanciful, the romantic, and the idealistic. The fanciful, the romantic, and the idealistic may depart from actuality, which the rational attitude accepts. Hence, the term rational as used herein is very often the near equivalent of the term realistic.

The term realism as employed in this study may be defined as the attempt to portray the world, life, human
beings, and human experience as they actually are. It is to be noted that James Branch Cabell perceived actuality in a light other than that which might prevail when another views the human scene, and therefore "actuality" in his works does not necessarily correspond to the "actuality" which another might perceive. Here, of course, we are confronted with the problem of what actuality is; and at this point this student of Cabell runs for cover. She has no intention of trying to draw back the curtain which conceals and disguises true realities. Obviously, she is not qualified to do so. Hence the "actuality" presented in the pages of this study is the "actuality" that Cabell perceived.

The term escapist will be used to designate one who turns his back upon the "realities" of human existence and seeks escape from these in an imagined world that is nearer the heart's desire.

The term pessimism (similarly with its corresponding adjective, pessimistic) in these pages designates the tendency to regard the pain, trouble, limitations, and (apparent) injustice that humanity endures as imperfectly compensated by the happiness, success, and justice that one may experience. It also designates the conviction that high expectations and promising prospects are almost invariably unrealized and that in many instances their sequels
are tragedy and disgrace.

It should be carefully noted that the title of this thesis employs the expression "the technique of the dream vision" and not merely that of "the dream vision." The distinction is important. There is no attempt to assert that the story of Jurgen is presented as a dream vision. Jurgen does not fall asleep at the beginning of the story; he does pass through his various adventures with full waking awareness; and he does not awake at the end to wonder at the strange things that he has experienced in a dream.

Nonetheless, Cabell's Jurgen has many points of correspondence to the various dream visions that are to be found in the literatures of many countries. To cite a few instances, thirteenth and fourteenth century French literature produced the Roman de la Rose, begun by Guillaume de Lorris and completed by Jean de Meun, which was translated into English by Geoffrey Chaucer\(^1\); the Paradys d'Amours of Froissart; and the anonymous Songe Vert\(^2\). In English


\(^2\) Ibid., p. 266.
literature there are numerous dream visions by Chaucer (The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, The Legend of Good Woman); there is The Pearl; and there is The Vision of Piers Plowman. Later, there is, among others, Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress. The three last mentioned bear a strong resemblance to Jurgen in their moralistic and religious intent. And it should be noted also that Dante’s Divine Comedy closely resembles the dream vision genre; all that need be supplied is the slumber of Dante and his subsequent awakening. Also to be noted is that Cabell’s Jurgen visits Hell and Heaven. That he by-passed Purgatory is understandable.

In the dream vision genre there is invariably a journey of the dreamer into strange or remote regions where very remarkable things take place. In brief, in the various dream visions of literature, one meets with very much the same sort of thing that is to be found in Jurgen. There is journeying or questing; there are characters which transcend in one way or another the common run of humanity; there is action that is not characteristic of actual life; and there is invariably a purpose toward whose realization all of these details are directed.

Not the least important of these in Jurgen is the purpose. As this study will attempt to show, Cabell’s
purpose was to employ material characteristic of the dream vision — material that is conventionally regarded as romantic — as a vehicle for the expression of moral values relating to the world of actuality.

Thus, in many respects, Mr. Cabell resembles Edmund Spenser. In *Jurgen* and in many other Cabell books what we actually meet with is "a continued Allegory, or darke conceit" (Spenser’s letter to Raleigh). Like Spenser, Cabell uses the material of mediaeval romance; like Spenser, he employs knighthood and quests and wicked enchanters and fair ladies, some of whom are no better than they should be. But one important difference should be noted. Although Spenser shows us the seamy side of life and of men through allegory (as in the House of Pride), the Red Cross Knight wins through: the great dragon is slain; the Tree of Life and the Well of Life confer strength and solace and healing. The high purposes of Gloriana are, in the end, always triumphantly served. On the other hand, while Cabell’s settings, atmosphere, and pervading tone are romantic and his characters are at least not flesh and blood people in their external appearance (many of them are mythological), nevertheless, in these romantic people and in these romantic settings, actual and not idealized human nature
displays itself, and so does human destiny and the lot of man. Never were there more bitter pills more curiously -- and deceivingly -- sugar-coated, by symbol and allegory, than these. In other words, Cabell creates illusions to dispel illusions.

The various parts of this study deal with various episodes in Jurgen, episodes in which Jurgen progresses from one region to another and from one set of circumstances to another with no very immediately apparent relationship between any two of his adventures. This apparent lack of unity is deceiving. What we witness, if we are perceptive, is not an aimless progression to region after region but a series of related allegories, each of which concerns itself with some aspect of reality, the moral values involved therein, and man's "reasonable" adjustment to these realities. The unity of this thesis rests upon the same basis in that it attempts to present the various facets of Cabell's dominant purpose.
CHAPTER I

Nature of Cabell's Material and His Use of It: King Smoit and Philistia

In the introduction to this study, the material that Cabell uses in *Jurgen* was characterized in more or less general terms. This chapter will attempt to indicate the nature of that material more specifically and in greater detail and to make clear how Mr. Cabell used this material as a vehicle for his more serious purposes.

In *Jurgen* the action begins in Poictesme, a region which one commentator has identified as the combination of two French provinces, Poitiers plus Angouleme. In any event it is an imaginary creation of Mr. Cabell, a mediaeval land which is bounded on the north by King Arthur's Britain and on the south by Asia Minor. During the course of the various novels which make up what Cabell calls "The Biography," this region acquires a number of wholly incredible and equally delightful boundaries including "Constantinople and Barbary, Massalia, Aquitaine, Navarre, Portugal, Rome, Alexandria, Arcadia, Olympia, Asgard, and the Jerusalems Old and New." It is a land in which (in...

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the words of its creator) "almost anything is rather more than likely to happen." And it does.

Those who prefer to be definite about matters geographical can refer to a map of Poictesme ("James Branch Cabell fecit, after Bülg's chart, 1792").

On this map can be located the site of Jurgen's pawnbroker's shop in Beauvillage; the Cistercian Abbey near which Jurgen encountered a black gentleman whose "sharp nails glittered like flame-points"; Amneran Heath, regarded as a very dangerous place by all prudent folk; Upper and Lower Morven, to be avoided even more carefully; Bellegarde, the residence of Count Emmerick; and the cave from which start Jurgen's adventures.

Presumably within a reasonable distance of Poictesme are all the territories that Jurgen visited, including the Garden between Dawn and Sunrise. Adjacent to that place, to the south, live the fairies and the gnomes; to the right are the Valkyries, with their allies, the Amazons and the Cynocephali; northward are to be found the Leprechauns; and the Sphinx pastures on a near-by mountain, visited now and then by Cerberus.

3 Ibid., following p. 42.
Jurgen's travels take him, among other places, to the realm of Glatlion; to the Green Castle, held by the giant, Graemagog; to a Druid forest inhabited by a Brown Man with Queer Feet; to the land of Cocaigne; to the region of Leuke, wherein was located the city of Pseudopolis; to the Infernal Regions; and to the Heaven of Jurgen's grandmother.

The roster of place-names is given here to show the predominantly romantic nature of Cabell's material. A roll-call of the characters which appear in Jurgen would suggest the romantic just as strongly. Here are a few selected and representative characters: Nessus, the Centaur; Thragnor; Yolande; Gogyrvan Vawr; Guinevere; Anaitis; Chloris; Helen, the delight of Gods and Men; Achilles; Dolores; Florimel; and Koshchei.

This romantic material is gathered from a number of sources. Some of these sources are Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Mabinogion, Halory, Greek mythology, Scandinavian and Germanic myth, Buddhistic and Hindu lore, mediaeval superstitions, Russian folk lore, the fertility cults of the East, and the Apocalypse. It may also be noted that Cabell, while he was preparing Jurgen, was reading The Legend of the Glorious Adventures of Tyl Ulenspiegel by Charles de Coster, translated from the French by Geoffrey
Whitworth. This student is sure that there are other sources, but the ones mentioned here have been definitely recognized by her.

The first pitfall to be avoided in any attempt to comprehend Cabell's purposes in Jurgen is that of assuming that the story's characters and adventures were created for their own sake and have no significance beyond that of forming a rainbow web of romantic enchantment. Indeed, this pitfall awaits the reader in almost all of Cabell's books, and Mr. Cabell does not place any warning red lanterns around the pit. On the contrary, Mr. Cabell repeatedly suggests that his aim is to write perfectly about beautiful happenings. Actually, he is only half serious. He does write with something very near perfection; but his subject matter, when one penetrates the glamorous mist that surrounds it, is often far from beautiful.

The romantic material that Cabell uses in so many of his novels is quite evidently the principal vehicle for his true purposes, and as it serves his purposes, Cabell values it. But it should be noted that he has no reverence for it for its own sake. He employs it because it is useful to him and not because it is romantic material with

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5 Colum and Cabell, p. 105.
possibilities of its own. On the contrary, at times he uses the personages of myth and legend, the fairy background, the machinery of folk belief and magic to produce an effect that is little -- if at all -- short of the burlesque. What happens in these instances is in effect a *reductio ad absurdum*. I think there can be no doubt that such parodies of the conventional materials of enchantment are quite consciously executed by Mr. Cabell, the master of the delicate touch and the creator of perfect tone and atmosphere. Mr. Cabell is too much of a gentleman and too much of an artist to insult his raw material unintentionally.

One instance of this burlesque treatment is to be found in Cabell's account of the "Divers Imbroglios of King Smoit" in *Jurgen*.6

On the particular night in question, Jurgen, sojourning in the court of King Gorgyrvan Gawr, was indulging in a jolly evening with Aribert and Urien, two of the king's barons lately returned from Pangwaed-Gir with queer tales of the Trooping Faries who "garrisoned that place."7 Both of these barons were seasoned topers, and Jurgen

6 The King Smoit story is one of Cabell's earliest literary efforts. It appeared in *Argosy*, February, 1902, with the title, "An Amateur Ghost," noted in Brewer, p. 21.

7 This and other quotations used in this section are from *Jurgen*, chapter 11.
eventually retired to his chamber "prepared for anything." It turned out much as he had suspected. The room was haunted — by "an impudent-looking leering phantom in a suit of old fashioned armor..." and "a beautiful pale lady, in the customary flowing white draperies."

After appropriate amenities had been exchanged between Jurgan and his guests, the leering phantom informed Jurgan that he was King Smoit and that the lady in the flowing draperies was Queen Sylvia Tereu, his ninth wife. Jurgan had heard of King Smoit and was aware that the latter had murdered his ninth wife, his eighth wife, his fifth wife, and his third wife and was known as the Black King because he was considered "the wickedest monarch that ever reigned in Glasthon and the Red Islands."

The visitation of these spirits was to request Jurgan's assistance in "a delicate affair." King Smoit then proceeded to explain to Jurgan that just sixty-three years previous to that very night he had murdered Queen Sylvia Tereu "in circumstances of peculiar brutality."

Some two years after this murder, Smoit had been captured by Duke Corineus of Cornwall and in reprisal for "merry larcenies and throat-cuttings" had been incarcerated in a "noisome dungeon." He had been "dissatisfied with
his quarters," quite understandably, of course. So Smoit slew his gaoler, an act quite distasteful to him, for he was getting along in years and had grown tired of killing people. Yet, since the varlet gaoler had been dull-witted, had had no "bowels of compassion," and had been deaf to hints of bribery, the wretch's life had seemed to Smoit "of no overwhelming importance." Jurgen agreed that what Smoit had done was "unavoidable."

Shortly thereafter, unfortunately and quite annoyingly, just as he was on the point of being married to King Tyrnog's daughter -- who would have been his thirteenth wife -- Smoit tripped, fell down his castle steps, and broke his neck. "Upon my word, it made me think there might be something, after all, in those superstitions about thirteen being an unlucky number."

But the real difficulty was that Smoit had been condemned by Eternal Justice to haunt the scenes of his crimes on their respective anniversaries. On first consideration, this seemed simple enough, and Smoit was inclined to make no complaints, although on each occasion it did "rather break into the evening." But "life" is never simple. Of course, it is axiomatic that one should be careful about one's murders, but who can keep books on
this sort of thing, especially when one is confined in a noisome dungeon? It rather disturbs one's orientation. In any event Smoit, just before dawn on the feast day of the holy St. Vitus, had murdered his gaoler with a cobble-stone, entirely forgetful that some years previously, at the same hour of the same day, he had murdered his ninth wife, Queen Sylvia Tereu.

The difficulty faced by Smoit was that he was required to re-enact two ghostly murders on their anniversaries and that embarrassingly these anniversaries fell upon the same day at the same hour and had occurred in two distant places; and, according to the nature of things, not even ghosts are ubiquitous.

At this point, Queen Sylvia Tereu voiced an understandable grievance:

And you murdering insignificant strangers on such a day! ... You climbing out of jail windows rigged out as a lady abbess, on an anniversary you ought to have kept on your knees in unavailing repentence! But you were a hard man, Smoit, and it was little loving courtesy you showed your wife at a time when she might reasonably look to be remembered, and that is a fact.
Smoit continued to bewail the fact that his "heedlessness" made it necessary for him to haunt two separate places on each fifteenth of June. "Well, but that was justice," Jurgen reminded him. Smoit's reply was, "It may have been justice . . . but my point is that it happened to be impossible."

Fortunately, as Smoit informed Jurgen, in previous years he had been aided by his great-great-grandfather Penpigon Vreichvras ap Myldwald Glasienief, who had the family face and could easily be mistaken for Smoit. This ancestor had, in place of Smoit, enacted the latter's murder of Queen Sylvia Tereu each year on its anniversary, with much verve, to the entire satisfaction of all. Queen Sylvia Tereu could not forbear commending him for his artistry:

Indeed, . . . he handled his sword very differently from you, my dear. It was a thrilling pleasure to be murdered by Penpigon Vreichvras ap Myldwald Glasienief, and I shall always regret him.

She would always regret him, for now, unfortunately, the term in Purgatory assigned to Penpigon Vreichvras ap Myldwald Glasienief had expired, and he had been admitted into Heaven. He must have been a gentle soul, to be properly cleansed of all his sins after the term of only
four living generations. But his admission into the life that never dies had raised embarrassing difficulties for Smoit. Penpigon Vreichvras could now no longer be the stand-in for Smoit. Angels, as is quite reasonable, are not permitted to perpetrate murders. It might establish a dangerous precedent.

Jurgen found all of this regrettable but not strikingly explicit. Just what was he expected to do? Well, it would appear (for reasons that are best not gone into) that Jurgen also had the "family face." Therefore, Jurgen, like Penpigon Vreichvras ap Myldwald Glasienief, could convincingly impersonate Smoit in the re-enactment of the murder of Queen Sylvia Tereu, thus leaving Smoit free to re-enact the murder of the dull-witted gaoler at the same hour. This, in short, was the affair of some delicacy that Jurgen could assist in.

"But I have had no experience at haunting," Jurgen confessed. "It is a pursuit in which I do not pretend to competence."

At length Jurgen consented and was given to drink a potion, accompanied by Druidical invocations, which would give him temporary insubstantiality. And so Jurgen prepared to haunt, with Queen Sylvia Tereu, the White Turret of the castle, for the hour of three was fast approaching. When
the drink had taken effect, Jurgen found his new maneuverability quite fascinating. He sailed around like Mary Martin in the role of Peter Pan. Surprisingly, and gratifyingly, Jurgen found himself able to float right through the ceiling of his room, which he did, for practice. Thus Jurgen found himself in the room immediately above his own, where was quartered the Bishop of Merion.

His eminence was not alone, but as both occupants of the apartment were asleep, Jurgen witnessed nothing unepiscopal.

Smoit informed Jurgen that Queen Sylvia would instruct him in the details of the performance they were shortly to give, assuring him that the Lady of the Lake, who occupied the room of the murder that night, was probably unacquainted with the details and would not be very critical of the performance. Then, since it was high time that Smoit kept his appointment in Cornwall, "he melted into air, with an airy confidence that bespoke long practice: and Jurgen followed Queen Sylvia Tereu."

Dame Anaitis, the Lady of the Lake, occupied the White Turret that night.

Any ghost, even an apprentice, could have acquitted himself with credit in such surroundings, and Jurgen thought he did extremely well. He was atavistically brutal, and to improvise the accompanying
dialogue he did not find difficult....
The Lady of the Lake leaned back among the
pillows, and witnessed the remainder of
the terrible scene with remarkable self-
possession. So it was that the tragedy
swelled to its appalling climax, and
subsided handsomely. Jurgen dragged
... the insensate body [of his temporary
wife] across the floor, by the hair of
her head, and had carefully remembered
first to put her comb in his pocket, as
Queen Sylvia had requested, so that it
would not be lost. He had given vent to
several fiendish "Ha-ha's" and all the
high imprecations he remembered.

Although it is perhaps laboring the obvious, it may
be pointed out that in this episode Cabell has pushed his
romantic material and characters to -- or even beyond --
the very verge of the ludicrous. It is true that he has
disguised by his suavity and deftness of touch the crude
exaggeration which commonly characterizes travesty or bur-
lesque so that the high absurdity of the whole affair
might escape the careless or unperceptive reader. But
Mr. Cabell did not write with the careless or unperceptive
reader particularly in mind.

Stripping his basic material of its attractive pack-
aging, let us see just what we have here. We have, first
of all, the conventional and romantic figure of the
uninhibited mediaeval king in the person of King Smoit.
But his lack of inhibition is carried to the bounds of
incredulity, even for those who willingly favor the artist with the "temporary suspension of disbelief." He murdered his ninth, eighth, fifth, and third wives in moments of "unprofitable but not unprovoked excitement." He indulged in "merry larcenies and throat-cuttings." And was he dispatched in fair combat, as just retribution for his predatory activities, by a champion of justice, a knight in shining armor, whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure, in keeping with the noblest traditions of high romance? Alas, no. He tripped and fell down his own palace steps and broke his neck, much after the fashion of Flecknoe, who fell through the trap prepared by Longvil and Bruce.

The difficulty of haunting two places at once demonstrates its own absurdity. This is a burlesque touch that one can hardly believe was unintended by Mr. Cabell. And as something in the nature of icing on this delightfully preposterous cake, we have Queen Sylvia Tereu. She resents her husband's failure to remember an important anniversary, that of her own murder at the hands of her husband. She is perhaps a bit unreasonable, as wives traditionally are, but nonetheless she has a point: a wife can be murdered by her husband only once, and such an occasion is thereby a red-
letter day not to be forgotten, neglected, or debased by
the unthinking slaughter of an unimportant stranger who
is, after all, just a common gaoler. And the detail of
her requesting Jurgen to treasure her comb carefully during
their re-enactment of the murder is, as a burlesque touch,
superb. Also there is the implied criticism of her hus-
band in her praise of the true gentlemanly technique in
murder of Penpigon Vriechvras ap Nyldwald Glasienief. It
was to her a thrilling pleasure to be murdered by him. "He
held his sword very differently from you, my dear." Ladies
are appreciative of such small but important differences.

If conclusive evidence of Cabell's deliberate intent
to treat this material in the burlesque vein is needed, it
may be found in Jurgen's sympathetic remark to Queen Sylvia
after their re-enactment of the murder. Queen Sylvia Tereu
confided to Jurgen that unfortunately her husband did not
understand her. Jurgen replied,

"Indeed, it is a sad thing, Sylvia, to
be murdered by the hand which, so to speak,
is sworn to keep an eye on your welfare, and
which rightfully should serve you on its
knees." 9

9 Jurgen, p. 124.
If the preposterous mixture of figures in Jurgen's reply was not deliberate, we have here one of the prize boners in the literature of the western world.

And thus did Mr. Cabell write perfectly about beautiful happenings, such as throat cuttings, merry larcenies, wife-slaughter, Purgatory, and unepiscopal acts that (perhaps) were never committed.

It would appear that Mr. Cabell in this episode is not dominated to any noticeable degree by high seriousness. Neither is there in this material any evidence that he is an escapist seeking, in a land that he himself fashions, a nearer approach to things as they should be. But there are implicit in the King Smoit episode a judgment of values and an evaluation of human conduct.

The action is located presumably in Wales or in "the demesnes that there adjacent lie," for this portion of Jurgen is full of Arthurian and Celtic echoes. It is the land and the age of chivalry, knight-errantry, derring-do, and noble ladies. But historical realism must deny the high moral code, the dedication, and the spiritual sensitivity that, according to mediaeval romance, characterized this region and this period. Therefore, in Cabell's account we have the former king of Glathion and the Red Islands disposing of inadequate or displeasing wives as the whim
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strikes him, indulging in merry larcenies and throat-cuttings, and slaughtering gaolers who were not amenable to reason — or to bribes. Here we have a world of rugged individualism, personal initiative, and local self-government that might well delight any foe of the socialist state, but the musical score to the libretto bears a remarkable resemblance to that part of the third movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony which is dominated by the "loud bassoon."

Nor should the lady in "the customary flowing white draperies" be overlooked. Queen Sylvia Tereu's sensitive and feminine nature quite understandably was wounded by her husband's lack of delicacy, as evidenced by his failure to remember the anniversary of her murder, especially since he was so immediately involved in it. Obviously he didn't understand her or value at their true worth the finer feelings of the radiant being that had been entrusted to his keeping. His was the hand that should keep an eye upon her welfare and rightfully serve her upon its bended knee.

Beyond doubt Cabell's treatment of this episode is satiric, and one of the important tools of the satirist is the rational point of view. The romantic or the escapist
has as much use for satire as a bird has for gills and fins. Smoit's lack of inhibitions and Sylvia Tereu's sensitivity are fair game for moral indictment, and Cabell pursues his quarry effectively.

But throughout Jurgen Cabell is interested in effects much different from those of the burlesque, and to secure these he employs material seemingly at variance with his bitter and realistic intents. It is possible to regard the King Smoit episode as a satire on the high absurdity of much romantic material. Similarly, the war between Pseudopolis and Philistia may be regarded as satirical, but much more bitterly so than is the King Smoit episode. And here again Mr. Cabell turns to the realm of legend and myth, achieving an even stronger contrast between the rich threads of the fabric and the bitterly disillusioning figures these threads form as the author weaves his tapestry.

The glory that was Greece, the Homeric splendor, and the classical beauty of Greek myth and Hellenic thought undoubtedly appealed strongly to Cabell. With his remarkable gift for appreciating and fashioning the beautiful, it could hardly be otherwise. But did he believe that this nobility, this happiness, this high endeavor had actually
ever been attained or could be actually attained? In this connection there should be significance in the fact that Cabell, in chapter 27 of *Jurgen*, gave the name Pseudopolis to that city of Leuke inhabited by Queen Helen, "the great Achilles whom we knew," and all their splendid companions. There can be little doubt that Cabell intended Pseudopolis to be the geographical embodiment of the beautiful Greek dream, and it would appear that the name Pseudopolis indicates his conviction that even to the Greeks it was unattainable. But certainly this embodiment did stand for something, even if that something were unattainable. A review of developments in chapter 27 and the immediately following chapters of *Jurgen* will permit a closer look at this matter.

*Jurgen*, having departed from Cocaigne and from Queen Anaitis, arrived in the land of Leuke, where dwelt the Field People and the People of the Woods. It had been reported to him that the abode of Queen Helen was in this land, and *Jurgen* very much wished to visit and see this queen, for reasons to be noted elsewhere in this study. "So he inquired forthwith the way that one might quickest come into the presence of Queen Helen." His informant was a hamadryad,

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one of the People of the Forest, who inhabited a large oak nearby. She pointed, and Jurgen "saw Pseudopolis as a city builded of gold and ivory, now all a dazzling glitter under a hard-seeming sky that appeared unusually remote from earth." The hamadryad also informed him that Helen, the Swan's daughter, was now wedded to the son of Peleus and that these two ruled in Pseudopolis.

"For they report," said the Hamadryad, "that in Ades' dreary kingdom Achilles remembered her beauty, and by this memory was heartened to break the bonds of Ades; so did Achilles, King of Men, and all his ancient comrades come forth resistlessly upon a second quest of this Helen, whom people call -- and, as I think, with considerable exaggeration, -- the wonder of this world. Then the Gods fulfilled the desire of Achilles, because, they said, the man who has once beheld Queen Helen will never any more regain contentment so long as his life lacks this wonder of the world. Personally, I would dislike to think that all men are so foolish."  

The somewhat disparaging comments upon the surpassing beauty of Queen Helen are not necessarily indicative of Cabell's skepticism but rather of the feminine nature of the hamadryad, who is unwilling to concede the beauty of another female.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., pp. 193-4.
Jurgen was determined to visit Pseudopolis and did so, but his visit there need not concern us at this time.

Now Pseudopolis ... was at war with Philistia: so it befell at this season Leuke was invaded by an army of Philistines, led by their Queen Dolores. They came from the coast, a terrible army, insanely clad in such garments as had been commanded by Ageus, a god of theirs; and chanting psalms in honor of their god Vel-Tyno, who had inspired this crusade; thus they ascended unreasonably toward Pseudopolis, and encamped before the city.

Before the decisive battle, Queen Dolores addressed her warriors, and Achilles, King of Pseudopolis, addressed his followers. In part, Dolores spoke as follows:

"Whenever you come to blows with the enemy he will be beaten. No mercy will be shown, no prisoners taken."

Meanwhile, within the city Achilles, King of Men, addressed his army. And he spoke thus to the assembly of godlike heroes:

13 The name Dolores seems to suggest one who brings sorrow.

14 Ageus, an anagram of the word usage.

15 Vel-Tyno, an anagram of the word novelty.


17 Ibid., pp. 230-1.
"The eyes of all the world will be upon you, because you are in some special sense the soldiers of Romance. Let it be your pride, therefore, to show all men everywhere, not only what good soldiers you are, but also what good men you are, keeping yourselves fit and straight in everything, and pure and clean through and through. Let us set ourselves a standard so high that it will be a glory to live up to it, and then let us live up to it, and add a new laurel to the crown of Pseudopolis. May the gods of Old keep you and guide you."18

The Philistines fought with the aid of "a more horrible form of Greek fire, which consumed whatever was not gray-colored. For that color alone was now favored by their god Vel-Tyno. 'And all other colors,' his oracles had decreed, 'are forevermore abominable, until I say otherwise.'"19

...the trumpet was sounded, and the battle was joined. And that day the forces of Philistia were everywhere triumphant. But they report a queer thing happened: and it was that, when the Philistines shouted in their triumph, Achilles and all those who served him rose from the ground like gleaming clouds and passed above the heads of the Philistines, deriding them.20

18 Ibid., p. 231.
19 Ibid., p. 230.
20 Ibid.
Pseudopolis fell, and the Philistines entered it.

"They defiled this city of beautiful colors, and then burned it as a sacrifice to their god Vel-Tyno, because the color of ashes is gray."21

Then were the People of the Field and the People of the Woods, who had taken no part in the war between the Philistines and Pseudopolis, subjugated by the followers of Vel-Tyno. Jurgen and his hamadryad were summoned before their wise men and were accused of being illusions, the penalty for which was banishment into the respective limbos of their fathers. Thus Chloris, the hamadryad, faced the prospect of Hades and Jurgen of Hell.

Now a court was held by the Philistines to decide whether or no King Jurgen should be relegated to limbo. And when the judges were prepared for judging, there came into the court a great tumble-bug22 rolling in front of him his loved and


22 "Any of various scarabaeid dung beetles which roll up globular masses of dung in which they deposit their eggs and in which the larvae develop," from *The American College Dictionary*. 
properly housed young ones..... This in-
sect looked at Jurgen, and with its pin-
cers rose erect in horror. The bug cried
to the three judges, "Now, by St. Anthoy
this Jurgen must forthwith be relegated
to limbo, for he is offensive and lewd and
lascivious and indecent."23

Both Jurgen and Chloris were adjudged to be illusions and
were sentenced to be dispatched to Hell and to Hades. The
time for their parting had come.

"Farewell to you now, Jurgen!" says
Chloris, weeping softly. "It is little I
care what foolish words these priests of
Philistia may utter against me. But the
big-armed axe-men are felling my tree
yonder, to get them timber to make a
bedstead for the Queen of Philistia; for
that is what this Queen Dolores ordered
them to do the first thing this morning."24

It should be noted that Cabell, the narrator, gives
every indication of being sympathetically disposed toward
the inhabitants of Pseudopolis and critical -- if the word
is strong enough -- of the Philistines and of their values
and attitudes. Achilles, Helen, Agamemnon, and Ajax Telemon
are, of course, inventions. They belong to the world of
"romance," the word being here used in a broad sense. May
we then assume that Mr. Cabell is, in his inclinations and

23 The episode of the tumble-bug did not appear in the
original version of Jurgen. It will be discussed further below.

24 Ibid., p. 246.
in his beliefs, "romantic"? In his inclinations, yes; in his beliefs, evidently not. Thebes and Ithica and Priam's neighbors seemingly represented for him "one equal temper of heroic hearts," but, alas, a splendor and a beauty that was higher than actuality and "beyond life." Hence Mr. Cabell called the city in Leuke Pseudopolis.

The glorious world of ancient Greek myth and epic grandeur was, apparently, to Mr. Cabell a dream of that which never was, in actuality. But what an inspiring and beautiful dream it was! And did not the Greeks most nearly approximate its beauty? As Cabell remarks elsewhere, only man of all animals is capable of playing ape to his dreams. But has man, in actuality, done so? This query leads, I think, to an appropriate consideration of the Philistines in Jurgen.

Matthew Arnold's use of the term Philistines to designate those characterized by unperceptiveness, crudity, stupidity, materialism, and indifference to the best that has been thought and known in the world is too familiar to be emphasized here. There can be little doubt, seemingly, that Mr. Cabell used the term similarly in Jurgen. We have

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25 *Beyond Life*, p. 45.
then, embodied in the Philistine-Pseudopolis episode in *Jurgen* the author's pessimistic conviction that stupidity inevitably must triumph over and destroy the highest and most beautiful concepts of man. In *Jurgen* the Philistines give every appearance of representing, regrettably, the great body of mankind. Who are their gods? They are Ageus, Vel-Tyno, and Sesphra\(^2\), and these names are rather obvious anagrams of, respectively, usage, novelty, and phrases.

The world has come to be the Great Desert of the Bozarts. It is governed and dominated by those who blindly follow established custom, constantly seek after vulgar novelty, and who bow low before the "wisdom" of catch-phrases: "Honesty is the best policy"; "First to thine own self be true"; "What's good for General Motors is good for the country." Mr. Cabell surely must have experienced an understandable sense of satisfaction as he penned his account of how Achilles and his followers "rose from the ground like gleaming clouds and passed above the heads of the Philistines, deriding them." If he had been the beautiful and unrealistic dreamer that he has so often been thought to be, would he not have made Pseudopolis triumph?

\(^2\) All three are mentioned in *Jurgen*, p. 242.
Then, too even in that beautiful city built of gold and ivory and peopled by Homeric heroes, there was the rotten spot, or perhaps its symbol was only the realistic prophet. At the conclusion of Achilles' noble exhortation (deliberately contrasted with the savage words that the Philistine queen addressed to her followers), Thersites 27 muttered into his beard, "'Certainly, fair-haired Pelides has learned from history with what weapon a strong man discomfits the Philistines.'" 28 Obviously, the weapon referred to is the jaw-bone of an ass, with which Samson wrought havoc among the Philistines, according to the Bible. Mr. Cabell's subtlety is evident here. The implication intended may be that Achilles' noble words are those formed by the jaw-bone of an ass, namely that of Achilles for indulging in nobility of sentiment, or it may be that the

27 The deformed character in Homer's Iliad beaten by Ulysses and the snake-tongued character in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida whose pronouncement on the struggle for Helen, "far on the ringing plains of windy Troy," was "All the argument is a cuckold and a whore," and "Lechery, lechery; still wars and lechery!" (II,111,77-8 and V,11,196-7).

28 Jurgen, p. 231.
only weapon which may overcome the Philistines is not the heroic sword but one which will vulgarize the user. Hence, even victory over the Philistines entails unavoidable debasement on the part of the user of the weapon. Either interpretation is difficult to reconcile with the conception of Mr. Cabell as the romantic idealist.

It is now desirable to focus attention upon the judging of Jurgen by the Philistines and the arrival of the tumble-bug as Jurgen's accusor, bringing against him charges of being "offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent." It should be noted that this particular passage concerned with the tumble-bug was not written and was not inserted into the text of Jurgen until after several editions of the novel had been published and it and its author had been attacked and reviled for being obscene. The tumble-bug obviously represents the obtuse and vindictive critics who so "righteously" attacked Jurgen. Accordingly, it would appear that while in the episode as originally written Philistia represents the world in general, in the inserted tumble-bug passage Philistia is the United States of America.

Upon Jurgen's asking the tumble-bug to indicate some basis for his accusations, the latter replied,
"You are offensive... because this page has a sword which I choose to say is not a sword. You are lewd because that page has a lance which I prefer to think is not a lance. You are lascivious because yonder page has a staff which I elect to declare is not a staff. And finally, you are indecent for reasons of which a description would be objectionable to me, and which therefore I must decline to reveal to anybody." 29

Jurgen then appealed to his judges:

"... For you gentlemen can see for yourselves, by considering these pages fairly and as a whole, that these pages bear a sword and a lance and a staff, and nothing else whatever; and you will deduce, I hope, that all the lewdness is in the insectival mind of him who itches to be calling these things by other names." 30

The judges remained silent, but all the other Philistines stood with their eyes tightly closed and said,

"We decline to look at the pages fairly and as a whole, because to look might seem to imply doubt of what the tumble-bug has decreed. Besides, as long as the tumble-bug has reasons which he declines to reveal, his reasons stay unanswerable, and you are plainly a prurient rascal who are making trouble for yourself." 31

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29. Ibid., Foreword.

30. Ibid. The phallic implications here are quite evident.

31. Ibid.
When Jurgen protested that instead of being a prurient rascal, he was merely a poet and made literature, the tumble-bug resumed:

"But in Philistia to make literature and to make trouble for yourself are synonyms... for already we of Philistia have been pestered by three of these makers of literature. Yes, there was Edgar, whom I starved and hunted until I was tired of it; then I chased him up a back alley one night, and knocked out those annoying brains of his. And there was Walt, whom I chivied and battered from place to place, and made a paralytic of him; and him, too, I labelled offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent. Then later there was Mark, whom I frightened into disguising himself in a clown's suit, so that no one might suspect him to be a maker of literature; indeed, I frightened him so that he hid away the greater part of what he had made until after he was dead, and I could not get at him. That was a disgusting trick to play on me, I consider... These are the only three detected makers of literature that have ever infested Philistia, thanks be to goodness and my vigilance, but for both of which we might have been no more free from makers of literature than are the other countries."32

Jurgen retorted that Edgar and Walt and Mark, alone among its writers, were the glory of Philistia and were honored wherever art was honored.

32 Ibid.
To this the tumble-bug retorted,

"What is art to me and my way of living?... I have no concern with art and letters and other lewd idols of foreign nations. I have in charge the moral welfare of my young, whom I roll in dung here before me, and trust with St. Anthony's aid to raise in time to be God-fearing tumble-bugs like me.... No, no, my lad: once whatsoever I may do means nothing to you any more, and once you are really rotten, then you will find the tumble-bug friendly enough." 33

Then,

Jurgen now looked more attentively at this queer creature: and he saw that the tumble-bug was malodorous, certainly, but at bottom honest and well-meaning; and this seemed to Jurgen the saddest thing he had found among the Philistines. For the tumble-bug was sincere in his insane doings, and all Philistia honored him sincerely, so that there was nowhere any hope for this people. 34

"Now do you judge me fairly," cried Jurgen to his judges, "if there be any justice in this mad country. And if there be none, do you relegate me to limbo or to any other place, so long as in that place this tumble-bug is not omnipotent and sincere and insane." 35

And Jurgen waited.

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., pp. 179-80.
35 Ibid.
These points being settled, the tumble-bug went away, smiling benevolently. "Morals, not art," he said, as he departed. 36

That Mr. Cabell loved art and beauty is evident. He believed that he lived in Philistia, where art and beauty were under suspicion and even condemnation. Is his the rare and radiant spirit whose idealism might be bruised by even the wings of a moth? Or was he perhaps an accurate evaluator of actualities who perceived that at the time of the Jurgan controversy his own country was dominated by those who were obtuse in culture and in morals? The passages presented above constitute, without any doubt, an indictment of the American people, numbering at that time about one hundred million. If the indictment is deserved, Mr. Cabell would seem to be a realist. If it is undeserved, and if the picture was not so dark as he painted it, Mr. Cabell would seem to be a pessimist.

In either event, Mr. Cabell is passing judgment on matters which involve morality. The tumble-bug was a "God-fearing tumble-bug"; Edgar and Walt and Mark 36 were, by the pronouncement of the tumble-bug, "offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent." And there is no doubt as to Mr. Cabell's verdict concerning these moral values. Cabell, 36

Is it necessary to point out that these are Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain?
like Jurgen, perceived that the tumble-bug "was sincere in his insane doings, and all Philistia honored him sincerely, so that there was nowhere any hope for this people."
CHAPTER II

Cabell on Love:

The Garden; The Repeated Wednesday;
The Pawnbroker's Purchase

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine Cabell's treatment of love in its chivalric or idealistic and in its realistic aspects.

In Beyond Life Cabell has straightforwardly stated his views on chivalric or idealistic love, views which are given exemplification in various episodes to be found in Jurgen.

... this ... illusion of chivalric love quite inevitably invades the life of every adolescent boy, and works transient havoc.... 1

So the illusion glows fed with hope and memory. For such-an-one the maid waits somewhere of whose embraces one can never tire, as in an unforgotten vision was once revealed to him, once for all time. 2

In Jurgen the symbol of this illusion is Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men. Once, as a child, when he was ill and burned with fever, Jurgen troubled his nurse

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1 Beyond Life, p. 78.
2 Ibid., p. 79.
by arising from his bed one night, saying that he must go to Troy because of his love for Queen Helen. As he was upon the threshold of manhood, his vision of Helen's loveliness was embodied for him in Dorothy la Désirée, one of the sisters of Count Emmerick.

During Jurgen's residence in Leuke with Chloris, the hamadryad, Jurgen walked one day beside the Euxine Sea. Two men approached, whom Jurgen recognized as Horvendile and Perion de la Foret, Jurgen's former acquaintances in Poictesme. As they talked, "Perion told how he had come through Pseudopolis, on his way to King Theodoret at Lacre Kai, and how in the marketplace at Pseudopolis he had seen Queen Helen. 'She was a very lovely lady,' said Perion, 'and I marvelled over her resemblance to Count Emmerick's fair sister, whom we all remember.'"

Horvendile remarked that he too had noticed at once this same resemblance as he had passed through the city. But he smiled strangely as he said this. Perion declared that he had noted that Queen Helen resembled Dame Melicent remarkably.

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3 Jurgen, p. 227.
"Dear sir," said Jurgen, hastily, "it was merely that it appeared to me the lady whom they call Queen Helen hereabouts is quite evidently Count Emmerick's sister Dorothy la Désirée."

"Whereas I recognized her at once," says Horvendile, "as Count Emmerick's third sister, the Beale Ettarre."

And now they stared at one another, for it was certain that these three sisters were not particularly alike.7

"No less, ..." says Horvendile, with his quiet smile, "...I am certain that it was Ettarre whom I beheld when I looked upon Queen Helen."

"I may confess," says Jurgen, clearing his throat, "that I have always regarded Madame Dorothy with peculiar respect and admiration. For the rest, I am married. Even so, I think that Madame Dorothy is Queen Helen."

Horvendile realized, as the others did not, what the explanation was:

"There would be no incongruity anywhere," he suggested... "if Queen Helen were the woman whom we had loved in vain. For the woman whom when we were young we loved in vain is the one woman that we can never see quite clearly, whatever happens. So we might easily, I suppose, confuse her with some other woman."5

5 Ibid., p. 218.
6 Ibid., p. 219.
7 Ibid.
Thus, each had seen in the lady he loved the perfect beauty of Helen.

Here may be noted Cabell's explicit statement that "chivalric" or idealized love is an illusion and that such an illusion wreaks havoc. In Jurgen, Queen Helen is the symbol of each man's imagined lady who is in all things perfect. Then there comes the time when to each man a flesh-and-blood lady seems the perfect embodiment of the imagined perfection. Dorothy la Désirée is Queen Helen and Queen Helen is Dorothy la Désirée. This results in a two-fold illusion: first, that there exists or can exist one who is in all things perfect; and second, that Dorothy la Désirée is that one. And where there is illusion, disillusionment is inevitable; and where there is two-fold illusion, particularly cruel and painful disillusionment must follow. Not only this, but man's determination at whatever price not to surrender the subjective Queen Helen or the subjective Dorothy la Désirée impels him to actions that are unworthy or shameful. That such were Cabell's convictions is indicated by several episodes in Jurgen which will now be examined in some detail.

It seems something of a paradox that some of the most beautifully tender chapters that James Branch Cabell ever
wrote, the chapters wherein is recreated the Garden between Dawn and Sunrise, where the youthful Jurgen and the radiant Dorothy la Désirée wandered and "were as brave and comely a pair of sweethearts as the world has known," should be those in which the cruelty of "things as they are" is inexorably set forth.

Nessus, the Centaur, an imaginary creature, transported Jurgen to this Garden Between Dawn and Sunrise because only an imaginary creature could have access to an imaginary place. And Jurgen at once recognized that garden:

"Why, but it is Count Emmerick's garden at Storisende," says Jurgen, "where I used to be having such fine times when I was a lad."

"I will wager," said Nessus, "that you did not use to walk alone in this garden."

"Well, no; there was a girl."

"Just so," assented Nessus. "It is a local by-law: and here are those who comply with it."

For now had come toward them, walking together in the dawn, a handsome boy and girl. And the girl was incredibly beautiful, because everybody in the garden saw her with the vision of the boy who was with her.

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8 Ibid., pp. 32-3.

9 Ibid., p. 19.
And a host of boys and girls did Jurgen see in the garden. And all the faces that Jurgen saw were young and glad and very lovely and quite heart-breakingly confident, as young persons beyond numbering came toward Jurgen and passed him there, in the first glow of dawn: so they all went exulting in the glory of their youth, and foreknowing life to be a puny antagonist from whom one might take very easily anything which one desired. And all passed in couples — "as though they came from the Ark," said Jurgen. But the Centaur said they followed a precedent which was far older than the Ark. 10

And the Centaur informed Jurgen that all men that have ever lived have sojourned in this garden for a while with no company save their illusions, and that, having taken their hour of recreation here, they leave unaccompanied to become "aldermen and respected merchants and bishops, and to be admired as captains upon prancing horses, or even as kings upon tall thrones; each in his station thinking not at all of the garden ever any more."11

And then there came to Jurgen and the Centaur a golden-haired girl, clad all in white and walking alone. She was tall, and lovely, and tender to regard. "Her nose was large and high in the bridge, her flexible mouth

10 Ibid., p. 20.
11 Ibid.
was not of the smallest; and yet whatever other persons
might have said, this woman's countenance was in all
things perfect."12

"And this is the only woman whom I ever
loved," Jurgen remembered upon a sudden.13

And it was strange to Jurgen that this was not a hand-
some woman in middle life but a young girl.

"I do not understand," he said aloud:
"for you are Dorothy. And yet it seems to
me that you are not the Countess Dorothy
who is Heitman Michael's wife."

And the girl tossed her fair head, with
that careless lovely gesture which the
Countess had forgotten. "Heitman Michael
is well enough, for a nobleman, and my
brother is at me day and night to marry
the man; and certainly Heitman Michael's
wife will go in satin and diamonds at
half the courts of Christendom, with many
lackeys to attend her. But I am not to
be thus purchased."

"So you told a boy that I remember, very
long ago. Yet you married Heitman Michael,
for all that, and in the teeth of a number
of other fine declarations."

"Oh, no, not I," said this Dorothy, won-
dering. "I never married anybody. And
Heitman Michael has never married anybody,
either, old as he is. For he is twenty-

12 
Ibid., p. 22.

13 
Ibid.
eight, and looks every day of it! But who are you, friend, that have such curious notions about me?"

"...Surely you perceive that I am Jurgen."

...And Jurgen understood. He had come back somehow to the Dorothy whom he had loved; but departed, and past overtaking by the fleet hoofs of centaurs, was the boy who had once loved this Dorothy, and who had rhymed of her as his Heart’s Desire; and in this garden there was of this boy no trace. Instead, the girl was talking to a staid and paunchy pawnbroker, of forty-and-something.14

And Jurgen meditated:

"Somehow it has befallen that I, who am but the shadow of what I was, now walk among shadows, and we converse with the thin intonations of dead persons. For, Madame Dorothy, you who are not yet eighteen, in this same garden there was once a boy who loved a girl, with such love as it puzzles me to think of now. I believe that she loved him. Yes, certainly it is a cordial to the tired and battered heart, which nowadays pumps blood for me, to think that for a little while, for a whole summer, these two were as brave and comely and clean a pair of sweethearts as the world has known."15

But Dorothy la Désirée married Hoitman Michael. Indeed, the story was old, even when Methuselah was teething.

14 Ibid., pp. 23-4.
15 Ibid., p. 25.
"There is no older and more common story anywhere. As the sequel, it would be heroic to tell you this boy's life was ruined. But I do not think it was."  

Ruined?

"Well, women, as he knew by experience now, were the pleasantest of playfellows. So he began to play ... and a whispering he made for the pleasure of women .... But the whispering, and all that followed the whispering, was his best game, and the game he played for the longest while, with many brightly colored playmates.... And their faith in the game's importance, and in him and his high-sounding nonsense, he often found very amusing; and in their other chattels too he took his natural pleasure. Then, when he had played sufficiently, he held a consultation with divers waning appetites; and he married the handsome daughter of an estimable pawnbroker in a fair line of business. And he lived with his wife very much as two people customarily live together. So, all in all, I would not say his life was ruined."  

Thus Jurgen. But thus Cabell? Perhaps. But Cabell was aware of the splendor and the brightness of the first love which is not tainted with the calculation and the practicality of "prudent" considerations. And Cabell knew that neither Jurgen nor Dorothy was worthy of the vision that they enjoyed in the Garden between Dawn and Sunrise.

Heitman Michael "returned from foreign parts, along with his lackeys, and plate, and chest upon chest of

17  Ibid., p. 27.
merchandise, and his fine horses,..." and so Dorothy la Désirée became Heitman Michael's wife, and Jurgen became a pawnbroker instead of a poet. And surely pawnbrokers serve a useful purpose in the general scheme of things, but do they contribute to romance and enchantment?

Yet it is conceivable that Heitman Michael might not have returned at this particular time and that Jurgen and Dorothy la Désirée might have progressed from the state of being a brave and comely and clean pair of lovers to that of being Mr. and Mrs. Jurgen. What then?

A passage from Beyond Life expresses Mr. Cabell's views on such a possibility:

... for ... love accredits the beloved with an opulence of qualities which human beings display, if at all, in exiguous traces; and is compounded in large part of an awed reverence such as it is impossible to retain for any human being with intimacy. These phantoms vanish at the dawn of married life: and the most obtuse of couples set about joint housekeeping with, as concerns each other, very few misapprehensions outliving the wedding trip; for that by ordinary is a transmuting journey, upon which the demi-gods depart, and wherefrom return only Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so.

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19 Beyond Life, pp. 74-5.
But to return to Jurgen, we may see in a sequence of events in that novel that Jurgen would have been the loser either in the event of losing Dorothy or in the event of winning her.

Jurgen, by his judicious and adroit flattery of Mother Sereda, who controls all Wednesdays, wins from her permission to re-live one particular Wednesday -- a Wednesday on which he, some twenty-odd years previously, had suffered the humiliation of having Count Heitman Michael supplant him as escort of the beautiful Dorothy la Désirée, whom Jurgen loved and who loved him. In this episode, the Count's noble blood and worldly experience had placed Jurgen at a great disadvantage and had ultimately resulted (as noted previously) in the Count's winning the hand of Jurgen's first love. In the re-play of this day's happenings -- granted by Mother Sereda -- Jurgen intended to arrange things differently. He intended that the Moving Finger should be lured back to cancel out more than half a line.

And presently, when the masque was over, Dorothy and Jurgen went out upon the terrace, to the east of Bellegarde, and so came to an unforgotten world of
moonlight. They sat upon a bench of carved stone which overlooked the highway, over luminous valleys and tree-tops. Just so they had sat there, as Jurgen perfectly remembered, when Mother Sereda first used this Wednesday.

"My Heart's Desire," says Jurgen, "I am sad tonight. For I am thinking of what life will do to us, and what offal the years will make of you and me."

"My own sweetheart," says she, "and do we not know very well what is to happen?" And Dorothy began to talk of all the splendid things that Jurgen was to do, and of the happy life that was to be theirs together.

"It is horrible," he said; "for we are more fine than we shall ever be hereafter. We have a splendor for which the world has no employment. It will be wasted. And such wastage is not fair."

"Ah, sweetheart! and can you really believe that I shall ever care a snap of my fingers for anybody but you?"

Then Jurgen laughed a little; for Hleetman Michael came now across the lonely terrace, in search of Madame Dorothy; and Jurgen foreknew this was the man to whom within two months of this evening Dorothy was to give her love and all the beauty that was hers, and with whom she was to share the ruinous years which lay ahead....

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20
Jurgen, p. 50.

21
Ibid., p. 51.
And then Heitman Michael saluted them civilly. "But I fear I must rob you of this fair lady, Master Jurgen," says he.

Jurgen remembered that the man had said precisely this a score of years ago; and that Jurgen had mumbled polite regrets, and had stood aside while Heitman Michael bore off Dorothy to dance with him. And this dance had been the beginning of intimacy between Heitman Michael and Dorothy.22

But this time Jurgen mumbled no polite regrets. He refused to surrender his lady and issued a challenge to Heitman Michael. The latter, much the better swordsman, toyed with Jurgen and finally struck Jurgen's sword from his hand and sent it flying over the balustrade. "And he turned gaily toward Madame Dorothy."

To Jurgen this was insufferable:

This man was stronger than he, this man was of the sort that takes and uses gallantly all the world's prizes which mere poets [and Jurgen in his youth had been a poet] can but respectfully admire. All was to do again: Heitman Michael ... would act just as he had first intended, and Jurgen would be brushed aside by the man's brute strength. This man would take away Dorothy, and leave the life of Jurgen to become a business [pawnbroking] which Jurgen remembered with distaste. It was unfair.

22 Ibid., p. 52.
So Jurgen snatched out his dagger, and drove it deep into the undefended back of Heitman Michael. 23

"What will become of you?" Dorothy whispered, after a while. "Oh, Jurgen, it was f'oully done, that which you did was infamous! What will become of you, my dear?"

"I will take my doom," says Jurgen, "and without whimpering, so that I get justice. But I shall certainly insist upon justice." Then Jurgen raised his face to the bright heavens. "The man was stronger than I and wanted what I wanted. So I have compromised with necessity, in the only way I could make sure of getting that which was requisite to me. I cry for justice to the power that gave him strength and gave me weakness, and gave to each of us his desires." 24

There are several considerations to be noted here. Two lovers come into "an unforgotten world of moonlight," with "luminous valleys and tree-tops," a world of tenderness and enchantment and heart's desire. With such opiates does Cabell drug the senses of his less perceptive readers; consider what develops in this world of tenderness and beauty. Two men desire a beautiful girl, and the stronger, coarser, more worldly-wise man is about to take her for­cibly from his gentler, more perceptive rival. Here indeed is one of those perpetual dilemmas that Thomas Hardy

23 Ibid., pp. 54-5.

24 Ibid., pp. 55-6. Italics are mine.
writes of as confronting humanity. The eventuality which is about to become reality is "insufferable"; if permitted, it will shatter the dream of what should be; it will tear up by the roots the fragrant plant which is one's first and purest love; and it will be thus because some power has made one man -- and the less worthy one -- a better swordsman than his rival. Yet the only possible alternative is an act that is brutal and cowardly, which itself shatters the dream and is false to all that is high and noble. "So I have compromised with necessity, in the only way I could make sure of getting that which was requisite to me."

It should also be noted that Cabell here quite evidently does not intend Jurgen to be the embodiment of all that is high and noble. Jurgen of course thinks of himself as such, but actually there is in Mr. Cabell's world no near approach to such an embodiment. It is not strange that Jurgen insists upon "justice." What is Justice? said jesting Jurgen and would not stay for an answer. There remains only compromise, not only with necessity but with one's own baser self, and it is that baser self that dictates the terms of the compromise, "in the only way I could make sure of getting that which was requisite to me."

This scene in the drama continues, for the Wednesday
granted again to Jurgen by Mother Sereda has not yet ended. Jurgen said to himself,

"Yes, something must remain to me of all this rapture, though it be only guilt and sorrow; something I mean to wrest from this high moment which I once wasted fruitlessly.... I will not waste the one real passion I have known, nor leave unfed the one desire which ever caused me for a heart-beat to forget to think about Jurgen's welfare." 25

Having shoved the corpse of Heitman Michael under the bench of carved stone, Jurgen proceeds by force to take possession of Dorothy la Désirée, and this embodiment of innocence and purity, as Jurgen had thought her to be, submitted with only token resistance and such half-hearted remonstrances as, "Here, over a dead body! Oh, Jurgen, this is horrible! Now, Jurgen, remember that someone may come any minute!"

But as Jurgen laughed triumphantly, with his arm beneath the head of Dorothy, and with the tender face of Dorothy passive beneath his lips, and with unreasonable wistfulness in his heart, the castle bell tolled midnight. What followed was curious: for as Wednesday passed, the face of Dorothy altered, her flesh roughened under his touch, and her cheeks fell away, and fine lines came about her eyes, and she became the Countess Dorothy whom Jurgen

25 Ibid., p. 87.
remembered as Heitman Michael's wife. There was no doubt about it, in that be-drenching moonlight; and she was leering at him, and he was touching her everywhere, this horrible lascivious woman, who was certainly quite old enough to know better than to permit such liberties. And her breath was sour and nauseous. Jurgen drew away from her, with a shiver of loathing, and he closed his eyes, to shut away that sensual face.26

Thus, with his tongue in his cheek, did Mr. Cabell write perfectly about beautiful happenings.

It is my belief that Mr. Cabell's urbane and disillusioned pessimism as expressed in this passage needs no pointing up. But it is interesting to note one detail of his technique. It all happened in "that be-drenching moonlight." Here is a striking study in contrasts. As Pandarus remarked to Troilus,

Eke whit by blak, by shame ek worthiness,
Ech set by other, more for other semeth,
As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth.

That romantic, be-drenching moonlight is the ironic background which sets off the heart-breaking reality of "things as they are."

Three times, in Cabell's novel, did Jurgen and Dorothy la Désirée meet. The first time was in the Garden between

26 Ibid., p. 58.
Dawn and Sunrise; here Jurgen, the somewhat paunchy pawnbroker of forty-odd, saw her as he had imagined her to be "for a whole summer, when these two were as brave and comely and clean a pair of sweethearts as the world has known."27 The second occasion was on the revisited Wednesday at Bellegarde after Jurgen had regained his youth through the power of Mother Sereda; here, as a dashing young fellow of twenty, he saw Dorothy as she had really been during that "whole summer," and not as he had imagined her. In this episode they are their real selves of twenty years ago. The third encounter occurred after Jurgen had returned from all the magic lands that he had visited, after all enchantments had been removed, and while Jurgen was on his way to rejoin his scolding wife, Dame Lisa, at their cottage. As he passed Bellegarde in the April dusk, someone called to him from the terrace. "Even in the dusk he knew this was the Countess Dorothy."28 Here both are their real selves and are once again in the world of reality.

Jurgen learned that the Countess had anticipated his passing as it was near his supper hour, and she had waited

27 Ibid., p. 25.
28 Ibid., p. 364.
for him because "it is not quite convenient for me to seek you out at the shop."29 He also learned that her husband's, Heitman Michael's, birthday was approaching and that she wished to surprise him with a gift.

It is therefore necessary that I raise some money without troubling him. How much — abominable usurer! — could you advance me on this necklace?

Jurgen examined the necklace carefully. He recognized it as formerly the property of Heitman Michael's mother. He named a sum. The Countess Dorothy protested that Jurgen's offer was but a fraction of its worth. Jurgen, who was well aware of what the real situation was, then mentioned that he could deal with her more generously if she would sell it to him outright. The Countess replied that it would not be convenient to do so. Jurgen's next suggestion was that, "I could make you an imitation in paste which nobody could distinguish from the original. I can amply understand that you desire to veil from your husband any sacrifices that are entailed by your affection."30

"It is my affection for him," said the Countess quickly. "I alluded to your affection for him," said Jurgen — "naturally."

Then Countess Dorothy named a price for

29
Ibid.

30
Ibid., p. 365.
the necklace. "For it is necessary that I have that much, and not a penny less." 31

The sale was agreed upon. "Then Jurgen suggested that the business could be most conveniently concluded through an emissary."

"If Messire de Nerac, for example, could have matters explained to him, and could manage to visit me tomorrow, I am sure we could carry through this amiable imposture without any annoyance whatever to Heitman Michael," says Jurgen smoothly.

"Nerac will come then," says the Countess. "And you may give him the money, precisely as though it were for him."

"But certainly, madame. A very estimable young nobleman, that! and it is a pity his debts are so large. I heard that he lost heavily at dice within the last month; and I grieved, madame."

"He has promised me when these debts are settled to play no more — But again what am I saying? I mean, Master Inquisitive, that I take considerable interest in the welfare of Messire de Nerac; and so I have sometimes chided him on his wild courses. And that is all I mean." 32

Jurgen paused. The moon was risen now. These two sat together upon a bench of

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., pp. 365-6.
carved stone near the balustrade; and before them, upon the other side of the highway, were luminous valleys and tree-tops. Fleetingly Jurgen recollected the boy and girl who had once sat in this place, and had talked of all the splendid things which Jurgen was to do, and of the happy life that was to be theirs together. Then he regarded the composed and handsome woman beside him, and he considered the money to pay her latest lover's debts had been assured with a suitable respect for appearances.

"So there is nothing more to say," observed Jurgen, as he rose in the moonlight, "save that I shall always be delighted to serve you, madame, and I may reasonably boast that I have earned a reputation for fair dealing."

And he thought: "In effect, since certainly as she grows older she will need yet more money for her lovers, I am offering to pimp for her." Then Jurgen shrugged. "That is one side of the affair. The other is that I transact my legitimate business, -- I, who am that which the years have made of me."

Thus does Mr. Cabell trace the progress of a love from the beautiful thing it was at its first bloom "for a whole summer," through shattered dreams to a sordid transaction between "as brave and comely and clean a pair

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33 This same bench of carved stone appeared in their second meeting, and certainly its reappearance here has its ironic suggestiveness.

34 Ibid., p. 366.

of sweethearts as the world has known," now become an unfaithful wife who discharges the debts of her lover by the sale of a necklace which belonged to her husband's mother — between this wife and a poet turned pawnbroker who "am that which the years have made of me." It was ordered thus by Kashchei, who is the God of Things as They Are.

Jurgen lost the spurious incarnation of Queen Helen that was Dorothy la Desirée, and in doing so he suffered cruelly; but it is amply clear that had he won Dorothy, he would have suffered equally. In his journeyings Jurgen had the opportunity to possess the real Helen, delight of gods and of men, the Swan's daughter. And from Mr. Cabell's account of the situation, again was Jurgen doomed to frustration or disillusionment. To state the matter colloquially, Jurgen couldn't win.

By means of trickery and gray magic Jurgen secured entrance into Pseudopolis, located in Leuke36, and ruled

36 Some Greeks identified Elision, or the Islands of the Blest, with the island of Leuke, the "White Isle," at the western end of the Euxine Sea. Of it Pindar wrote, "But thou, Menelaus, son of Zeus, art not ordained to die and meet thy fate in Argos, the pastureland of horses, but the deathless gods will convey thee to the Elysian plain
over by King Achilles and Queen Helen. Entering at night, he passed the silent and unlighted palaces: of Ajax Telemon, of Philoctetes, of much-counseling Odysseus, and of fair-haired Agamemnon. Jurgen noted the names that were engraved upon the bronze shield that hung beside each doorway.

Jurgen went into the largest palace, and crept stealthily by the bedroom of Achilles, King of Men, treading a-tip-toe; and so came at last into a little room panelled with cedar-wood where slept Queen Helen. She was smiling in her sleep.... She was infinitely beautiful, this young Dorothy whom people hereabouts through some odd error called Helen.

And so Jurgen was about to awaken her,

But a queer thought held him. Nothing, he recollected, had shown the power to hurt him very deeply since he had lost this young Dorothy. And to affairs which threatened to result unpleasantly, he had always managed to impart an agreeable turn, since then, by virtue of preserving a cool heart. What if by some misfortune he were to get back his real youth? and were to become again the flustered boy who blundered from stammering rapture to wild misery, and back again, at the

and the world's end, where is Rhadamanthys of the fair hair, where life is easiest for man. No snow is there, nor yet great storm, nor any rain; but always Ocean sendeth forth the breeze of the shrill west to blow cool on man; yea, for thou hast Helen to wife and thereby they deem thee to be the son of Zeus." — William Sherwood Fox, "Greek and Roman," in The Mythology of All Races (Boston, 1916), I, 147-8.

Jursen, p. 225.
least word or gesture of a gold-haired girl?

"Thank you, no!" says Jurgen...

And yet tears came into his eyes, for no reason at all. And it seemed to him that the sleeping woman, here at his disposal, was not the young Dorothy whom he had seen in the garden between dawn and sunrise, although the two were curiously alike; and that of the two this woman here was, somehow, infinitely the lovelier....

He paused... and his fingers fretted with the robe of violet-colored wool beneath which lay Queen Helen.

"Yours is that beauty of which men know by fabulous report alone, and which they may not ever find, nor ever win to, quite. And for that beauty I have hungered always, even in childhood. ... But I know that I would like to love somebody as Chloris loves me, and as so many women have loved me. And I know that it is you who have prevented this, Queen Helen, at every moment of my life since the disastrous moment when I first seemed to find your loveliness in the face of Madame Dorothy. It is the memory of your beauty, as I then saw it mirrored in the face of a jill-flirt, which has enfeebled me for such honest love as other men give women."

Now Jurgen ... reflectively ... drew back the robe of violet-colored wool, a little way. The breast of Queen Helen lay bare. And she did not move at all, but she smiled in her sleep.

Never had Jurgen imagined that any woman
could be so beautiful nor so desirable as this woman, or that he could ever know such rapture. So Jurgen paused.

"Because," said Jurgen now, "it may be this woman has some fault; it may be there is some fleck in her beauty somewhere. And sooner than know that, I would prefer to retain my unreasonable dreams, and this longing which is unfed and hopeless, and the memory of to-night. Besides, if she were perfect in everything, how could I live any longer, who would have no more to desire?"

So Jurgen sighed and gently replaced the robe of violet-colored wool ....

Thus Jurgen faced two possibilities. Dorothy had been other, far other, than she had seemed; the result had been, for him, cruel suffering. Helen, too, might be other than she seemed; there might be some flaw, some fleck, in her beauty. This Jurgen could not bear. Or Helen might indeed be perfect. And that would leave Jurgen with nothing more to desire, and "how could [he] live any longer, who would have no more to desire?"

It must have been arranged thus by Koshchoi, the God of Things as They Are.

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CHAPTER III
Cabell and Sex

That part of *Jurgen* which is most fully occupied with the treatment of sex comprises the adventures of Jurgen in Cocaigne, especially chapters 22 and 23, in which Mr. Cabell presents "as in a glass darkly" his convictions about sex, the various ways of its indulgence, its rewards, and its penalties.

It was this portion of *Jurgen*, no doubt, which caused most of the furore about the book back in the 1920's and which convinced many indignant, well-meaning, but sadly obtuse people that its author was a lascivious, grinning, satyr-like re-incarnation of one of the more depraved sons of Sodom.

It will be the object of this chapter to show by exposition and documentation that such was not Mr. Cabell's nature; to show that instead of wallowing in depraved sensuality, the author was rather anxious to demonstrate that the sex urge -- which man cannot escape -- is capable

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*Jurgen* was published in 1919.
of being (and often has been) the enslavement of man; and to suggest that if the same attitudes and convictions which are expressed in this portion of Jurgen had been set forth in the "scientific" language of the Kinsey reports, Mr. Cabell would probably have been hailed as the most chaste and upright of men. But Mr. Cabell scorned "scientific" language; he chose instead to embody his message in allegory and symbolism.

That some of the more discerning perceived accurately Mr. Cabell's true intent is apparent in the comment of Guy Holt in his Introduction to the Modern Library edition of Beyond Life:

"...it has to me been a matter of wonder that the authorities did not long ago rather turn their attention to Mr. Charteris's devastating arguments than to Jurgen, whose only offense was that it embodied a plea for monogamy presented in the only convincing terms."

But the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was, among a great many others, not as perceptive as Guy Holt.

A detail of Mr. Cabell's treatment of sex appears early in the adventures of Jurgen and recurs frequently

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2 Beyond Life, p. xiv.
throughout the story. When Jurgen enters the cave which adjoins Amneran Heath, he meets with Nessus, the Centaur, who informs Jurgen that he (Jurgen) is to be transported to the Garden between Dawn and Sunrise, "over the grave of a dream and through the malice of time. So you had best put on this shirt above your other clothing." Thus does Jurgen don the shirt of Nessus.

It will be recalled that Nessus was, in Greek mythology, the centaur who undertook to transport on his back Heracles and Deianira across a stream. While conveying Deianira, he attempted to rape her. Thereupon Heracles slew him with poisoned arrows. In hope of revenge, Nessus gave Deianira some of his poisoned blood, telling her that it was a potent love charm which would reclaim the affections of Heracles should they ever wander. Later, Heracles became enamored of Iole, and Deianira, to regain his affections, saturated a shirt with the infected blood of Nessus and gave it to Heracles to wear. It inflamed and infected the latter's skin and caused his death. For his own purposes Mr. Cabell adapts these details, and thus the

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3 Jurgen, p. 16.

shirt of Nessus becomes in Jurgen, in actuality, a love charm which, as Nessus claimed, was irresistible. Wearing this shirt throughout his adventures, Jurgen enjoys the favors of all the attractive ladies, goddesses, nymphs, hamadryads, and queens with whom he meets. He "deals fairly" with Guinevere, with Yolande, with Anaitis, with Chloris, with Dolores, with Florimel, and with all the rest of those feminine creatures with whom he meets. The significance of the series of invariably successful amorous adventures will, it is to be hoped, become apparent later.

There can be no doubt that Cabell treats primarily of sex matters in his account of Jurgen's trip to and adventures in Cocaigune; nonetheless, details shall be presented here to confirm this assertion.

Jurgen was conducted to Cocaigune by Anaitis, the queen of that land. "Anaitis" is a variant form of "Anahita," the name given to the Persian goddess of the fertilizing waters.5 "In Acilisene well-born maidens were dedicated to Anaitis as prostitutes."6 On the voyage thither Anaitis

6 "Prostitution, Sacred," Ibid., p. 740.
entertained Jurgen with stories of "how Calmoona contented her five lovers, and Jurgen found the tale perturbing." 7 She also told him stories of King Minos and Pasiphae. 8 Anaitis also assured Jurgen that "All men that live have but a little while to live, and none knows his fate thereafter. So that a man possesses nothing certainly save a brief loan of his own body; and yet the body of man is capable of much curious pleasure." 9

So they came to a wall that was high and gray, and to the door which was in the wall.

"You must knock two or three times," says Anaitis, "to get into Cocaigne." 6

Jurgen observed the bronze knocker on the door, and he grinned in order to hide his embarrassment.

"It is a quaint fancy," said he, "and the two constituents of it appear to have been modeled from life."

"They were copied very exactly from Adam and Eve," says Anaitis, "who were the first persons to open this gateway."

With that he knocked, and the door opened, and the two of them entered. 10

7 Jurgen, p. 148.
8 Mother of the Minotaur, by a bull.
9 Jurgen, p. 149.
10 Ibid., p. 150.
So it was that Jurgen came into Cocaigne, wherein is the bedchamber of Time... with no glaring sun rays anywhere, and with one large star shining alone in clear daylight. This was the star of Venus Mechanitis.  

In the twilight forest around the palace of Anaitis, with its domes and pinnacles, "... was to be seen ... a sort of moss which made Jurgen shudder." In the courtyard was "The dimly colored statue of a god with ten heads and thirty-four arms: he was represented as very much engrossed by a woman, and with his unoccupied hands was holding yet other women."

Said Jurgen: "I do not criticize. Nevertheless, I think this god is carrying matters to extremes." After they had come into a white room, four girls bathed Jurgen, "giving him astonishing caresses meanwhile... and they anointed him with four oils, then dressed him again in his glittering shirt."

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11 Italics are mine.

12 Jurgen, p. 151.

13 The reference is to stinkhorn: "Any of several fungi belonging to the genus Phallus, so called from its odor and formation." Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary. (Cleveland, 1935), p. 1632.

14 Jurgen, p. 152.

15 Ibid.
Anaitis informed Jurgen that before he could experience any of the "curious pleasures" that she had mentioned, a ceremonial, called "The Breaking of the Veil," must be performed.

"Well," says Jurgen, "I am willing to taste any drink once." 16

So Anaitis led Jurgen into a sort of chapel, adorned with very unchurchlike paintings. There were ... shrines, dedicated to ... St. Cosmo and St. Damianus. 17

First of all, the hooded man made Jurgen ready. "Behold the lance," said the hooded man, "which must serve you in this adventure."

"I accept the adventure," Jurgen replied, "because I believe the weapon to be trustworthy."

Said the hooded man, "So be it! but as you are, so once was I." 18

It has been noted that some of the details which Jurgen observed caused him embarrassment and produced in him disapproval. Yet he was willing to "enter into the pursuit of those curious pleasures of which you were telling

16 Ibid., p. 153.

17 Cosmo and Damian were Arab physicians martyred under Diocletian. Their symbols were the mortar and pestle, hence phallic. See "Cosmas and Damian," Columbia Encyclopedia (New York, 1936), p. 429.

Jürgen was willing to give them a trial. This attitude is characteristic of Jürgen throughout the book. Perhaps it might be said that he submitted (for a period) to the life of complete sensuality as a sort of scientific experiment.

Anaitis took salt and water from the child, and mingled these. "Let the salt of earth enable the thin fluid to assume the virtue of the teeming sea."20

Now the hooded man and the two naked girls performed their share in the ceremonial, which part it is not essential to record. But Jürgen was rather shocked by it.21

Both Anaitis and Jürgen indulged in invocation as the ceremonial progressed. Anaitis said in part,

...to serve me is better than all else....
To serve me you will then be eager to surrender whatever else is in your life; and other pleasures you will take with your left hand, not thinking of them entirely; for I am the desire that uses all of a man, and so wastes nothing....
I ... am ... all pleasure, all ruin, and a drunkenness of the inmost sense.22

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19 
Ibid.

20 
Ibid., p. 157. The details obviously constitute a fertility rite. Anaitis was goddess of the fertilizing waters, hence called the Lady of the Lake elsewhere in Jürgen.

21 
Ibid., p. 155. Italics are mine.

22 
Ibid., pp. 155–6.
Jurgen replied, in part, "I too am life and the giver of life, and in me too is death."

The two naked children stood on each side of Anaitis, and waited there trembling. These girls, as Jurgen afterward learned, were Alecto and Tisiphone, two of the Eumenides.23

Then said the naked children: "... we are little and quite helpless. So presently we must be made as you are: for now you two are no longer two, and your flesh is not shared merely with each other. For your flesh becomes our flesh, and your sins our sins: and we have no choice."24

... So Jurgen came into the adytum.

Black candles were burning in this place, and sulphur too was burning there, before a scarlet cross, of which the top was a circle, and whereon was nailed a living toad....

Queen Anaitis was very beautiful ... and yet, this woman's face was sad.25

After other "curious" observances, the "veil" was "broken."

"Now the happenings just recorded befell on the eve

23 Ibid., p. 156.
24 Ibid., pp. 156-7.
25 Ibid.
of St. John the Baptist." 26

Now, if the passages and details cited above were the "be-all and the end-all" of the Cocaigne episode, Mr. Cabell's detractors might well stand justified. But we have examined only one side of the coin. The obverse side is worthy of attention.

Rather obviously, Cocaigne is the realm of unbridled sexual pleasures, including the "off-beat" ones. Phallic symbols, in one guise or another, are met with at every turn. But does this sort of thing have Mr. Cabell's blessing and endorsement, or even his acquiescence? There are some significant details to be noted in this connection.

Let it be assumed (as seems reasonably apparent) that Jurgen is not the imaginative and projected embodiment of Cabell himself. Nevertheless, he is a vehicle for the expression of Mr. Cabell's "philosophy." In the light of this assumption one may profitably examine Jurgen's reactions to this realm of completely uninhibited pleasure, in which the physical man becomes the entire man. Does Jurgen, a

26 The birthday of St. John the Baptist is celebrated on June 24, Midsummer's Day. "Because midsummer is about the time of the solstice, it has been associated long before Christianity with solar ceremonies.... The gaiety and frolic of the night were often excuses for unbridled license. The importance of this night, the eve, June 23, to love and
paunchy pawnbroker of forty-odd, who has been granted temporarily a renewal of his youth, find here the realm of heart's desire?

To begin with, it may be noted that Jurgen plucks with pleasure the casual flowers that line his path through regions of romantic questing. He "deals fairly" with Guinevere, Anaitis, Chloris, Dolores, Yolanda, and Florimel. But basically how congenial and satisfying to him is unbridled indulgence?

Among the things to be given attention in the incidents and developments noted above is the very evident sense of shock that Jurgen felt at what transpired in the Kingdom of Cocaigne, that "romantic" region "beyond the farthest Hebrides." Jurgen was no squeamish prude, as Guinevere or Yolande or Chloris or Florimel could testify if placed on the witness stand; but he was embarrassed; he thought Jigsbyed, with his ten heads and thirty-four arms, carried "matters to extremes." Jurgen shuddered at the moss which grew around the palace of Anaitis, and he was rather shocked by the share of the hooded man and the two naked girls in the ceremonial.

In considering the reactions of the reader rather than of Jurgen, it may be noted that in this episode are several passages whose impact is far removed from that characteristic of enchantment and romance. To assume that Mr. Cabell was unaware of the probable impact is to assume that he was less of an artist than he has demonstrated himself to be.

For instance, is it probable that an uncritical person would have the embodiment of complete abandonment to sexual pleasures say, "I who am all pleasure, all ruin, and a drunkenness of the inmost sense..."? Is not the degredation indicated of those who surrender themselves to sensuality indicated by her words: "To serve me you will then be eager to surrender whatever else is in your life; and other pleasures you will take with your left hand, not thinking of them entirely; for I am the desire which uses all of a man..."? And not to be overlooked is the revulsion produced by the black candles, the burning sulphur, and the scarlet cross, whereon was nailed a living toad. Nor should the hooded man with the high, bleating voice

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27 *Jurgen*, pp. 155-6. Italics are mine.
(suggestive of the lascivious goat) be overlooked.

Was it in a moment of absent-mindedness that Mr. Cabell provided Alecto and Tisiphone to attend upon Anaitis? These naked girls are not only Eumenides, Blynes, or Furies who tremble at the retribution they must inflict upon those who indulge in such unholy rites, but they also -- in a two-fold allegory -- represent the children who must share the retribution: "For your flesh becomes our flesh, and your sins our sins; and we have no choice." The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.

Anaitis was the embodiment of physical pleasure, "and yet this woman's face was sad."

And Jurgen continued in the Kingdom of Cocainge as Prince Consort to Queen Anaitis, "For he found that unknowingly he had espoused her by participating in the Breaking of the Veil, which is the marriage ceremony of Cocainge."28

But not all was perfect in Cocainge.

From the first her new Prince Consort was puzzled by her fervors, and presently was fretted by them. He himself failed to understand how anyone could be so frantic over Jurgen. It seemed unreasonable. And in her more affectionate moments this

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28 Ibid., p. 161.
nature myth positively frightened him: for such transports as these could not but rouse uncomfortable reminiscences of the female spider, who ends such recreations by devouring her partner.

"Thus to be loved is very flattering," he would reflect, "and I again am Jurgen, asking odds of none. But even so, I am mortal. She ought to remember that, in common fairness."

Then the jealousy of Anaitis, while equally flattering, was equally out of reason. She suspected everybody, seemed assured that every bosom cherished a mad passion for Jurgen, and that not for a moment could he be trusted.29

Jurgen responded to these opportunities, or necessities, of unlimited pleasures with diminishing enthusiasm.

"Ah, but, my dear, you are quite certain as to who made you, and for what purpose you were made.... But I have no such authentic information as to my origin and mission in life; I appear at all events to have no natural talent for being diverted; I do not take to it wholeheartedly, and these are facts we have to face.30

"I but point out that your creed necessitates, upon the whole, an ardor I lack.... I merely confess that to celebrate these rites so frequently requires a sustentation of enthusiasm which is beyond me.... That is how I feel about


it, my precious, and that is why I find, with constant repetition of these ceremonials, a certain lack of firmness developing in my responses; and finally, darling, that is all there is to it."31

Later, Jurgen was driven to complain rather pathetically about Anaitis' numerous cousins, other fertility gods, who were always under foot, having come to visit her "in such a zoologically muddled condition."

"Besides, they have no conversation. They merely bellow -- or twitter or bleat or low or gibber or purr, according to their respective incarnations, -- about unspeakable mysteries and monstrous pleasures until I am driven to the verge of virtue by their imbecility.32

"And your female relatives are just as annoying, with their eternal whispered enigmas, and their crescent moons, and their mystic roses that change color and require constant gardening, and their pathetic belief that I have time to fool with them. And the entire pack practices symbolism until the house is positively littered with ashterahs and combs and phalloses and linghams and yonis and arghas and pulleiars and talyas,33 and I

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31 Ibid., p. 165.

32 Italics are mine.

33 Phallus (Greek): The representation of the male organ of generation as a symbol of the fertilizing power in nature, made a feature in the processions of bacchic orgies of ancient Greece, and employed similarly in the orient. Lingham (Sanscrit): In Hindu Mythology, the male organ of
do not know what other idiotic toys that
I am continually stepping on."  

Thus,

And so, more and more, Jurgen sought escape from Anaitis and her monstrous cousins in the library of the palace.  

And all this while Jurgen tried to find the answer to a riddle, "for Jurgen was no more able to give up questioning the meaning of life than could a trout relinquish swimming."  

"Yes, I feel that something is expected of me," says Jurgen: "and without knowing what it is, I am tolerably sure, somehow, that it is not an indulgence in endless pleasure."

And such was his final decision about Anaitis and Cocaigne:

For the pleasures of Cocaigne do not satisfy me... Yes, Anaitis makes an excellent wife. Nevertheless, her

 generation, worshipped as being representative of the god Siva or of the productive power of nature. Yoni (Sanskrit): In the phallic worship of India, the symbol of the supreme active female energy of nature; usually associated with the lingam. Taly (Hindu): A Hindu pendant engraved with the likeness of the goddess Lakshmi, worn by Brahmin wives. -- From Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary.

34 Jurgen, p. 168.
35 Ibid., p. 170. Italics are mine.
36 Ibid., p. 171.
37 Ibid.
diversions do not satisfy me, and gallantly to make the most of life is not enough."38

Cabell's final evaluation of the respective merits of chivalric, idealistic, realistic, and carnal love is presented in the developments that occurred after Jurgen had entered the cave for the third time and had come face to face with Koshchei, the God of Things as They Are. Jurgen found this deity somewhat kindly disposed toward him. He wished to furnish for Jurgen just such a wife as would be most congenial to him.

The black gentleman meditated. "Come, friend," says he at last. "You were a poet of some merit. You displayed a promising talent which might have been cleverly developed, in any suitable environment. Now, I repeat, I am an Economist: I dislike waste; and you were never fitted to be anything but a poet. The trouble was" -- and Koshchei lowered his voice to an impressive whisper, -- "the trouble was your wife did not understand you. She hindered your art. Yes, that precisely sums it up: she interfered with your soul-development, and your instinctive need of self-expression, and all that sort of thing. You are very well rid of this woman, who converted a poet into a pawnbroker. To the other side, as is with point observed somewhere or other, it is not good for man to live

38 Ibid., p. 149.
alone. But, friend, I have just the wife for you."

"So Koschei waved his hand: and there, quick as winking, was the loveliest lady that Jurgen had ever imagined."  

It was Queen Guinevere, whom Jurgen had loved in Glathion, but Guinevere did not know him at all.

And she told him, quite as though she spoke with a stranger, that she was Queen Guinevere.

"But Lancelot is turned monk, at Glastonbury; and Arthur is gone into Avalon," says she: "and I will be your wife if you will have me, Jurgen."  

Jurgen replied:

"Madame and queen... once long ago there was a man who worshipped all women. To him they were one and all of sacred, sweet intimidating beauty. He shaped sonorous rhymes of this, in praise of the mystery and sanctity of women. Then a count's tow-headed daughter whom he loved, with such a love as it puzzles me to think of now, was shown to him just as she was, as not even worthy of hatred. The goddess stood revealed, unveiled, and displaying in all things such mediocrity as he fretted to find in himself. That

39 Ibid., pp. 333-4.

40 Ibid., p. 334.

41 Ibid., p. 335.
was unfortunate. For he began to suspect that women, also, are akin to their parents; and are no wiser, and no more subtle, and no more immaculate, than the father who begot them.... And this man was never the mate for you, dear Guinevere."42

And thus Jurgen said farewell to Queen Guinevere.

"Again Koschei waved his hand. Then came to Jurgen a woman who was strangely figted and perverse."43 It was Anaitis, who in the meanwhile had forgotten that Jurgen had ever been her Prince Consort.

Of the lore of Thais she spoke, and of the schooling of Sappho, and of the secrets of Rhodope, and of the mourning for Adonis.... "For we have but a little while to live, and none knows his fate thereafter. So man possesses nothing certainly save a brief loan of his own body; and yet the body of man is capable of much curious pleasure." ... And the bright-colored woman spoke with antique directness of matters that Jurgen found embarrassing.

"Come, come!" thinks he. But it will never do to seem provincial. I believe that I am actually blushing" Aloud he said: "Sweetheart, there was.... a youth who sought quite zealously for the over-mastering frenzies you prattle about. But, candidly, he could not find the flesh whose touch would rouse insanity. The lad had opportunities, too, let me tell

42 Ibid., pp. 336-7, 338.

43 Ibid., p. 340.
you! ... He went from one pair of lips to another, with an ardour that was always half-feigned, and with protestations which were curious echoes of some romance or other. Such escapades were pleasant enough: but they were not very serious, after all. For these things concerned his body alone: and I am more than an edifice of viands raised by my teeth." [44]

Jurgen's final answer to the appeals of Anaitis was,

"Sweetheart,... you paint a glowing picture: but you are shrewd enough to borrow your pigments from the day-dreams of inexperience. What you prattle about is not at all as you describe it." [45]

Again Koshchei waved his hand, and before Jurgen stood a woman with golden hair; and she was robed all in white. It was Queen Helen, the delight of gods and men. And Jurgen addressed the lady of his vision:

"Now through the will of Koshchei, it appears that you stand within arm's reach.... Lady, were that possible — and I know very well it is not possible, whatever my senses may report; — I am not fit to mate with your perfection.

For we who are tax-payers as well as immortal souls must live by politic evasions and formulae and catchwords that fret away our lives as moths waste a garment; we fall insensibly to common-sense as to a drug; and it kills whatever in us is

[44] Ibid., p. 341.

[45] Ibid., p. 342.
rebellious and fine and unreasonable; and so you will find no man of my years with whom living is not a mechanism which gnaws away time unprompted. For within this hour I have become again a creature of use and wont; I am the lackey of prudence and half measures; and I have put my dreams upon allowance. Yet even now I love you more than I love books and indolence and flattery and the charitable wine which cheats me into a favorable opinion of myself. What more can an old poet say? For that reason, lady, I pray you begone, because your loveliness is a taunt which I find unendurable."

Now Jurgen has realized that the Lady of the Vision can never be attained and that her beauty and perfection, if pursued, will bring only pain and bitter disappointment; he who pursues an ideal must not only fail — he must suffer bitterly.

"And so farewell to you, Queen Helen! Oh, very long ago I found your beauty mirrored in a wanton's face! and often in a woman's face I have found one or another feature wherein she resembled you, and for the sake of it have lied to that woman glibly. And all my verses, as I know now, were vain enchantments striving to evoke that hidden loveliness of which I knew by dim report alone. Oh, all my life was a foiled quest of you, Queen Helen, and an unsatiated hungering.... Your beauty has been to me as a robber that stripped my life of joy and sorrow, and I desire not ever to dream of your...

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Ibid., p. 346.
beauty any more. For I have been able to love nobody. And I know that it is you who have prevented this, Queen Helen, at every moment of my life since the disastrous moment when I first seemed to find your loveliness in the face of Madame Dorothy. It is the memory of your beauty, as I then saw it mirrored in the face of a jilt-flirt, which has enfeebled me for such honest love as other men give women....

Thus he cried farewell to the Swan's daughter and Queen Helen, vanished as a bright mist passes....

At this point Koschei the Deathless became a bit impatient and remarked that some people are hard to please. Jurgen then asked, "...could you not let me see my first wife for just a moment?" Accordingly, Dame Lisa appeared.

"Aha, you rascal!" begins Dame Lisa, addressing Jurgen; "and so you thought to be rid of me! Oh, a precious lot you are! and a deal of thanks I get for my scrimping and slaving!" And she began scolding away.

And rather unaccountably Jurgen fell to thinking of how unsubstantial seemed these curious months devoted to other women, as set against the commonplace years which he and Lisa had fretted through together; of the fine merry girl that Lisa had been before she married him; of how well she knew his tastes in

47 Ibid., p. 347.
48 Ibid., p. 348.
49 Ibid., p. 352.
cookery and all his little preferences, and of how cleverly she humored them on those rare days when nothing had occurred to vex her; of all the buttons she had replaced, and all the socks she had darned, and of what tempests had been loosed when anyone else had had the audacity to criticize Jurgen; and of how much more unpleasant -- everything considered -- life was without her than with her. She was so unattractive, too, poor dear, that you could not but be sorry for her.

Jurgen's final decision was, "I think I will take her back, Prince."

When Lisa had departed, after a memorable tirade directed against Jurgen, Koshchei expressed wonder at Jurgen's choice.

Jurgen replied:

"Ah, ... but the truth of it is, we have lived together so long that my wife has become rather foolishly fond of me. She is not, as one might say, quite reasonable about me. No, sir, it is the fashion of women to discard civility toward those for whom they suffer most willingly; and whom a woman loveth she chasteneth, after a good precedent.... Oh, Prince, when I consider steadfastly the depth and intensity of that devotion which for so many years has tended me,  

50 Ibid.  
51 Ibid.
and has endured the society of that person whom I peculiarly know to be the most tedious and irritating of companions, I stand aghast, before a miracle. And I cry, oh, certainly a goddess! and I can think of no queen who is fairly mentionable in the same breath. Hah, all we poets write a deal about love: but none of us may grasp the word's full meaning until he reflects that this is a passion mighty enough to induce a woman to put up with him."52

On this note does the High History of Jurgen end. Jurgen, who might have dwelt forever and a day with the beauty of the fabled Guinevere, the perfection of the incomparable Helen, or the excitement of the alluring Anaitis turned his back upon them all and chose rather to go home to an ageing, shrewish wife. And good reasons are made apparent for his doing so. But isn't this romantic heresy?

We may imagine the paunchy pawnbroker of forty-odd and the carping, sharp-tongued Lisa sitting before the fire of a winter night in their commonplace cottage, and the miracle of it is that either has the forbearance to put up with the other. But Mr. Cabell has made it seem entirely fitting that it should be thus. The Guineveres and the

52 Ibid., pp. 358-60.
Helens and the other sirens of high romance are, if attainable, unsatisfying. Ordinary domesticity is preferable. Mr. Cabell has demonstrated the convincingness of this, but in doing so has he played the romanticist or the realist?

And, finally, has Mr. Cabell, in his treatment of sex, revealed himself as one of the depraved sons of Sodom; or has he, to quote Guy Holt again, given us in Jurgen "a plea for monogamy presented in the only convincing terms"?

Mr. Cabell has surveyed rationally the ecstatic frenzies of carnal love and has found them "all ruin and a drunkenness of the inmost sense." These are the words of Anaitis herself, who also says, "To serve me you will then be eager to surrender whatever else is in your life; and other pleasures you will take with your left hand, not thinking of them entirely." It is not to be wondered at that Jurgen found the service of Anaitis too demanding and that he more and more sought refuge in the library of Anaitis' quarters. Nor is it strange that Jurgen replied to the final appeal of Anaitis by stating that these things concerned his body alone, "and I am more than an edifice of viands raised by my teeth."

Similarly, idealized love, viewed rationally, is the
parent of eventual and inescapable disillusionment, as Jurgen learned to his sorrow.

There remains the more sober relationship of married domesticity, to which the bridal couple return from the honeymoon with most of their bright illusions gone, having become commonplace Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so. But the ensuing years bring their unglamorous but lasting and satisfying compensations. And what could be more rational than this, or more moral?
CHAPTER IV

Cabell on Christianity; on Justice
on the Nature of Man; on Man's
Place in the Universe.

In the following pages will be presented, as expressed in *Jürgen*, Cabell's views on man, his dignity or lack of it, his desire for "justice," and his relation to the universe. All of these details can perhaps be comprehended under the term *religion*, if that term be understood in its broader sense, with no implications of *dogma* or *sectarianism*.

Accordingly, Mr. Cabell's treatment of *Christianity* in *Jürgen* will first be presented. *Christianity* is a rather broad term and suggests vastly different things to vastly different people. Perhaps no one has ever computed the number of the various Christian sects, but their number is surely legion, and with each one Christianity has assumed a different guise. Therefore, it is important to determine which particular versions of Christianity Mr. Cabell treats in *Jürgen*.

Contrary to what might be expected, such a determina-
tion is not too difficult to make. The first important thing to note is that Mr. Cabell certainly does not present in Jurgen his own Christianity, unless in a very negative way, as one would define a term by stating what it does not mean. Briefly stated, Mr. Cabell's Hell (which Jurgen visits) is a region conceived by ordinary and literal-minded people, such as Jurgen's father, Coth of the Rocks. Koshchei, God of Things as They Are, "'Created Hell extempore, and made it just such a place as your forefathers imagined it ought to be..."1 Similarly, when Jurgen visited Heaven, he learned that in all respects it conformed to what his grandmother Steinvor thought it was. "'Then Koshchei smiled and created Heaven about Steinvor and her illusions, and he made Heaven just such a place as was described in the book.'"2

Accordingly, Heaven in Jurgen is an illusion of Grandmother Steinvor, and thus does Mr. Cabell create illusions for the purpose of dispelling illusions, for certainly no perceptive reader could accuse Cabell of a

1 Jurgen, p. 257.

2 Ibid., p. 302.
desire to foster the naive conceptions of Steinvor. And to dispel illusions (by whatever means) would seem to be to serve the purposes of realism.

Upon his arrival in Hell, there came to Jurgen "all such devils as his fathers had foretold, and in not a hair or scale or talon did they differ from the worst that anybody had been able to imagine." His principal interrogator was Amaimon, "in the form of a thick suet-colored worm going upright upon his tail, which shone like the tail of a glowworm."  

After he had learned that Jurgen was "Emperor of Noumaria," Amaimon hesitated to permit Jurgen to remain, for they were rather overrun with emperors, each of whom was a great trouble to them. It was necessary to devise and administer punishments appropriate to their numerous and horrible crimes.

"Of course they are not properly punished until they are convinced that what is happening to them is just and adequate. And you have no notion what elaborate tortures they insist their exceeding wickedness has merited, as though that which they did or left undone could

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3 Ibid., p. 251.
4 Ibid., pp. 251-2.
possibly matter to anybody. And to con-
trive these torments quite tires us out."

Repeatedly Cabell returns to the assertion that the
sort of Hell that Jurgen visited was nothing more nor less
than the embodiment of the beliefs of Jurgen's literal-
mined ancestors, whose sense of their own importance
demanded punishments in keeping with the "monstrosity" of
their sins. We have here, among other things, a very
evident satire on man's idea of his own importance, a
conception which Mr. Cabell quite evidently does not
share. And as "realism" is understood in this twentieth
century, a conviction of man's insignificance is one of
its trade-marks.

As demonstrating the frequency of Cabell's emphasis
upon Hell as the creation of man's inflated ego, the
following may be noted:

One of the first inquiries addressed to Jurgen upon
his arrival was, "Were you a very wicked ruler?" Jurgen
assured the devils that he had not been.

"Your conscience, then, does not demand
that you be punished?"

"My conscience, gentlemen, is too well-
bred to insist on anything."

"You do not even wish to be tortured?"

"Well, I admit I had expected something of the sort. But none the less, I will not make a point of it," said Jurgen, handsomely. "No, I shall be quite satisfied even though you do not torture me at all."

And then the mob of devils made a great to-do over Jurgen.

"For it is exceedingly good to have at least one unpretentious and undictatorial human being in Hell. Nobody as a rule drops in on us save inordinately proud and conscientious ghosts, whose self-conceit is intolerable, and whose demands are outrageous."

And again:

"All such as you are born with a conscience come hither," the devils said. "Do you think you could persuade them to go elsewhere? For in that event, we would be deeply obliged to you. Their self-conceit is pitiful: but it is also a nuisance, because it prevents our getting any rest."

Later, Jurgen visits and talks with Grandfather Satan, who is, so to speak, the Chairman of the Board, the ultimate authority. One of his first remarks to Jurgen was that "'Ah, but you must remember that thoughtful persons keep out of Hell.'"

6 Ibid., p. 252.
7 Ibid., p. 253.
8 Ibid., p. 256.
 Quite a neighborly discussion did Jurgen and Grandfather Satan have, and toward its conclusion Jurgen had little hesitation in asking "'How long, then, must I remain here?'"

"I do not know," replies Satan. "It depends entirely on what your father thinks about it ---"

"But what has that to do with it?"

"--Since I and all else that is here are your father's absurd notion..."9

When Jurgen had departed from Grandfather Satan, he passed that point in Hell where his father, Coth, "stood conscientiously in the midst of the largest and hottest flame he had been able to imagine, and rebuked the outworn devils who were tormenting him, because the tortures they inflicted were not adequate to the wickedness of Coth."10

Coth here becomes the particular and specific confirmation of Cabell's thesis that Hell is merely an embodiment of man's imaginings and that man's unjustified opinion of the importance of his own doings and of his own place in the scheme of things universal borders upon the absurd if it does not actually project into it.

9 Ibid., p. 258.

10 Ibid., p. 260.
"... it is inadequate torment, Jurgen, such as does not salve my conscience. There is no justice in this place, and no way of getting justice. For these shiftless devils do not take seriously that which I did, and they merely pretend to punish me, and so my conscience stays unsatisfied."

"Well, but, father, I have talked with them, and they seem to think your crimes do not amount to much after all."

Coth flew into one of his familiar rages. "I would have you know that I killed eight men in cold blood, and held five other men while they were being killed. I estimate the sum of such iniquity as ten and a half murders, in addition to the many hundreds I killed in the heat of battle, and could not keep count of."

"Ah, but, sir, that was fifty years or more ago, and those men would now be dead in any event, so you see it does not matter now."

"I went astray with women, with I do not know how many women.... You jacknapes, I tell you that I swore and stole and forged and burned four houses and broke the Sabbath and was guilty of mayhem and spoke disrespectfully to my mother and worshipped a stone image in Portusa. I tell you I shattered the whole Decalogue, time and again. I committed all the crimes that were ever heard of, and invented six new ones."

For a parallel to this sort of imagined superlative depravity, one must turn to Synge's *Playboy of the Western

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 260-1.}\]
World, which is not often characterized as an example of dreamy, idealized romanticism.

Coth's impatience with the inadequacy of his torments is further emphasized.

"...I demand that you loitering devils bring more fuel."

"Sir," said a panting little fiend, in the form of a tadpole with hairy arms and legs like a monkey's, as he ran up with four bundles of faggots, "we are doing the very best we can for your discomfort. But you damned have no consideration for us, and do not remember that we are on our feet day and night, waiting upon you," said the little devil, whimpering as with his pitchfork he raked up the fire about Coth. "You do not even remem­ber the upset condition of the country, on account of the war with Heaven, which makes it hard for us to get you all the inconveniences of life. Instead, you lounge in your flames, and complain about the service, and Grandfather Satan punishes us, and it is not fair."12

Jurgen protested that after a man has been dead a con­siderable while, it really doesn't matter much what he did, that he becomes "just a stone in the churchyard which describes him as a paragon of all the virtues;"13 but Coth steadfastly refused to believe that his wickedness did not bother anyone now.

12 Ibid., pp. 261-2.
13 Ibid., p. 262.
And Jurgen, now a naturalized citizen of Hell, married a very engaging vampire, Florimell, and lived with her by the shore of the sea.

... this sea was composed of the blood that had been shed by piety in furthering the kingdom of the Prince of Peace, and was reputed to be the largest in existence.\(^\text{14}\)

The passage just quoted seems worthy of Jonathan Swift in one of his more indignant moods. It is hardly in conformity with Mr. Cabell's avowed purpose to "write perfectly about beautiful happenings." Religious intolerance, when it develops into persecution -- which it has often done -- constitutes one of the most repellant realities of human nature, and Cabell here points up the deformity by the ironic reminder that it was all done in "furthering the kingdom of the Prince of Peace."

Cabell also uses the episode of Jurgen's stay in Hell to expose the madness which seizes a nation during the time of war, and to suggest with disillusionment that our "enlightened democracy" is open to severe criticism as a form of government.

For with the devils Jurgen got on garrulously. The religion of Hell is patriotism, and the government is an enlightened democracy.\(^\text{15}\) This contented the devils, and

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 274.

\(^{15}\) Cabell may have owed something to John Milton here: "For so the popular vote inclines."
Jurgen had learned long ago\textsuperscript{16} never to fall out with either of these codes, without which, as the devils were fond of observing, Hell would not be what it is. \textsuperscript{17}

It is well to recall that \textit{Jurgen} was published in 1919, less than a year after the end of the war to "make the world safe for democracy," and many of the war-time developments were fresh in Cabell's memory. To imagine that he used these details for their aesthetic appeal is to misunderstand both Mr. Cabell and estheticism.

Cabell relates that there was considerable unrest in Hell. The simple-minded fiends were "deplorably over-worked by the importunate dead... who were such persons as had been saddled with a conscience, and who in consequence demanded interminable torments."\textsuperscript{18} Particularly among the younger devils there was strong sentiment for "compounding the age-old war with Heaven, at almost any price..." There was the Scriptural pronouncement that when Satan had been bound in chains, there would be no more death; that meant, of course, that there would be no further influx of "conscientious dead persons in search

\textsuperscript{16} A realistic note suggesting bitter experience.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Jurgen}, p. 277.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}
of torment.... So said the younger devils: and considered Grandfather Satan ought to sacrifice himself for the general welfare."19

Satan had been the presiding magistrate of Hell ever since its founding because "a change of administration is inexpedient in war-time: so that Satan must term after term be re-elected: and, of course, Satan had been voted absolute power in everything, since this too is customary in war-time. Well, and after the first few thousand years of this the younger devils began to whisper that such government was not ideal democracy."20

This pro-Celestial propaganda, advocating peace and submission to the commands of Heaven was, of course, viewed with indignation by the more conservative older devils, who remembered "the brave days when Pandemonium was newly built and they were all imps together."21 Jurgen, who had learned never to fall out with the code of patriotism, strongly advocated (with the full approval of the stronger and conservative element) a policy of firm dealing with the subversives. He eyed Grandfather Satan

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., pp. 277-8.
21 Ibid., p. 279.
severely and spoke of the latter's "policy of condonation."
There is more than a little of the intolerant, rabble-rousing, "patriotic" demagogue in Jurgen's harangue:

"I tell you that as long as sentimental weakness marks the prosecution of offences in violation of the laws necessitated by war-time conditions; as long as deserved punishment for overt acts of pro-Celestialism is withheld; as long as weak-kneed clemency condones even a suspicion of disloyal thinking; then just so long will a righteous-ly incensed, if now and then misguided patriotism take into its own hands vengeance upon the offenders."22

Jurgen continued his patriotic outburst, addressing Grandfather Satan directly:

"... the patriotic people of Hell are not in a temper to be trifled with, now that they are at war. Conviction for offenses against the nation should not be hedged about with technicalities devised for over-refined peace-time jurisprudence."23

Grandfather Satan inquired, "'But with what are you charging me?"

"With sentimental weakness," retorted Jurgen. "Was it not only yesterday one of the younger devils was brought before you, upon the charge that he had said the climate in Heaven was better than that here? And you, sir, Hell's chief magistrate -- you it was who actually asked him if he had ever uttered such a disloyal

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
heresy!"

"Now, but what else was I to do?" said Satan, fidgeting,...

"You should have remembered, sir, that a devil whose patriotism is impugned is a devil to be punished; and that there is no time to be prying into irrelevant questions of his guilt or innocence. Otherwise, I take it, you will never have any real democracy in Hell." 24

And Satan replied, "No doubt, precisely as you say, we do need a little more severity hereabouts, and would gain by adopting more human methods." 25 The bitter implications of Satan's expression, "more human methods," should not be overlooked.

And thus "Jurgen's perception and sturdy common-sense were forevermore established among the older and more solid elements in Hell."

And Satan followed Jurgen's suggestions, and the threatened rebellion was satisfactorily discouraged, by tearing into very small fragments anybody who grumbled about anything. So that all the subjects of Satan went about smiling broadly all the time at the thought of what might befall them if they seemed dejected. Thus was Hell a happier looking place because of Jurgen's coming. 26

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24 Ibid., p. 280.

25 Ibid., p. 281.

26 Ibid.
It seems evident that the author intended the stronger stresses in the last sentence to fall on the words *happier looking*.

There seems to be little doubt about the entire earnestness of Mr. Cabell's views concerning human behavior and "Christian" behavior during war-time, both on the battle field, on the home front, and in the pulpit. 27 When on this subject, he does not make the artistic purpose his primary one. He is not writing perfectly about beautiful things. Confirmation of his earnestness can be found in some of his other books. In *Let Me Lie*, he writes,

... the war, that inconceivable huge horror, becomes only a slight, disregarded annoyance now that writing drugs me. I have lived through too many years to expect human beings to behave rationally; and the war, as yet, stays endurably remote, in its more violent aspects, from tiny Poynton Lodge and my adjacent seven acres in the Northern Neck of Virginia. 28

And in *Beyond Life*,

History must always record that in war-time the ministers of Christ, in every land and epoch, have bravely confessed that to their minds the exhortation

27 It should be remembered that when Cabell writes of Christianity he does not always write of his own particular variety of it.

to love your neighbor was in no way inconsistent with military endeavor to remove him from the face of the earth; and that to their minds the text concerning the blessedness of peacemakers should be "rescinded for the enemy." The clergy act bravely, be it repeated, for considerable courage is required to make public confession that your mind works in this fashion. Nor for near twenty centuries have they once faltered in contending that the Sixth Commandment should be interpreted in a super-Pickwickian sense, since if only you were careful to commit your homicides wholesale and in the right uniform, manslaughter was an eminently praiseworthy pursuit. And killing done in the wrong uniform, of course, is counted as another brutal atrocity that has always been frankly conceded by the clergy, upon both sides.\textsuperscript{29}

It seems evident that to Mr. Cabell war was not very romantic nor very heroic.

It has already been noted that when Jurgen visited Heaven, he was told that Koshchei, the God of Things as They Are, had created the place to humor Jurgen's grandmother, Steinvor. He "created Heaven about Steinvor and her illusions, and he made Heaven just such a place as was described in the book."\textsuperscript{30} It would presumably be safe to infer from this touch that Mr. Cabell did not hold with those whose Christianity is based upon a literal reading of the Bible. It would seem to be correspondingly unsafe to infer that Mr. Cabell is attacking, not one narrow version

\textsuperscript{29} Beyond Life, pp. 165-6.

of Christianity, but the Christian creed in general and a belief in an afterlife.

One or two details may be noted, however. Jurgen discovered that Koshchei had questioned Steinvor and had thus perceived her illusions.

"But stay," said Koshchei, "what is that which comes into this woman's eyes as she speaks of her children?" And they told him it was love.

"Did I create this love?" says Koshchei, who made things as they are. And they told him, no; and that there were many sorts of love, but that this especial sort was an illusion which women invented for themselves, and which they exhibited in all dealings with their children. And Koshchei sighed.

"Tell me about your children," Koshchei then said to Steinvor: "and look at me as you talk, so that I may see your eyes."

So Steinvor talked of her children; and Koshchei, who made all things, listened very attentively.... So she ran on very happily and proudly, while Koshchei .... listened, and watched the eyes of Steinvor.

Then privately Koshchei asked, "Are these children and grandchildren of Steinvor such as she reports?"

"No, sir," they told him privately.

So as Steinvor talked Koshchei devised illusions in accordance with that which Steinvor said, and created such children and grandchildren as she described. Male
and female he created them standing behind Steinvor, and all were beautiful and stainless: and Koshchei gave life to these illusions. 31

This account of things was given to Jurgen by the God of Jurgen's grandmother; and Jurgen (a fine touch of irony!) was a bit shocked.

"And all this," said Jurgen virtuously, "for a woman who was not even faithful to her husband!"

"Oh, very probably!" said the God: "at all events, it was done for a woman who loved. Koshchei will do almost anything to humor love, since love is one of the two things which are impossible to Koshchei."

"I have heard that pride is impossible to Koshchei — ... But why is love impossible to Koshchei?"

"Because Koshchei made things as they are, and day and night he contemplates things as they are. How, then can Koshchei love anything?" 32

It would be difficult to evade or explain away the pessimistic touch here. "Things as they are," when contemplated by the power responsible for them, the power who created them, are not such as to give a sense of gratification (pride) or a sense of affection (love) to one who knows he has wrought them.

31 Ibid., pp. 300-01.
32 Ibid., pp. 302-3.
Another instance of the disillusioning reality of things is to be found in Jurgen's meeting with a young lad who helped him gain entrance to Heaven. This lad was Jurgen himself as his Grandmother Steinvor had known him, the Jurgen who had once been. Jurgen had been "beautiful and stainless," and so his grandmother conceived of him, and accordingly had Koshchei created this lad for Steinvor as part of the Heaven that was her illusion.

And Jurgen talked with the boy that he had once been, and stood face to face with all that Jurgen had been and was not any longer. And this was the one happening which befell Jurgen that the writer of the tale lacked heart to tell of.33

This writer has never met with a more pathetic statement of disillusionment than the last sentence above. And thus did Mr. Cabell write perfectly about beautiful things.

And because Jurgen was no longer beautiful and stainless, and because he comprehended — with agony — what he had once been, he thus addressed the God of his grandmother.

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You, and Your doings as they are recorded I find incoherent and a little droll. But I am glad the affair has been so arranged that You may always now be real to brave and gentle persons who have believed in and have worshipped

and have loved You. To have disappointed them would have been unfair; and it is right that before the faith they had in You not even Koshohei who made things as they are was able to be reasonable.

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You; but remembering the sum of love and faith that has been given You, I tremble. I think of the dear people whose living was confident and glad because of their faith in You: I think of them, and in my heart contains a blind contrition, and a yearning, and an enviousness, and yet a tender sort of amusement colors all. Oh, God, there was never any other deity who had such dear worshippers as You have had, and You should be very proud of them.

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You.... I, Jurgen, see You only through a mist of tears. For You were loved by those whom I loved greatly very long ago: and when I look at You it is Your worshippers and the dear believers of old that I remember. And it seems to me that dates and manuscripts and the opinions of learned persons are very trifling things beside what I remember and what I envy!"

Is not Jurgen's voice the voice of many of today and yesterday who, try as they may, cannot reconcile reason and faith and who are therefore suspended between two worlds, to neither of which they can belong, being in effect the displaced persons of the universe? But be it noted that Jurgen’s voice is not necessarily the voice of

Cabell, as Ferrara’s voice in "My Last Duchess" is not necessarily the voice of Browning.

Jürgen’s last conversation in Heaven was with St. Peter, and they hit it off remarkably well considering that Jürgen had been the paramour of Guinevere, Annites, Chloris, Florimel, et al., and St. Peter, of course, the first and greatest of the popes.

"Well, it is true, St. Peter, that you founded the Church —"

"Now, there you go again! That is what those patronizing seraphim and those impish chorubs are always telling us. You see, we Twelve sit together in Heaven, each on his white throne; and we behold everything that happens on Earth. Now from our station there has been no ignoring the growth and doings of what you might loosely call Christianity.\(^35\) And sometimes that which we see makes us very uncomfortable, Jürgen. Especially as just then some cherub is sure to flutter by, and in a broad grin, and chuckle, 'But you started it.' And we did; I cannot deny that in a way we did. Yet really we never anticipated anything of this sort, and it is not fair to tease us about it.... If only they would not claim sib with us we could stand it... for to cap it all, Jürgen, the little wretches die, and come to Heaven impudent as sparrows, and expect me to let them in! From their thumbscrewings, and their auto-da-fés, and from their massacres, and patriotic sermons, and holy wars, and from

\(^35\) Italicis are mine.
every manner of abomination, they come to me smirking. And millions upon millions of them, Jurgen! There is no form of cruelty or folly that has not come to me for praise, and no sort of criminal idiot who has not claimed fellowship with me, who was an Apostle and a gentleman."

In view of the passage just cited, can one reasonably contend that Mr. Cabell, in *Jurgen*, pictures a world (or cosmos) in which things correspond to heart's desire, the light that never was on land or sea, the consecration and the poet's dream?

St. Peter was particularly indignant about one prominent person who had appeared at his wicket and demanded entrance to the blessed regions.

"Why Jurgen, you may not believe it, but there was an eminent bishop came to me only last week in the expectation that I was going to admit him, — and I with the full record of his work for temperance, all fairly written out and in my hand!"

"But temperance is surely a virtue, St. Peter."

"Ah, but his notion of temperance! and his filthy ravings to my face, as though he were talking in some church or other! Why, the slavering little blasphemer! to my face he spoke against the first of my

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Master's miracles, and against the last injunction which was laid upon us Twelve, spluttering that the wine was unfermented! To me he said this, look you, Jurgen! to me, who drank of that noble wine at Cana and equally of that sustaining wine we had in the little upper room in Jerusalem when the hour of trial was near and our Master would have us at our best! With me, who have since tasted of that unimaginary wine which the Master promised us in His kingdom, the busy wretch would be arguing! and would have convinced me, in the face of all my memories, that my Master, who was a Man among men, was nourished by such thin swill as bred this nigling, brawling wretch to plague me!

"Well, but indeed, St. Peter, there is no denying that wine is often misused."

"So he informed me, Jurgen. And I told him by that argument he would prohibit the making of bishops, for reasons he would find in the mirror; and that, remembering what happened at the Crucifixion, he would clap every lumber dealer into jail. So they took him away still slavering," said St. Peter, wearily. "He was threatening to have somebody else elected in my place when I last heard him; but that was only old habit." 37

37 Ibid., pp. 310-11. The bishop referred to is undoubtedly Bishop (Methodist) James Cannon, Jr.: born in Salisbury, Maryland, November 13, 1864; A. B., Randolph-Macon, 1884; Principal of Blackstone Female Institute (Men of Mark in Virginia, ed. Lyon G. Tyler, Washington, D.C., 1907, pp. 65-7). He ended up as Methodist Bishop of Los Angeles. He was officially pronounced a "flour hoarder" during World War I; he was the self-appointed spokesman for the "intelligent, self-respecting, honest masses of our
As the good bishop had been denied entrance into Heaven, Jurgen expressed wonder that he had not met the prelate in Hell, from which he had come not long before. Saint Peter explained:

"In the Hell of your fathers? Oh, no: your fathers meant well, but their notions were limited. No, we have quite another eternal home for these blasphemers, in a region that was fitted out long ago, when the need grew pressing to provide a place for zealous Churchmen. We Twelve were permitted to design and furnish this place. And, of course, we put it in charge of our former confrere, Judas. He seemed the appropriate person."

Thus Mr. Cabell on zealous churchmen and those who would, by political action and power, compel others to live "the good life." It is small wonder that Koschecbi, who created things as they are, found little or nothing in which to take pride.

people", he dealt extensively with a New York bucket-shop; he appeared before a committee of his church on charges of immorality; he was indicted and tried by the Federal courts on charges of violating the corrupt practices act; he refused to explain in detail how he had spent over $48,000 in the presidential campaign of 1928, in which he zealously opposed and denounced the alcoholic Alfred E. Smith, who was also a tool of Romanism. (Richmond Times-Dispatch, editorial, October 16, 1935). He was a rabid prohibitionist and, as the spokesman for the "intelligent, self-respecting, honest masses of our people," he exercised great power politically (until November, 1932) and had many senators and congressmen eating out of his hand. St. Peter's evaluation of the good bishop seems quite sound: another touch of Cabellian realism.

38 Jurgen, pp. 311-12.
Cabell called Jurgen "A Comedy of Justice." The words justice, unjust, fair, fairly, and unfair recur page after page. To present all of their significations and implications in their various contexts would not be an endless task, but it would be one that would result in needless repetitions. Accordingly, several representative citations will be made instead of an exhaustive examination of all passages concerned with Cabell's inclusion in the work of matters pertaining to "justice."

In general, with respect to "justice," Jurgen appears to have been intended as another Everyman, representing the human race and expressing its somewhat naive and prejudiced ideas of what constitutes justice.

Before specific passages are cited, it may be observed that the inferences to be derived from Cabell's treatment of this matter of "justice" are that homo more-or-less sapiens regards justice as being that which is to his advantage and that which contributes to or confirms his wishful thinking with respect to his importance in the scheme of things.

While the meaning of the word justice is under discussion, it is well to note that Jurgen's visit to the Master Philologist was (to Jurgen) an unsatisfactory one.
"It is not at all equitable: but the man showed me a huge book wherein were the names of everything in the world, and justice was not among them. It develops that, instead, justice is merely a common noun vaguely denoting an ethical idea of conduct proper to the circumstances, whether of individuals or communities."\(^3\)

This would seem to indicate that in human usage justice is a word signifying that which is regarded as proper or advantageous to the individual or the community. In other words, humanity generally has no conception of higher or abstract or ideal justice. To the human race, "justice" is that which "justifies" the interests or the expediency of the individual or the community. This concept is not to be identified with the views of Mr. Cabell. It is presented satirically. From this let us proceed to further specific instances.

In previous pages it has been noted that Jurgen conceived of Dorothy la Désirée as the embodiment of perfection, the lady who was in all things perfect. This was an illusion. That this illusion should be dispelled was "unjust." In Jurgen's view, any "just" God would make realities conform to the post-adolescent dream of the son of Coth of the

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 182-3.
Rocks, who, by the way, had much to answer for.

And a madness came upon Jurgen, there in the garden between dawn and sunrise, and a disbelief in such injustice as now seemed incredible.

"No, Heart's Desire," he cried, "I will not let you go. For you are dear and pure and faithful, and all my evil dream, wherein you were a wanton and befooled me, was not true. Surely, mine was a dream that can never be true so long as there is any justice upon earth. Why, there is no imaginable God who would permit a boy to be robbed of that which in my evil dream was taken from me!" 40

Next, we may note that during the re-play of the Wednesday that was granted Jurgen by Mother Sereda, Jurgen, to prevent Heitman Michael from again carrying away Dorothy, "snatched out his dagger and drove it deep into the undefended back of Heitman Michael." 41

And this was simple "justice."

"I will take my doom," says Jurgen, and without whimpering, so that I get justice. ... The man was stronger than I and wanted what I wanted. So I have compromised with necessity, in the only way I could make sure of getting that which was requisite to me. I cry for justice to the power that gave him strength and gave me weakness, and gave to each our desires. 42

40 Ibid., p. 29.
41 Ibid., p. 55.
42 Ibid., pp. 55-6.
That the Ruler of the Universe should so arrange things that each individual should be granted the power to secure that which he desires, irrespective of conflicting interests, seems a rather quaint concept. "This I desire; therefore it should be rightfully mine," certainly expresses an ethical concept that even Omnipotence would have difficulty in implementing.

Again, when Jurgen visited Leuke, Chloris, the Hamadryad told him that Helen, the delight of gods and men, was the wife of Achilles, who ruled in Pseudopolis. Jurgen desired Helen, but Achilles possessed her.

"For I admire this man Achilles, I envy him, and I fear him," says Jurgen; "and it is not fair that he should have been created my superior." 43

That Achilles should be Jurgen's superior is unjust; but that Jurgen should have been created "a monstrous clever fellow" who outwits various less clever persons is, of course, a striking instance of the rightness and justness of things.

It is the fear of betraying his own interests that restrains Jurgen from the possession of Helen when, seemingly, he had the opportunity to do so.

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43 Ibid., p. 195.
"No, I would be betraying my own interests... and injustice is always despicable."44

Thus, that which does not promote one's own interests is unjust and therefore despicable.

Jurgen also accuses his wife, Dame Lisa,45 of not remaining the person whom he had promised the priest to love, "a cuddlesome and merry girl, who thought whatever I did was done to perfection." Instead, she had elected "to develop into an uncommonly plain and short-tempered old woman."46 This, of course, was clearly "unfair" and fully "justified" Jurgen's interest in other women.

Further, on numerous occasions Jurgen invents authorities to quote in support of his contentions. These non-existent authorities serve his purposes well on all occasions except one. When Jurgen was being judged by the priests of the Philistines, he cited in his defense various learned pronouncements of Gowlais and of Stevegonius. The priest of Ageus did not challenge the reality of these "authorities" but asserted that both had been pronounced heretics by the Diet of Orthumar; hence their opinions were to be in no wise respected. This was an unexpected move, but Jurgen countered it.

44 Ibid., p. 229.

45 There is some doubt that in this episode the creature Jurgen addresses really is Dame Lisa, but even so there is nothing uncharacteristic of Jurgen in his utterance.

46 Jurgen, p. 75.
"Eh!" says Jurgen. He did not like this priest. "Now I will wager, sirs," Jurgen continued, a trifle patronizingly, "that you gentlemen have not read Gowlaïs, or even Stevagonius, in the light of Vossler's commentaries. And that is why you underrate them."

"I at least have read every word that was ever written by any of these three," replied the priest of Sesphra — "and with, as I need hardly say, the liveliest abhorrence. And this Gowlaïs in particular, as I hasten to agree with my learned confere, is a most notorious heretic... I tell you that I have been roused to indignation by his Historia de Bello Veneris,... shocked by his Pornoboscodiascole,... and horrified by his Liber de Immortalitate Mentulae,... and have been disgusted by his De Medio Coeundi,... and have shuddered over the unspeakable enormity of his Erotopaegnion of his Gynaecial and especially of his Epipedesis, that most pestilential and abominable book, quam sine horrore nemo potest legere,... and have read also all the confutations of this detestable Gowlaïs: as those of Zanchius, Faventinus, Lelius Vincentius, Lagalla, Thomas Giaminus, and eight other admirable commentators... and that, in short, I have read every book you can imagine."

The shoulders of Jurgen rose to his ears, and Jurgen silently flung out his hands, palms upward.

"For I perceive," says Jurgen to himself, "That this Realist is too circumstantial for me. None the less, he invents his facts; it is by citing books which never existed that he publicly confutes Gowlaïs."
whom I invented privately: and that is not fair."

Probably Mr. C. Cabell's most conclusive, if not his final, pronouncement on justice in *Jurgen* is to be found in that episode in which Jurgen visits the Heaven of his grandmother Steinvor, the Heaven that was created by Koshchei around her illusions. This was the Heaven that was created for a woman who loved, and there was also created the God of Steinvor, who was the God of Love.

When Jurgen met the God of Steinvor, whom through his monstrous cleverness he had proved to be nothing but an illusion of old women, he demanded, "O God, why could You not let me have faith? for You gave me no faith in anything, not even in nothingness. It was not fair."

And Jurgen continued:

"God of my grandmother! God Whom I too have loved in boyhood!" said Jurgen then: "why is it that I am denied a God? For I have searched: and nowhere can I find justice, and nowhere can I find anything to worship."

"What, Jurgen, and would you look for justice, of all places, in Heaven?"

"No," said Jurgen: "no, I perceive it cannot be considered here. Else you would sit alone."  

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The implications here seem clear. What mankind stands in need of is not justice. With it, mankind would fare badly and Heaven would be unpopulated. Truly it is "in the best interests" of man to invoke love and mercy, not justice.

Closely related to the concepts of justice presented in Jurgen are those having to do with man's ideas of his own importance and his place in the scheme of things in contrast to his actual importance or dignity or position in the universe. Before details in Jurgen are examined, it would be helpful to give attention to a somewhat extended passage in Beyond Life in which the convictions of the novelist John Charteris (Cabell's mouthpiece) are expressed.

Indeed, when I consider the race to which I have the honor to belong, I am filled with respectful wonder.... All about us flows and gyrates unceasingly the material universe, -- an endless inconceivable jumble of rotatory blazing gas and frozen spheres and detonating comets, wherethrough spins Earth like a frail midge. And to this blown molecule adhere what millions and millions and millions of parasites just such as I am, begetting and dreaming and slaying and abnegating and toiling and making
Mirth, just as did aforetime those countless generations of our forebears, every one of whom was likewise a creature just such as I am! Were the human beings that have been subjected to confinement in flesh each numbered, as is customary in other penal institutes, with what interminable row of digits might one set forth your number, say, or mine?

Nor is this everything. For my reason, such as it is, perceives this race, in its entirety, in the whole outcome of its achievement, as beyond wording petty and ineffectual; and no more than thought can estimate the relative proportion to the material universe of our poor Earth, can thought conceive with what quintillionths to express that fractional part which I, as an individual parasite, add to Earth’s negligible fretting by ephemerae. 49

This passage reveals quite clearly the position and importance of man when the cosmic view is taken. Does man appear advantageously when the view is restricted to this quintillionth fraction of things that is the Earth and human life? Again Beyond Life supplies the answer, John Charteris again speaking:

Marlowe’s utterance is lacking in that element of triteness without which no work of art can ever be of general appeal in a world of mostly mediocre people. 50

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49 Beyond Life, pp. 50-1.

50 Ibid., p. 93.
As a more direct introduction to Jurgen material, a third passage from Beyond Life is presented, in which John Charteris again speaks:

And we decline, very emphatically, to consider the universe as a whole — "to encounter Pan", as the old Greeks phrased it, who rumored that this thing sometimes befall a mortal, but asserted likewise that the man was afterward insane. They seem to have had the root of the matter.51

In Jurgen Cabell expanded and materialized this idea in the episode in which Jurgen, following instructions given by Merlin, entered a Druidical forest, there to witness magic that transcended even that of Merlin, whose conjuring could raise nothing more formidable than devils. This was to be a bit of the Old Magic, now no longer understood, and Merlin himself declined to go with Jurgen; he preferred not to meddle with it.

Having entered the forest, Jurgen

... presently observed a sun-browned brauny fellow, who sat upon the bank of a stream, dabbling his feet in the water, and making music with a pipe constructed of seven reeds of irregular lengths. To him Jurgen displayed, in such manner as Merlin had prescribed, the token which Merlin had given him. The man made a peculiar sign and rose.

51 Ibid., p. 122.
Jurgen saw that this man's feet were unusual.52

Although this brown man's name is never mentioned in the episode, he is clearly the god Pan. In view of the pipe of seven reeds and the "unusual" goat's feet, no other identification is possible. Accordingly, he will hereafter be called Pan.

Pan led Jurgen to an open glen in the midst of the forest, remarking to Jurgen,

"Merlin dared not come himself, because ... Merlin is wise. But you are a poet. So you will presently forget that which you are about to see, or at worst, you will tell pleasant lies about it, particularly to yourself."

"I do not know about that," says Jurgen, "but I am willing to taste any drink once. What are you about to show me?"

The brown man answered: "All." 53

Jurgen and Pan remained in the glen until evening. Pan was smiling as they emerged, but Jurgen was "in a flutter."

"It is not true," Jurgen protested. What you have shown me is a pack of nonsense. It is the degraded lunacy of a so-called Realist. It is sorcery and pure childishness and abominable blasphemy. It is, in a word, something I do not choose to believe. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

52 Jurgen, p. 136.

53 Ibid., p. 137.
"Even so, you do believe me, Jurgen.... Yes, you are certainly a poet.... For you come out of my glen, and from my candor, as sane as when you entered. That is not saying much, to be sure, in praise of a poet's sanity at any time. But Merlin would have died, and Merlin would have died without regret, if Merlin had seen what you have seen, because Merlin receives facts reasonably."

"Facts! sanity! and reason!" Jurgen raged; "why, but what nonsense you are talking! Were there a bit of truth in your silly puppetry this world of time and space and consciousness would be a bubble, a bubble which contained the sun and moon and the high stars, and still was but a bubble in fermenting swill! I must go cleanse my mind of all this foulness. You would have me believe that men, that all men who ever lived or shall ever live hereafter, that even I am of no importance! Why, there would be no justice in any such arrangement, no justice anywhere!"

Jurgen was upon the verge of hysteria and blurted out the accusation that Pan had lied to him. At this Jurgen heard a growing sound of laughter on all sides, as if each tiny leaf of the forest were laughing him to scorn, and this was swelled by the mirth of larger creatures.

"And the brown man's appearance changed as he stood there, terrible in a continuous brown glare from the low-hanging

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54 Ibid., pp. 137-8.
clouds, and with the forest making obeisance, and with
shivering and laughter everywhere."

"Make answer, you who chatter about
justice! how if I slew you now," says
the brown man, — "I being what I am?"

"Slay me then!" says Jurgen, with shut
eyes, for he did not at all like the ap-
pearance of things. "Yes, you can kill
me if you choose, but it is beyond your
power to make me believe that there is
no justice anywhere, and that I am un-
important. For I would have you know I
am a monstrous clever fellow. As for
you, you are either a delusion or a god
or a degraded Realist. But whatever
you are, you have lied to me, and I
know that you have lied, and I will not
believe in the insignificance of Jurgen."

Chillingly came the whisper of the
brown man: "Poor fool! O shuddering,
stiff-necked fool! and have you not just
seen that which you may not ever quite
forget?

"None the less, I think there is some-
thing in me which will endure. I am
fettered by cowardice, I am enfeebled by
disastrous memories; and I am maimed by
old follies. Still, I seem to detect in
myself something which is permanent and
rather fine. Underneath everything, and
in spite of everything, I really do seem
to detect that something.... I tell you
candidly, you brown man, there is some-
thing in Jurgen far too admirable for
any intelligent arbiter ever to fling
into a dustheap. I am, if nothing else,
a monstrous clever fellow...."
"Now but before a fool's opinion of himself," the brown man cried, "the Gods are powerless. Oh, yes, and envious, too!" 55

And thus did Mr. Cabell write perfectly about Pan, the pastoral deity of Greek mythology, and the beautiful faith that mankind has in its own fineness and importance.

In the interests of complete clarity, it may be pointed out that Pan is the universal god (the concept deriving apparently from the fact that in Greek the word pan meant all), and therefore what Pan revealed to Jurgen was a view of "all," that is, the universe; and that view of the universe demonstrated the insignificance of the planet Earth and still more forcibly the insignificance in the general scheme of things of the human parasites which crawl over the surface of that minute, insignificant planet.

It may be pointed out also that the ancient Greek belief that those mortals who met with Pan went insane (from which is derived our word panic) has its parallel in Jurgen's (or humanity's) inability to face the realities of the vastness of the universe and the insignificance of humanity itself.

55 Ibid., pp. 139-40.
As Jurgen remarks on a later occasion, "No, I cannot believe in nothingness being the destined end of all: that would be too futile a climax to content a dramatist clever enough to have invented Jurgen." 56

There seems to be some point in the brown man's remark that "before a fool's opinion of himself ... the Gods are powerless. Oh, yes, and envious, too."

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56 Ibid., p. 172.
CHAPTER V

Summation

In the preface of this study, an attempt has been made to evaluate the criticism and the scholarly study that the works of James Branch Cabell have enjoyed or have suffered from. The preface expresses this student's belief that Cabell criticism has, for the most part, been hurriedly and unperceptively executed. No really solid or competent scholarly work on Cabell's writings has been done, but the basis for effective scholarship has been or is in the process of being provided by the collection of Cabell material in the Venable Library of the University of Virginia, by the compiling of an accurate and very useful bibliography, by the publication of Cabell's correspondence with his editors and with other writers, and by the projected definitive edition of Cabell's letters planned by the University of Pennsylvania. The most obvious need seems to be that for competent critical interpretation in detail of Cabell's writings.

The Introduction has been devoted to definitions of
terms employed in the study, an indication of the similarity of Cabell's method in Jürgen to that of the dream vision, a statement of Cabell's purpose as understood by this student, and an indication of the source of unity in Jürgen and in this study.

Chapter I discusses the nature of Cabell's subject matter and how he handles that subject matter. It examines rather closely two Jürgen episodes to indicate that Cabell's predominantly romantic subject matter is used to produce effects that are uncharacteristic of what is usually considered romantic.

Chapters II and III undertake an examination of several episodes in Jürgen in which are expressed Mr. Cabell's convictions about the various aspects of love: chivalric or idealistic love, realistic love, and carnal love. The conclusion reached is that Cabell regards the realistic husband-wife relationship, commonplace and unexciting as it is, as the only practical and satisfying relationship.

Chapter IV consists of a study of various episodes in Jürgen expressing Cabell's views on the conventional ideas of Heaven and Hell, on the ethical values subscribed to by the majority of mankind, on man's importance in the universe as indicated by reason and knowledge, and on man's
refusal to accept his position as thus indicated.

A brief summation of the foregoing summation may perhaps be permitted. The contentions of this thesis have been that Cabell, although mistakenly regarded in general as a romantic and an escapist, is in actuality a realist who subtly and skillfully employs romantic subject matter and techniques to express convictions — based upon reason and knowledge — concerning the nature of man, the importance of man, and the valid ethical standards that are appropriate to man and to his condition.

There is need, perhaps, for one final observation. It should be borne in mind that Jurgen is not an isolated work but constitutes one link in a chain of twenty-three that Cabell called The Biography of the Life of Manuel. In these successive related works Mr. Cabell treats various themes repeatedly, one theme being treated briefly in one novel and extensively in another. Many of Cabell's characters appear in more than one novel. All twenty-three works form a consciously planned and consistent whole. Thus, it may be said that the essential Cabell is expressed in Jurgen. And it is accurate to say that what one finds in Jurgen may also be found in the other novels which make up The Biography.


Bregenzer, Don and Samuel Loveman, eds. A Roundtable in Poetics: Cleveland: The Colophon Club, 1924.


VITA

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