critics are not so sophisticated as they may appear to be. It would be a slaughter of innocents.

After all, most of our younger critics gossip and converse. They approach authors with that oh-what-I-know-about-you look in their eyes. Now this is extremely diverting; it titillates the curiosity. Because this is so the writer of these paragraphs must apologize for his deficiencies as he admits that he is personally acquainted with three of the writers out of the four to be considered here and that, rack his brain as he may, he can dredge up nothing particularly pertinent to state about them except that Louise Bogan is extremely pleasing to stare at. Being so handicapped, he must be old fashioned and apply himself to their books.

POETIC STANDARDS

By Herbert S. Gorman

ONE difficulty of appraising contemporary poetry is the lack of an acceptable standard. Our standards are wholly the result of past eras of poetical inspiration and the major portion of modern singers disclaim loudly against being measured by them. Indeed, the critic does make himself slightly ridiculous when he gravely applies the lessons learned from William Wordsworth to Ezra Pound. The critic and his subject do not jibe; and that seems to be the reason for most of the critical floundering and bewilderment that exists in written comment today. Every little critic has a heaven of his own, into which he puts the gods of his idolatry. There is no remedy for this except, perhaps, a general slaughter of critics, and while this may meet with the warm approbation of most writers it is unfeasible at the present time. Our

The second series of W. H. Davies's "Collected Poems" is exactly the same as the first. It has been some years now since Davies reached that point of time which may be regarded as his maturity. Since then he has turned out a large number of the wide eyed naïve lyrics which are so peculiarly his own. These snatches of melody are delightful, but more than a hundred of them become monotonous. Aspects of nature, little Cavalier twists on love, a childlike candor in the consideration of cosmic matters, an intense social consciousness—here is the subject matter with which Davies is most himself. And the form with which he circumscribes these things is one of simplicity, of monosyllabic phrasing and even iambs. "Today" is a fair example:

I have no hopes, I have no fears,
Whether my dreams are gossamers
To last beyond my body's day,
Or cobwebs to be brushed away.
Give me this life from hour to hour,
From day to day, and year to year;
This cottage with one extra room

To lodge a friend if he should come;
This garden green and small, where I
Can sit and see a great big sky
And give me one tall shady tree,
Where, looking through the boughs, I'll see
How the sharp leaves can cut the skies
Into a thousand small blue eyes.

Miss Bogan is quite the reverse of simplicity, and it is safe to assert that "Body of This Death" will have no small vogue among those readers who desire to have their poetry cerebralized. There is an intensity here, a dark dwelling and insistence upon the subtle reactions of a disillusioned mind. There are times (in "A Tale" and "The Frightened Man" for instance) when Miss Bogan appears to have studied the technique of Elinor Wylie to good purpose. For the most part, however, the influence is one of form and not of matter. A superficial observation might imagine a rather close kinship between these two poets, but careful consideration shows this kinship to be mainly one of mental concentration. Miss Bogan's qualities of clear technique, tight thought, and distinguished phrasing are well illustrated by "The Alchemist":

I burned my life, that I might find
A passion wholly of the mind,
Thought divorced from eye and bone,
Ecstasy come to breath alone.
I broke my life, to seek relief
From the flawed light of love and grief.

With mounting beat the utter fire
Charred existence and desire.
I died low, ceased its sudden thresh.
I had found unmysterious flesh —
Not the mind's avid substance — still
Passionate beyond the will.

The work of another woman, Lizette Woodworth Reese's "Wild Cherry", emphasizes the chasm that yawns between our older women poets and that younger group headed by Mrs. Wylie and Miss Bogan. Miss Reese is, perhaps, the most distinguished of these older women poets. She is a born lyrist and in one or two instances (the sonnet "Tears" is one) she has fused emotion, inspiration, and phrasing into achievements that possess as much enduring quality as any work of this generation. "Wild Cherry" exhibits her at her best, although there appear to be no sudden high peaks in it. Here are musical lyrics with poignant twists in them, lucent sonnets, and gentle portraits, all done with an unlabored art that is unquestionably part of the older tradition. Now and then Miss Reese echoes for a moment. The sonnet "Wild Cherry", from which the book is named, contains a last line, "And run, and run, to roof within your heart", which suggests irresistibly Alice Meynell's "I run, I run, I am gathered to your heart."

John Cournos is the solitary free verse writer in this particular quartet of poets and he does not come off very well. "In Exile" contains some well phrased lines, and the greater part of the matter is interesting as personal revelation, but the high touch of authentic poetry is rarely evident. There is a conversational tone to much of this free verse which suggests the novelist and analyst more than the poet. Poetry is an indefinable fusing of emotion, inevitable words, and revelation; and Mr. Cournos lacks the divine fire to fashion this magical substance. There is no doubt that he *feels* it at times; there is a poet beating in the back of Mr. Cournos's mind. Even the reader senses that. But there is no outlet for it in Mr. Cournos; he cannot command this fiery medium.

Collected Poems: Second Series. By W. H. Davies. Harper and Bros.
Body of This Death. By Louise Bogan. Robert M. McBride and Co.
In Exile. By John Cournos. Boni and Liveright.
Wild Cherry. By Lizette Woodworth Reese. The Norman, Remington Co.