

Morrow Countian
Writes Sparkling
Novel of New York

Ohio Boy Finds Past and Present In "The Village"



DAWN POWELL

THE GOLDEN SPUR by Dawn Powell.
Viking Press, 1962. Pp. 274, \$3.95.

DAWN POWELL, a native of Mount Gilead, Morrow County, is one of the wittiest women in New York and the author of fifteen other novels and several plays.

REVIEWED BY Mahonri Sharp Young, one of the wittiest men in Columbus, Director of the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts and the author of one novel.

DAWN POWELL LOVES NEW YORK as only an Ohioan can and that is what her novels are about, including this one. She loves Greenwich Village, and youth and love in it, and that is what she writes about. She knows the Village well, and seems, to an uptown boy, very much a part of it. Far from blinding, her love gives her keener vision, for this novel, like its predecessors, is very funny indeed, witty and humorous and comical. Her novels are straight, with people in them; this one is about people from Ohio, or at least people from out of state, and about abstract artists whose pictures have no people in them at all.

"The Golden Spur" is a bar where Connie Birch had hung out in the Twenties, and though you'd never believe it, it is still there when her son Jonathan begins his conquest of New York in 1956. The hymn starts early with "the contented purr of the city, a blend of bells, whirring motors, whistles, buildings rising, and buildings falling," "the street of old brick houses, with their fan lights over white doorways, trellised balconies of greenery, magnolia trees, vined walls, cats sunning themselves in windows." Jonathan's mother had prepared him well for his trip to New York, and she had a secret which connected her with "The Golden Spur," which in those days was "the restaurant where the writers and artists go . . . and I've met the most exciting man there and Tessie, he's going to be famous and how could I really go back to John after being in love with a really great man?" Despite her letter to sister Tessie back in Silver City, marry John she did, though after three years he dumped wife and son on Tessie. "John Jaimison turned her in just the way he turned in his car when it went bad."

Jonathan had not enjoyed being a Jaimison anyway, what with their stuffiness and their family reunions. He had always felt that he was destined for greater

things, encouraged more than a bit by his mother and the memory of her golden days. Now, wild and free, "he breathed deep of the heady New York air, that delirious narcotic of ancient sewer dust, gasoline fumes, roasting coffee beans, and the harsh smell of sea that intoxicates inland nostrils." Jonathan found "The Golden Spur" easily, and quickly made it his club, his home.

A Philosopher

Now it was mainly for abstract painters, particularly Hugow, who painted "great lozenges of red and white, (I love blood, he always said), black and white squares, (I love chess, he'd say), big green spikes, (I love asparagus)." According to the bartender a philosopher like all his kind, "The way I size it up is that they got to paint sober, then they're so disgusted with what they've done that they got to get stoned."

Immediately, Jonathan recognized New York as home while the New York experience took place just as it had for his mother. Within a month he knew more about New York than he had ever bothered to learn about central Ohio. He got a job and a place to live with amazing quickness; obviously he had qualities of his own undreamt of in Silver City. They were to help him in the Quest, the search for which he had come to the city, the Quest of the Glaspig Beast. This is his mystery, and the author's, and this reviewer's.

Miss Powell is very convincing on the abstract artist, and leaves us with the proper feeling that he may know what he is doing even though his girl friends don't. And she is knowledgeable indeed on the fringes of literary life, or should we say literary life. She has no illusions about literary gents, large or small: if they're large, they can't write any more, like one of Jonathan's mother's old connections - - - for a mousy girl Connie

must have been very disarming; - - - if they're small, male or female, and both kinds are in the book, they can't get published. She is not even respectful about dealers, who have been unselfishly bringing us culture these last years. Hugow's dealer is a character, a woman who is set on making another Pollock out of him, which even for Barnum wouldn't be easy.

All of these people, introduced so casually, because they had some kind of connection with Connie Birch, turn out to have very strong connections with each other, even the hotel widow we met in the first scene, when Jonathan found the hotel upset by the Major's funeral. Even the Major, who turns out to be the man Jonathan was looking for all along. Quite a girl, Connie! Everybody in the novel is looking for some kind of relationship, and Jonathan finds his. There is more plot than we realized. But in the end, fame is not the spur, New York is.

FUND AT OBERLIN

A David Robertson Memorial Fund, income from which will be used to expand the Oberlin Festival of Contemporary Music, has been established at the College. Mr. Robertson founded the Festival in 1951. He was director of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music from 1949 until his death, at the age of 49, in Paris, France, in 1961.

NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK this year is April 21-27.

NEW MUSIC LISTS

Suggestions for programs of music (1) suitable for Lent and Easter and (2) suitable for performance by young people, all composed by Ohioans, are available, free, from the Ohioana Library. The lists were compiled by Mrs. Edward G. Mead of Cincinnati, a member of the Library's Music Committee.