'Mamser' presents dilettanti

By MIKE JOHNSON

The "Bastard" is off the press. This first issue, is indeed, "as true in shape and as honest as any madam's," and I mirror the hopes of its contributors in wishing that it may not fall prey to the intransigent "curiosity" of the immortal Institute, or be deprived of its share of the light of interest now shining on its two-faced competitor.

Goethe (spoken softly, reverently) once said that there are two kinds of dilettanti writing poetry: he who neglects concern with the structural mechanics of poetry and rests satisfied to have portrayed feeling, and he who hopes to create poetry merely by mechanism, neglecting content.

Form Equals Content

As a good pupil of the modern critics, I would say that poetry must have both to succeed, that form equals content, that structure equals meaning.

The central problem in criticizing the poetry of the new "Bastard" is perhaps the very problem of attempting to define the manner in which these equations are defined in the poetry represented.

The purist in this regard will find himself disappointed, but the poets in question are not professionals, but dilettanti.

As dilettanti, these poets have written poetry, which, while lacking in structural perfection, is nonetheless interesting in content. It is poetry as honest and perhaps as unselfconscious as any I've read in the English language.

Best By Glade

The poem "A Kaddish for Methuselah" by Roger Glade is probably the best poem of the issue. Combining and juxtaposing innumerable surrealist images he has created a work of interest to both the literary critic and the student of Ferenczi and Freud.

However, the poem does not read easily — it is a little rough at points and is, perhaps, too singsong at others; but taken on the whole it is very interesting treatment of the themes of childhood and death.

Geoffrey Bowman's poetry is better in this issue of the "Bastard" than it was in Janus — perhaps partly due to the fact that here one may see more of Bowman's poetry than in Janus; and, of course, Bowman may have learned more of the poetic art in the interim.

Beverly Wehking, writing largely in a form defined somewhere between the hokku and the tanka, has seized and written down some of her thoughts concerning God and man.

The shorter poems are better than the long ones, although the "Satanic Power" poem (while structurally weak) is tonally powerful.

Gary Bennett's "A Tragedy in Five Stanzas" poses a very interesting question for the Christian in the age of the Hell-bomb, robots, and cancerous death. His "After the Bomb" is a somewhat more pointed indictment, and his closing "renaissance piece" is another phrasing of the eternal question of being.

The poetry is poignant in its message; and should the reader think it typical of the existential whiners bearing witness to the death of our wonderful technological world, he might well re-read "After the Bomb."

Compson's Obsessions

The poetry of Charles Sinex reminds one of the obsessions of Quentin Compson, although I don't compare him to Faulkner. His writing is more prosaic than poetic. His crystallization of thought through image is rather effective, especially in the first poem, which is perhaps the best.

Robert Zelenka has written a harpsichord poem — the kind of poem which I have been anticipating from his omnipresent pen.

Grasp At Ultimate

In "Rameau" Mr. Zelenka is again attempting to grasp at ultimates — a characteristic of most of his poetry, but this time he betrays more of the Romantic temperament, less of the philosophic.

These are more honest poems than his seen last on the Rice campus, and more experimental, as the reader may discover in reading "Transcription I."

"Toccata I" is a poem concerning "the moment's meaning," and from my analysis I discern the poet's contemplation of the Kierkegaardian "Augenblick."