OCTOBER, 1914

Songs of the Coast Dwellers

Constance Lindsay Skinner

The Chief’s Prayer After the Salmon Catch—
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SONGS OF THE COAST-DWELLERS

THE CHIEF'S PRAYER AFTER THE SALMON CATCH

KIA-KUNAE, praise!
Thou hast opened thy hand among the stars,
And sprinkled the sea with food;
The catch is great; thy children will live.
See, on the roofs of the villages, the red meat drying;
Another year thou hast encompassed us with life.
Praise! Praise! Kunae!
O Father, we have waited with shut mouths;
With hearts silent, and hands quiet,
Waited the time of prayer,
Lest with fears we should beset thee,
And pray the unholy prayer of asking.
We waited silently; and thou gavest life.

Oh, praise! Praise! Praise!

Open the silent mouths, the shut hearts, my tribe:

[1]
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Sing high the prayer of Thanksgiving,
The prayer He taught in the beginning to the Kwakiutl—
The good rejoicing prayer of thanks.
As the sea sings on the wet shore, when the ice thunders back,
And the blue water floats again, warm, shining, living,
So break thy ice-bound heart, and the cold lip's silence—
Praise Kunae for life, as wings up-flying, as eagles to the sun.
Praise! Praise! Praise!

SONG OF THE SEARCH

I descend through the forest alone.
Rose-flushed are the willows, stark and a-quiver,
In the warm sudden grasp of Spring;
Like a woman when her lover has suddenly, swiftly taken her.
I hear the secret rustle of the little leaves,
Waiting to be born.
The air is a wind of love
From the wings of eagles mating—
O eagles, my sky is dark with your wings!
The hills and the waters pity me,
The pine-trees reproach me.
The little moss whispers under my feet,
"Son of Earth, Brother,
Why comest thou hither alone?"
Song of the Search

Oh, the wolf has his mate on the mountain—
Where art thou, Spring-daughter?
I tremble with love as the reeds by the river,
I burn as the dusk in the red-tented west,
I call thee aloud as the deer calls the doe,
I await thee as hills wait the morning,
I desire thee as eagles the storm;
I yearn to thy breast as night to the sea,
I claim thee as the silence claims the stars.
O Earth, Earth, great Earth,
Mate of God and mother of me,
Say, where is she, the Bearer of Morning,
My Bringer of Song?
Love in me waits to be born,
Where is She, the Woman?

SONG OF THE CONQUEROR OF WOMEN

I am Mo-an-mat-ma, the Dandy.
My tribesmen, jealous, call me Many-Faces;
But the name over my house-door
Is Conqueror of Women.
The Moon-Woman's finger wrote it there.
I am as that red deer of stars
In the night's skyey forest,
Ever pursued by the tossing foam of maidens' love—
Froth from the mouths of hunting wolves!
(Ak! and some that be not maidens—

[3]
My blind-eyed kinsmen, look to the little straying feet
Of such—and this—and that—um’m’m’m—
Look to it! They follow me,
As the twinkling foam-track of hungry stars
Endlessly trails after him, the antlered one, the Red Star—
But takes him never! Aik-Ki-yi-y!

I am the Conqueror of Women!
My grass cap is set round with red breasts of red-breasted
woodpeckers;
My hair is sleek, black, long, bead-twined,
It flashes like the watered fins of Auch-Willo
Striking through the sea in the sun.
It is priceless as the fur of seals:
It is heaven-blossomed, like Yethel's wing.
I am tall, tall, tall and proud,
Proud, proud, proud, and strong;
Strong, strong, strong, like—
Like all the men of the Haidas;
Like all save me, who am tallest, proudest, strongest.
My moccasins are of white doe-skin much embroidered;
Five little rows of smallest white owl-feathers
Go round and round
The star-signs, the love-signs, worked in colored grasses.
(O my kinsman, O No-al-es, would you wed with Ho'g
tonight
If you knew—oh, la la!—who worked my moccasins?)
**Song of the Conqueror of Women**

I am the Conqueror of Women!
My body is swiftly strong as the storm in spring,
And beautifully large as the pale gold sand beneath the moon.
I am long-limbed and thewed like the cliff,
And curved in mighty curves like the shore about the sea.
My voice in love-making is as birds warring.
It is as sea-gulls shrieking, in the ears of women;
In anger—ai-k! how terrible in anger is my voice!
It splits the hearts of women, like Yethel pecking clam-shells.
Ai! They follow, follow my bright moccasins
Through the crooked trails of the woods.
They break my hunting scent; they scare my fishes—
Ak! ak! ak! love-seekers! husband-snatchers!
Foolish, foolish and unwise, you dance after a ghost!
I am Many-Faces, the Dandy; I wed none.
I wed none, I miss none. I lose none.
I am the Conqueror of Women!

**SONG OF THE FULL CATCH**

Here's good wind, here's sweet wind,
Here's good wind and my woman calls me!
Straight she stands there by the pine-tree,
Faithful waits she by the cedar,
She will smile and reach her hands
When she sees my thousand salmon!
Here's good wind and my woman calls me.

[5]
Here's clear water, here's swift water,
Here's bright water and my woman waits me!
She will call me from the sea's mouth—
Sweet her pine-bed when the morning
Lights my canoe and the river ends!
Here's good wind, here's swift water,
Strong as love when my woman calls me!

THE CHANGE-SONG

Death's first snows are drifting on my cheek,
Pale are my lips
As the kiss of Cin-Uza;
I lie low and still.
Near me crouch my silent kinsmen,
They hold the breath and wait the hour of wailing;
They have wrapped the scarlet mourning blanket
Round the shoulders of the oldest man;
He has taken their sorrow.
He droops at my door
Like a bleeding hawk where the eagles have battled.
He is so old he feels not any grief,
His heart is cold,
In his ears no sound is,
And in his eyes no light.
Therefore have my kinsmen given him their griefs—
Because the dawn leaps clear into their eyes,
Because the sound of women's feet
Rustling on the cedar mats when the torch is blown
Calls sweetly to their ears,
And their hearts are beating for the hunt.
They may not bear the sorrow of my passing,
We have known strong joys together!

I take your loves, my kinsmen,
I leave with you no griefs!
Sing, my kinsmen, when ye swing me
To the topmost branches of the cedar.
Sweet-smelling arms of cedar, reach for me,
Tenderly receive me,
Hold me in the Last Caress under open sky!
Sing, my kinsmen, when the oldest man
Takes his lone trail through the forest.
He will wear no mourning-blanket when he comes again tomorrow!
He will say, "Rejoice—
I have borne your grief afar,
I have buried it deep,
The place is not known."
The wind of your singing shall rock me
In the arms of my mother, the cedar.
Yet there is a sweeter song, my kinsmen;
It is the Change-Song of Supreme One.
I hear it now,
He chants it to my heart;
Because pale death has crossed my threshold, and has clasped my hand.
"Fear not," sings Supreme One;
"I am making pure, making pure,
I destroy not life,
I am Life-maker!"

The oldest man has entered the forest.
Ah! Ah! my kinsmen are wailing;
They saw me depart with Death
Into the White Change.
But I go on—and on!
And I sing the Change-Song of Supreme One:
Ha-kehos la no-ya ai-a me la-la
Q' olahag' i-h-e-e- la-wo!

SONG OF THE LITTLE SON

Hear me! I shout, "Ki-Ki-y!"
See me! I shake my little spear!
I am Leqa-a-to'q, the Little Son—
The strong little, swift little, fierce Little Son of the Chief.
Ki! Ki-Ki-y!
When I stamp my mighty little foot, my mother weeps;
She fears me, she trembles;
(Also old Bi'iq, my grandmother.)
The earth trembles, the sea shakes;
My little foot, stamping, rocks all the canoes of the world.
The clouds, like screaming windy birds,
Fly, fly before my little willow-bow.
The eagles screech, leaping to the pine-tops,
When they see me fit my sparkling red-feathered little arrow
To my gleaming bowstring.
Running on the beach above the glistening bay,
For sport, I shake my tall little spear—
Ok—Ki! see the great shadows on the sea!
Kok-wats-Tyee, old Salmon-Chief,
Beckons with his tail all other fishes
And dives to the bottom of the world!
He fears me! Ki-Ki-Ki-y!

Tlet-la, the fisher, calls from his big canoe,
Where my father's twenty tribesmen paddle,
"O Leqa-a-to'q! Little Son! we pray thee,
No longer shake thy frightening spear!
If thou scare all the salmon from the sea,
How shall we eat dried fish when winter dances?
Thy tribe will die!"
Ai!—the sweet smoked fish! I hide my spear;
Once more the sea is full of salmon,
Swimming to the fishers' nets.
I run among the berry bushes,
Crying my fierce "Ki-Ki-y!"—
And laugh to see the wild wolves fleeing.

See Me! I jump the highest log—
Ki-Ki-Ki-y!—
My stuck-out little fingers pierced the sky!
"Leqa-a-to'q!" . . . . . . . Who calls? . . . . . .
(Ho! 'tis but my trembling mother.)
When the beach crawled longly down
To the low sea, at morn,
With my sharp hunting little knife
I killed the fat Father of the Clams!

....."Leqa-a-a-to'q!"....(Ho? ai-ai?...Angrily she calls me!)
Farewell, slaves:
I hear the loud voice of the Great Chief's Great Woman calling,—
The high voice of the Great Chief's great Little Son's great Mother.
"Leqa-a-a-to'q—co-omes!"
See Me!
Grinding, flashing, my long, white, many, fierce, little teeth,
I run, I run, I run—Ki-Ki-Ki-y!—
To eat my big little supper.

SONG OF WHIP-PLAITING

In the dawn I gathered cedar-boughs
For the plaiting of thy whip.
They were wet with sweet drops;
They still thought of the night.

All alone I shredded cedar-boughs,
Green boughs in the pale light,
Where the morning meets the sea,
And the great mountain stops.
Earth was very still.

I heard no sound but the whisper of my knife,
My black flint knife.
It whispered among the white strands of the cedar,
Whispered in parting the sweet cords for thy whip.
O sweet-smelling juice of cedar—
Life-ooze of love!
My knife drips:
Its whisper is the only sound in all the world!

Finer than young sea-lions' hairs
Are my cedar-strands:
They are fine as little roots deep down.
(O little roots of cedar
Far, far under the bosom of Tsa-Kumts!—
They have plaited her through with love.)
Now, into my love-gift
Closely, strongly, I will weave them—
Little strands of pain!
Since I saw thee
Standing with thy torch in my doorway,
Their little roots are deep in me.

In the dawn I gathered cedar-boughs:
Sweet, sweet was their odor,
They were wet with tears!
The sweetness will not leave my hands,
No, not in salt sea-washings:
Tears will not wash away sweetness.
I shall have sweet hands for thy service.

(Ah—sometimes—thou will be gentle?
Little roots of pain are deep, deep in me
Since I saw thee standing in my doorway.)

I have quenched thy torch—
I have plaited thy whip.
I am thy Woman!

SONG OF THE YOUNG MOTHER

M'-m'-m'-m'-n!  N'-n'-n'-n'-m!
A-i-i-he-i—ah-o-he-a-i-ne—
Swing my chiefling fragrantly
On the cedar-branch.
Cedar, Cedar, tenderly
Sway to the singing wind.
Bright flying Wind with song in thy white throat,
And light in thy wide sea-eyes,
The sky's blue feathers on thy wing—
Oh blow, blow, genly, softly, Wind,
Rock my chiefling, Wind,
In his little woven cradle.

When thou wast still a seedling,
Deep in mine earth, months deep,
I sat in thy father's doorway making thy cradle.
At the first light, eager I rose to the weaving;
In the dusk my fingers still threaded,
Needing no light.
I remember my mother sat near me often, watching;
Sometimes weeping. Yes, she wept;
Yet answered not when I asked wherefor.
In the night thou hast waked me at his side—
Dancing, in thy dark house, to the doors that soon must open
On thy white shining dawn-shores of life:
And I have seen the Moon-Woman's round face
Laughing through the smoke-hole, mocking,
Pointing to thy empty cradle hanging.
Ai! but her smile grew kind! She said,
"Wait a little longer, impatient one;
When next my round face peeps through the smoke-hole,
I will seek him at your breast."
Ai-i-hi! Very precious is the man-child!
Ere it is born a woman loves it.
How cam'st thou here, little Chiefling?
A woman gave thee life!

Yes—my mother wept, watching me weave for thee.......
And I have wept, too, a little.

Strange, that pain came with love;
I knew it not until thy father sought me.
Yet—what woman would cast love out?

[13]
Gladly in the dusk I waited him—
None told me, not my mother even, of the pang.
So my heart, joyous, sounded a song of drums,
Beating the loud wild march for his swift-trampling feet.
The breasts of love were as the eaves of a house,
Jutting through the red mists and the dusk of ending day,
Calling the hunter to enter to his rest.
The door trembled with strange winds—
He circled my house with the arms of strength,
And took me with weapons. . . . . . . Joy?
Ay. Yet I cried from the depths with a sudden deep cry,
And in grieving earth was the torch quenched.
. . . . . . . Darkness. . . . and his, his utterly, in that dark . . . . .
None had told me. . . .
Nor that his strength would leap, rejoicing at my cry.

At dawn—it is our custom—I went forth alone
Into the mists that wrap the sleeping cedars
And droop to the pale unwakened sea.
Alone on the dawn's white rim I gathered cedar-boughs.
My tears fell, shining among the earth's bright drops;
For now I knew
Why the maiden plaits a whip of cedar-fibre,
To give into her husband's hand on her marriage-day.
Once I asked my father—it seemed so strange
A maid should weave and weave a rod for her own sorrow.
He laughed and said: "It is our custom; ay, an old custom—
I know not if it means aught now,
Song of the Young Mother

Or ever did have meaning."
My mother sat near. Ay, I have remembered that she spoke not;
But, silently, in the shadow of his body, drooped her head.

Ay, 'tis old, the custom,
Old as earth is old;
Ancient as passion,
Pitiless as passion—
Ay, pitiless, pitiless, the earth-way for women!
Bitter it is, as the taste of bright sea-water,
That he, who takes the gift, and wields our weaving of desire,
Knows not the meaning of the gift—nor can know ever!
Into the heedless hand of passion
We yield our power-of-pain......

It is the law of the earth-way.

So it is with birth-giving.
Aii-he! the mightier pang.
The mightier loving!
And thou and thy father, the two Strong Ones,
Glad, glad, of the woman's pain-cry!

M'-m'-m'-m'-n—Ai-i-he-i—
Sleepest thou, little Fatling?
Ay, thou didst long drink at my breast—
(But hast not drained it of love.)
Cedar, Cedar, carefully
Guard my little brown cone
On thy earth-bending branch.
M'-m'-m'-m'-n—Ai-he-i—
Little life-bud on the bough!
Sleep, sleep, thou drowsy one—
Thou art guarded well.
Ay, rock, rock, safely, safely, little Man-Child—
A woman watches thee.

NO ANSWER IS GIVEN

I am Ah-woa-te, the Hunter.

I met a maiden in the shadow of the rocks;
Her eyes were strange and clear,
Her fair lips were shaped like the bow of dawning.
I asked her name,
Striking my spear in the deep earth for resting.

"I am Kantlak, a maiden, named for the Morning.
On the mountain-top I heard two eagles talking—
The word was Love.
They cried it, beating their wings on each other
Until they bled; and she fell,
Yet, falling, still weakly cried it
To him soaring: and died.
I came to a mossy low valley of flowers."
There I saw Men-iak, the white grouse,
(White with chaste dreams, like the Spring Moon, fairer
than flowers).
Through the forest a dark bird swooped, with fierce eyes,
And Men-iak flew down to it.
Her white breast is red-dyed, she lies on the moss;
Yet faintly cries the same strange word.
Hunter, will you come to my little fire and tell me
What Love is?"

I could not see the maiden's face clearly, for the dusk,
Where she sat by her small fire—only her eyes.
In the little flicker I saw her feet; they were bare—
Tireless, slim brown feet.
I saw how fair her lips were—
I drew nearer to cast my log on the fire. I said:
"Maiden, I am the Hunter.
When dusk ends the chase I leave the Mighty Killing.
Far or near, where gleams some little fire,
I grope through the forest with my heavy log;
Till I find one by the fire, sitting alone without fuel.
I cast my log gladly into the fire—thus.
It grips, the flames mount, the warmth embraces.

"Almost I can see your face, Woman;
The bow of your fair lips is hot with speeded arrows,
Your strange clear eyes have darkened.
Fear not—our fire will outlast the dark."

[17]
"Hunter, what of the cold on the bleak hillside
When the log burns gray, and the fire is ashes?"
I replied, "I have never seen this:
When the fire burns low I am asleep."
She said: "What of me, if I sleep not, and see the ashes?"
I yawned: I said, "I know not;
I wake in the sun and go forth."

The bow of her lips was like the moon's cold circle.
She said, "Hunter, you have told me of Love!"
"It may be so," I answered. I wished to sleep.
She said, "Already it is ashes."
I looked and saw that her face was gray,
As if the wind had blown the ashes over it.
I was angry; I said, "Better you had slept."
She said, "Yes—but I lie bleeding on the moss,
Crying this word."
I answered, "This is so; but wherefore?" and asked, idly,
"Wherefore remember him who brought to your lone little fire
The log that now is ashes?"
She shivered in the cold dawn;
I saw that her eyes were darker than shadows.
Her fair mouth was like my perfect bow,
But I could fit no more arrows to it.

She said, "Hunter, see how gray are these rocks
Where we have sheltered our brief night."

[18]
No Answer is Given

I looked—they were ashen.
She said, "See how they come together here—and here—
As the knees, the breast, the great brow, the forgotten eyes,
Of a woman,
Sitting, waiting, stark and still,
And always gray;
Though hunters camp each night between her knees,
And little fires are kindled and burned out in her hollows."
It was so; the mountain was a stone woman sitting.
Kantlak said, "She remembers him who turned her fire to ashes;
She waits to know the meaning of her waiting—
Why the love that wounded her can never be cast out."

I asked idly, "Who will tell her?"—
And laughed, for the sun was up. I reached for my arrows;
I drew my strong spear from the deep earth by her feet.
Kantlak looked up to the other gray face, and said,
"No answer is given."
Down to the cold white endless sea-shore
Slowly she went, with bend head.
A young deer cast its leaping shadow on the pool.
I ran upon the bright path, swaying my spear.

Constance Lindsay Skinner.

[19]
IN THE LABORATORY

So you have lost your keen Italian craft—
You, sir, with the pale-blue steady eyes.
The restless liquids changing in a wink,
The elemental catch-and-cling, the flames,
The quiet cultures hatching hour by hour—
All these are not the secret Kiss-of-Death?
You do not follow me? It’s just as well—
I only muse on fashions of your trade.
For you, the present mode’s enough; for you
The rose-red liquor of the Borgia’s feast,
The ointment on the blade at Elsinore,
The cobra-touch of the Byzantine ring—
Crude things they seem, I take it, in your eyes......
And yet they had their midnight will of life.

But you have lost the pose, the furtive air.
That devilish old theatric charlatan
Had much the better of you, sir, in style.
This same clear glass—he used it for a gaze
That hoped to glimpse the cloudy shape of Fate.
You spread a drop upon a slide; stain it
Some hue that pierces evil things alone—
(Magic in that? A little, if you like)—
And balance in its groove this paltry drop.
The light gleams through it to the lens above.
No, I can’t look, sir......It’s my life, you know.

[20]
In the Laboratory

Give me a moment. Let me prattle on.
What's this? And this? Grave issues, every one.
This tells you if a beam of ribboned steel
Will hold some daring tower against the sky.
These tubes?—the milk tests: ah, the little lives
That hang in peril till you mark them safe.
And this?—a matter of your own research.
You are still curious? A mere chance, you think—
I understand. Into the springs of life,
The primal secrets and the hidden wells,
You peer when trade is dull. You tear apart
The final atoms in their whirling dance,
And trust they may not find their way again.
The mind of God is swift . . . . And so is Death.

No, sir, not yet. The first look must be mine.
How should it stand? If the round discs are clear—
Fair winds, and hope, and lengthening days, you say?
Good! Fear, sir, is a grisly thing to feel.
If they be tinged with violet, then the plague—
The pale, slow plague—is rotting out my life.
Suppose I dash the thing aside, and slay
The messenger of evil ere he speak?
No, no!—a moment more. That was my Fear
Who sometimes cries before I crush him down.
Now I will know . . . . The violet shade, you say,
Is the death sign; the white is innocent.
Well, now the hoary wings of doom are poised
Above me, and I feel their fluttering. . . .
Tomorrow, and the fostering sun, the flowers,
The kisses and the songs, the green spring roads,
And all my soul's new fortunes and desires,
Tremble across this disc of light. Ah, God!
Some brandy! Sweet Life! The glass is clear.

Thomas Wood Stevens
TO J. L.

Often within the house where we have met
You are an aching presence and a pain,
The cruel obsession of a tortured brain
With only you and loss of you beset.
Each room where you have moved is a regret;
In every spot some self of you is slain.
And "Oh," I question, "must he die again,
And die a thousand deaths till I forget!"

But when I plunge into the moving street,
Into the vital sunlight and keen air,
When face to face and life to life I meet
My living brothers, all the old despair
Falls from me; in the faces that I greet,
And in the quickened heart-throbs, you are there.

A GIRL STRIKE-LEADER

A white-faced, stubborn little thing
Whose years are not quite twenty years;
Eyes steely now and done with tears,
Mouth scornful of its suffering—

[23]
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The young mouth!—body virginal
Beneath the cheap, ill-fitting suit;
A bearing quaintly resolute;
A flowering hat, satirical.

A soul that steps to the sound of the fife
And banners waving red to war;
Mystical, knowing scarce wherefore—
A Joan in a modern strife.

CITY OF HUGE BUILDINGS

City of huge buildings into which men have poured their souls,
City of innumerable schools where little children are taught and cared for,
City of the great University, discussing solemn and learned questions,
City of well-dressed, beautiful women, sleek, satisfied, sure of their clothes and of themselves,
And their husbands sleek and satisfied also:
I, a common prostitute, in the wan morning buying cocaine,
Ask you the meaning of it all.

Florence Kiper Frank

[24]
ON THE JAIL STEPS

I've won the race.
Young man, I'm new!
Old Sallow-face,
Good luck to you!

I've turned about,
And paid for sin.
And you come out,
As I go in.

Ten years! but mark,
I am free, free!
Ten years of dark
Shall gather me.

My wife—long-while
She wept her pain.
She cannot smile;
She weeps again.

My little one
Shall know my call.
Child is there none,
For sin grows tall.

Now who are you,
Spar of hell's flood?
And who, and who,
But your own blood?

[25]
A STATUE IN A GARDEN

I was a goddess ere the marble found me.
Wind, wind, delay not!
Waft my spirit where the laurel crowned me!
Will the wind stay not?

Then tarry, tarry, listen, little swallow!
An old glory feeds me—
I lay upon the bosom of Apollo!
Not a bird heeds me.

For here the days are alien. Oh, to waken
Mine, mine, with calling!
But on my shoulders bare, like hopes forsaken,
The dead leaves are falling.

The sky is gray and full of unshed weeping
As dim down the garden
I wait and watch the early autumn sweeping.
The stalks fade and harden.

The souls of all the flowers afar have rallied.
The trees, gaunt, appalling,
Attest the gloom, and on my shoulders pallid
The dead leaves are falling.

Agnes Lee
RETROSPECT

In your arms was still delight,
Quiet as a street at night;
And thoughts of you, I do remember,
Were green leaves in a darkened chamber,
Were dark clouds in a moonless sky.
Love, in you, went passing by,
Penetrative, remote, and rare,
Like a bird in the wide air,
And, as the bird, it left no trace
In the heaven of your face.
In your stupidity I found
The sweet hush after a sweet sound.
All about you was the light
That dims the graying end of night;
Desire was the unrisen sun,
Joy the day not yet begun,
With tree whispering to tree,
Without wind, quietly.
Wisdom slept within your hair,
And Long-Suffering was there,
And, in the flowing of your dress,
Undiscerning Tenderness.
And when you thought, it seemed to me,
Infinitely, and like a sea,
About the slight world you had known
Your vast unconsciousness was thrown...
O haven without wave or tide!
Silence, in which all songs have died!
Holy book, where hearts are still!
And home at length under the hill!
O mother quiet, breasts of peace,
Where love itself would faint and cease!
O infinite deep I never knew,
I would come back, come back to you,
Find you, as a pool unstirred,
Kneel down by you, and never a word,
Lay my head, and nothing said,
In your hands, ungarlanded;
And a long watch you would keep;
And I should sleep, and I should sleep!

*Rupert Brooke*
I HAVE protested in private, and I now protest more openly, against the motto upon the cover of POETRY. The artist is not dependent upon his audience. This sentence is Whitman tired. You have only to compare Whitman to my mutton-headed ninth cousin, or to any other American of his time who had the "great audience," to see the difference of result.

And for all that, Whitman was not such a poet as Dante, who never gave way, and from whom we have the tradition of an answer more becoming to genius: "Quem stulti magis odissent." When they asked him who was wisest in the city he answered, "He whom the fools hate worst."

The artist is not dependent upon the multitude of his listeners. Humanity is the rich effluvium, it is the waste and the manure and the soil, and from it grows the tree of the arts. As the plant germ seizes upon the noble particles of the earth, upon the light-seeking and the intrepid, so does the artist seize upon those souls which do not fear transfusion and transmutation, which dare become the body of the god.

I ask you, had Synge an audience in his life-time? He was hounded or despised by a half-educated, Zoroastrian rabble of "respectable" people more stupid and sodden than is to be found even in America. He had a scant handful
of friends. Had Dante the popular voice? He had his youthful companionship with Guido, and correspondence with a man from Pistoja and with the latinist De Virgilio.

Must we restrict this question to poets? I ask the efficient man in any department of life. Can we have no great inventors without a great audience for inventors? Had Curie a great audience? Had Ehrlich for his bacilli? Can we have no great financier without a great audience? Had the savior of the world a great audience? Did he work on the magazine public?

Is there any use carrying it further? Did not the disciples of Confucius beg him to do something popular? Have we not his imperturbable answer? "So you wish me to become famous—shall I take up archery or charioteering? I shall take up charioteering."

It is true that the great artist has in the end, always, his audience, for the Lord of the universe sends into this world in each generation a few intelligent spirits, and these ultimately manage the rest. But this rest—this rabble, this multitude—does not create the great artist. They are aimless and drifting without him. They dare not inspect their own souls.

It is true that the great artist has always a great audience, even in his life time; but it is not the vulgo but the spirits of irony and of destiny and of humor, sitting within him.

Ezra Pound.
Controversy is good for the soul, and the magazine which expresses but one opinion is doomed.

Of course, as Mr. Pound says, there is a sense in which a "great audience" may be a very small one. That was hardly Whitman's meaning, however, nor is it the hint we intend to convey by our motto. Modern inventions, forcing international travel, inter-racial thought, upon the world, have done away with Dante's little audience, with his contempt for the crowd, a contempt which, however, disregarded the fact that his epic, like all the greatest art, was based upon the whole life of his time, the common thought and feeling of all the people. No small group today can suffice for the poet's immediate audience, as such groups did in the stay-at-home aristocratic ages; and the greatest danger which besets modern art is that of slighting the "great audience" whose response alone can give it authority and volume, and of magnifying the importance of a coterie.

In an essay on *The Bigness of the World* (*Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1911) I discussed this question of the poet and his audience at greater length than POETRY has space for. The concluding paragraphs were:

Great art, the highest art, comes only when profound energy of creation meets profound energy of sympathy. The leader must have his army behind him, the *vates* must hear an outcry of passion and understanding from all his world. Of old, when the poet spoke for a few, the response of the few was enough. Today, when he must speak for the many, the many must hear him, must not only hear but understand him in their profoundest secret instincts of sympathy or rebellion; else he can not utter
the truth that is in him, and modern democracy must go uninspired.

Thus we shall hardly have our votes until our huge heterogeneous crowd becomes as aware of the spirit as it is today of the flesh, as keen for truth and beauty as it is today for comfort. . . . The inventors have had their world behind them; modern democracy is still giving them its commands. Science takes no step forward that the man in the street does not know: he thrills over X-rays and radium, he is eager to test the mono-rail, he jokes about the inhabitants of Mars. In this direction lies increase of comfort and knowledge; here the creative energy of our age meets equal energy of sympathy, and each day records a new miracle. And all these are glorious deeds, necessary to the making of a larger world. We live in a great age, but a greater age must come.

Already there are many signs of an awakening of spiritual consciousness in the crowd—confused and scattered signs of far-blown sympathies, exaltations, ideals. Democracy is becoming awake and aware, is discovering a deeper need than the need of food and raiment. At present this instinct is vague and formless, voiced in dim and clouded questionings, almost world-wide political doubt, spiritual unrest. The new democracy must grope and wander, lingering among vast uncharted uncertainties. It must search long for its poet-prophet who shall sing the old era away and usher in the new. And when he comes he must be of spiritual stature great enough to stand fitly on mountain-tops and speak for a world more vast than man has ever known.

Art is not an isolated phenomenon of genius, but the expression of a reciprocal relation between the artist and his public. Like perfect love, it can be supreme only when the relation is complete. There is a magic in it beyond the reach of reason, a magic which Whitman felt when he wrote the sentence printed on our cover. Science is explaining more and more the reactions and relations of matter, of life. It becomes increasingly clear that nothing can stand alone, genius least of all.

H. M.
NATIONALISM IN ART

American and English critics do love to talk about American art. They tell us just what it ought to be about, and how it should be presented. They are constantly on the qui vive to detect foreign ideas and alien interests, and even if forced to admit good work in something possessing these baneful qualities, they are sure to heave a sigh, and deplore the fact that it is "un-American."

It would seem that the only thing to cure critics of this attitude would be a course in psychology. It is not so surprising that English critics, ignorant of our civilization, and of the vastness of our country and its many and various intellectual reactions, should erect a spurious ideal of what literature here should be. But that our own critics should persist in demanding a narrow and purely surface "Americanism" is more astonishing.

To their minds "Americanism" would seem to consist of a mixture of trade-unionism, slums (neither of which phenomena, it may be remarked, is peculiar to this country), polyethnic factories, and limitless prairies peopled by heroic cow-boys. This would appear to be a rather narrow range in which to confine the art of a great nation. For we are a great nation, and that supremely interesting thing, a nation in the making. Is our lack of a correspondingly great art due to our youth, or to other, and more artificial, causes?

To all people who find art a worthy preoccupation and endeavor, this question is one of paramount interest. What can we do to get ourselves worthily down on canvas or
paper? How can we produce that concourse of great artists which the critics are always fuming at us for not possessing? How angry they would be if we suggested that they were one of the obstacles which stand in the way, that this constant talk and urging on the subject of "Americanism" was one of the surest ways not to get it. We have gone daft in this country on the "social," we speak of people as though their only value were in the aggregate. We pounce upon individualism with jeers, and sneers, and misunderstanding. Universal suffrage works as badly in the domain of the arts as it does in Wall Street. In fact, it undoubtedly works worse. For there are many more able business men than there are able artists, so the public may very well be supposed to have an apter judgment in business affairs than in letters. Not that the public is not a good judge of results. The "man in the street" can see the difference between a great financier and the keeper of the corner grocery. And great artists attain their rank through universal (though not always popular) opinion. Certainly the public sees results, but the public is not a very good judge of how results are to be come by.

Art is a thing of the individual. It is all very well to group by-gone artists into schools for class-room convenience. It amuses a certain type of mind to fasten tags upon living men. It interests readers and stimulates their curiosity to line artists up in opposing factions like the two sides of a base-ball game. But these are purely exterior phenomena and leave the profound individuality of the artist untouched. So shy and unaccountable is the creative impulse that it has
Nationalism in Art

so far defied the researches of psychologists. It depends upon a number of physical and mental phenomena, worked upon by environment. And it is this subtle, elusive, and awe-inspiring thing which the critics are so anxious to push here and there!

A nation is its character, just as a man is. Personality is made up of all sorts of traits and habits, cross-sectioning and inhibiting each other. It is in its essence, in the kind of character a man has, that his national character comes out. It is stupid and impertinent to be forever telling a man to try and be someone else. The American artist must first of all be encouraged to be himself, and by being himself openly and fearlessly he will also be entirely American. In fact, he could not help it if he would. We are a nation with marked characteristics; there is no lack of national flavor about us. That we do not get it into our literature is because of another national trait—we are conventional, hopelessly, timidly so. All the intellectual revolts and movements come from abroad. But, and here is the point, American artists living abroad are usually in the van of such movements. Whistler led one of the most important artistic reforms of our time, and one of the best known of the French symbolists is Stuart Merrill, an American. No, we are not stupid, and not incapable of the seething intellectual force which makes for change, but here at home we live in an atmosphere of stuffy monotony, and the critics, who should be our teachers and helpers, are forever asking us to mold ourselves on one pattern.

[35]
No other country has treated its artists so. Other countries have realized that in the richness and many-sidedness of artistic achievement lies the greatness of national artistic life.

Musicians speak of the "attack" with which a singer takes a note. National character is shown in this quality of "attack," the way an artist takes a subject, the fluid play of his personality about it. Let us show a little more trust in our artists, let us believe that they know what is good for themselves better than we do. And when an American artist, with all the force and vitality of his go-ahead American nature, braves the scorn of the critics and lays a beautiful pomegranate before us, let us not weep or scold because it is not a rice pudding.

Poe and Walt Whitman share the honor of being America's greatest poets. And what a difference! How unlike are the subjects which inspired them, and how utterly unlike their forms of "attack." But it is quite obvious to the most casual reader that neither of them could have come out of any country except America. It is the fashion to call Poe an exotic. Why? Because there has only been one of him? Could he have been an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German? Clearly he has none of the national traits of these, or any other foreign countries. It must be then because he is a genius that we fail to see the American in him. Is it not a little sad that genius is so rare with us that when it appears we dub it "exotic?"

No, what the American artist needs to be told is to be himself. And to spare no study to present that self as it
Nationalism in Art

really is. If a poet chooses the ancient Aztec civilization as the background for a poem, it may be as purely "American" a production as though he had laid his scene in the lower East Side of New York at the present day. If he chooses to people the Kentucky woods with fairies, who are we to bar out the fine play of his imagination as alien to our national temper? And is it not a little ludicrous, perhaps pathetic, to have a reviewer upbraid him because he has not chosen to write about the laborers on the adjacent farms? What reviewers of that type do not understand is, that neither poet nor painter chooses his subject. It is the subject which chooses him; he can no more help his preferences and inspirations than he can help the shape of his head.

These unscientifically trained reviewers seem to think that a man decides what is to ignite his creative impulse as wilfully and calmly as he would choose a number at a roulette table; and, the subject taken, they speak as though the rest were chance. A profound ignorance of psychic laws is responsible for these ideas. The fact would seem to be just the reverse. An artist cannot choose his number, but he can learn to spin his wheel. We are afraid to go to school lest we cease to be ourselves. A strong man gains an added sense of power by everything he learns. Every great artist has spent a life of laborious learning. He has mastered his technique with infinite pains, and by so doing has been able to fling his personality unimpeded before the world. The only motto for a serious artist is: WORK! Instead of begging us to be what we are not, the critics
POETRY:  
A Magazine of Verse

should urge us to be more fully what we are. Only so will they hasten the day when America will have the great artists for which she clamors.

Amy Lowell.

REVIEWS


Imagism is essentially a graphic art, and, like the finest etching, print or wood-cut, depends upon a highly cultivated state of appreciation in the observer. It is not an art of the naive or unsophisticated. A great many of the classical poems of the Japanese are also graphic in the sense in which I use it here. Their poems exist independently, it is true, of the pictures that they were designed to accompany, or that were made, in their turn, to complete the text of the poet; but the spirit of the poem was based upon this dual appreciation. In other words, it was based upon a mental image to which more than one sense, or more than one art-sense, was contributory. The fact that poet and painter played into each other’s hands, so to speak, was due to a more general culture in art than many of us in the west possess, and it was due also to the non-imitative quality of the respective arts. Perhaps this is one reason why the visual element, which plays an important part in the poems in this volume, is not likely to find ready appreciation or understanding.

“An Image,” Mr. Pound says, “is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.”

[38]
The moon rose full, and the women stood as though around an altar.  

How shall I find the white flower  
That resembles the hoar-frost?  
When I think I have come upon it—  
It is only a flake of white crystal  
That melts in my fingers.

_Sappho_

_In several brief poems by Mr. Pound in this anthology the Image would not exist without this contributory sense of delicate vision:

Be in me as the eternal moods  
of the bleak wind, and not
As transient things are—  
gaiety of flowers.
Have me in the strong loneliness  
of sunless cliffs
And of gray waters.
Let the gods speak softly of us
In days hereafter.  
The shadowy flowers of Orcus
Remember Thee.

_O fan of white silk,
  clear as frost on the grass-blade,
You also are laid aside.
The petals fall in the fountain,
  the orange-colored rose-leaves,
Their ochre clings to the stone.

Mr. Aldington also gives a delightful visual impression in _Au Vieux Jardin_, which one New York reviewer frankly finds ridiculous; no doubt because a delicate combination of color could never set him "nigh to weeping!" And the same reviewer objects to "the delicate artificiality, the delicate antiquity, the delicate futility" of the imagist poems. But
there are hands of otherwise very worthy people to which one would not confide the delicate artificiality, the delicate antiquity, the delicate futility of an Etruscan vase.

"But the Etruscan vase was not futile, but useful," the reviewer would probably object.

"Yes, but would not the most vulgar manufactured china-jug serve as well?" he might be answered.

The futility, after all, is in the impossibility of imposing a selective choice on the naturally unselective.

Modernity, moreover, is not objective, not a matter of time and place. A sparrow hopping on the lawn in London appeals to this reviewer; but substitute Athens for London, and his sense of modernity would be outraged.

There is much individual variety in the expression of the eleven poets represented in this anthology, but all the poems are more or less bound together by certain tendencies which it is unnecessary to indicate here, as the principles of Imagism have been set forth at some length in this magazine and about three-fourths of the poems included were first published in POETRY. The collection of the poems in a single volume is valuable as affording a concentrative expression of the group, and an appended bibliography increases its value for the collector.  

A. C. H.

[40]
Sonnets From The Patagonian, by Donald Evans. Marie Claire.
Saloon Sonnets With Sunday Flutings, by Allen Norton. Marie Claire.

There are signs of a late grafting of the spirit of the eighteen-nineties upon certain young poets of the United States. Of course we have had earlier and more authentic indications of that spirit in poets whose work is based upon the artistic methods of the nineties, but the grafting of which I speak represents rather a tendency to imitate only that phase of the cult whose literary trademark is the sophistication of wickedness.

Curiously enough, this phase seems to have fastened itself particularly upon New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Chicago, with the exception of a few cases transferred to Greenwich Village, seems to have escaped this light attack of the measles. I was told lately of an argumentative contest between two young poets, each of whom desired to prove that he was wickeder than the other! To a remark that the out-worn, very much passé desire to épater les bourgeois was no doubt at the root of the matter, a friend responded that these young men did not, indeed, care so much to shock others as to shock themselves; and the remarkable fact was that they succeeded so well!

Not a little of this foolish and rather wasteful child's play, in combination with certain post-impressionist leanings, is found in the two volumes of poems by Mr. Donald Evans and Mr. Allen Norton.
Mr. Evans has a decided gift for unique and memorable phrasing derived from a concise perception of the complexity of a mood. Many of these phrases occur in poems that have been quoted by reviewers for the sake of the supposed jolt they would give the public, but there are other poems less obvious in intention and more subtle; and there is much natural vigor in his work. Rhythmically, his sonnets are rather monotonous. Mr. Norton's sonnets are even more metronomically regular, and his impressions are choppy and hurried, giving the effect of confusion rather than of clarity. In many cases he kills his images before they are born. His Sunday Flutings are more musical; but he, even more than Mr. Evans, seems to be still fin de siècle. A. C. H.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

In addition to much good criticism, non-academic and personal, The St. Louis Mirror often publishes poetry that deserves more than casual recognition. In the Spoon River Anthology, Mr. Webster Ford unites something of the feeling and method of the Greek Anthology with a trace of the spirit of Villon; but the "tradition" has only served to lead him to a little cemetery in a small town—it might be any small town—in the United States, where death reveals life in a series of brief tragic epitaphs. We regret that we have space to quote only a few of the poems:

[42]
Our Contemporaries

OLLIE M'GEE

Have you seen walking through the village
A man with downcast eyes and haggard face?
That is my husband who by secret cruelty,
Never to be told, robbed me of my youth and my beauty
Till at last wrinkled and with yellow teeth,
And with broken pride and shameful humility,
I sank into the grave.
But what think you gnaws at my husband's heart?
The face of what I was, the face of what he made me!
These are driving him to the place where I lie.
In death, therefore, I am avenged.

DOC HILL

I went up and down the streets
Here and there by day and night,
Through all hours of the night caring for the poor who were sick.
Do you know why?
My wife hated me, my son went to the dogs.
And I turned to the people and poured out my love to them.
Sweet it was to see the crowds about the lawns on the day of my funeral,
And hear them murmur their love and sorrow.
But oh, dear God, my soul trembled, scarcely able To hold to the railing of the new life,
When I saw Em Stanton behind the oak tree At the grave.
Hiding herself, and her grief!

THE HILL

Where are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and Charley,
The weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozzer, the fighter?
All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

One passed in a fever,
One was burned in a mine,
One was killed in a brawl,
One died in a jail,
One fell from a bridge toiling for children and wife—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.
Where are Ella, Kate, Mag, Lizzie and Edith
The tender heart, the simple soul, the loud, the proud, the happy one?
All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

One died in shameful child-birth,
One of a thwarted love.
One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,
One of a broken pride, in the search for heart's desire,
One, after life in far away London and Paris,
Was brought to her little space by Ella and Kate and Mag—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,
And old Towny Kincaid and Sevigne Houghton,
And Major Walker who had talked
With venerable men of the revolution?
All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

They brought them dead sons from the war,
And daughters whom life had crushed,
And their children fatherless, crying.
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Where is Old Fiddler Jones
Who played with life all his ninety years,
Braving the sleet with bared breast,
Drinking, rioting, thinking neither of wife nor kin,
Nor gold, nor love, nor heaven?
Lo! he babbles of the fish-frys of long ago,
Of the horse-races of long ago at Clary's Grove,
Of what Abe Lincoln said
One time at Springfield.

"Vorticism" is the latest official title of the latest literary and artistic revolution in England, and Blast, a quarterly published by John Lane, with a bright cerise cover that makes one feel as if the outer cuticle had been removed, is its official organ. There is much entertainment to be had from the
Our Contemporaries

various Manifestos, tables of Curses, and equally profane Benedictions included, and no small food for thought—if thought is the product of such pre-digested nutriment. I say pre-digested advisedly, for the quarterly represents the height of sophistication, and it is only those who are, if possible, more sophisticated who will find about Blast something of the wan excitement of Fourth of July Fireworks on the day after the Fourth. There is no doubt that its authors have found great joy in its creation, and this, in the face of the complete inertia which surrounded them, must have been well worth the effort. As they prayed for a breeze that would “stiffen the back of the Serpentine and put aquatic steel half-way down the Manchester Canal,” let us hope that the prompt fulfilment of their wish by the obliging European war-lords may not postpone the second number of the quarterly.

The present number includes, in addition to Manifestos, Reviews, Notes, etc., etc., a play by Wyndham Lewis, a story by Rebecca West, the first chapters of a serial by Ford Madox Hueffer, poems by Ezra Pound, reproductions of drawings and sculpture by futuristic artists.

A COMMENT

By the Other Woman in Hueffer’s poem On Heaven in Poetry for June 1914

For those who have won earthly love
Immortal joys are spread;
Kind God, hush thou my soul to sleep
When I am dead.

[45]
NOTES

Miss Constance Skinner, who was born in British Columbia, was brought up among the Indian tribes of the Northwest. Her father, a government official, used to take the child with him on his rounds, so that she became friendly with many primitive bards. When she began to interpret their work in English, the themes found their own form, dictated by the poet's feeling for the old rhythms, her intimate knowledge of Indian love and character gained through early association and impression, and her later study of material gleaned at first hand.

Her first Indian poem, *Song of Whip-Plaiting*, proved, on analysis, to be accompanied by a primitive musical theme, something more than a monotonous chant, which filled in the verbal pauses in places and marked out the changes of mood and sentiment and of the beat and tempo. The *diminuendo* and *crescendo*, the *rallentando* and *accelerando*, the rest, *staccato*, *rubato* and *sostenuto* are clearly perceptible to the ear in all the songs; but are most easily followed by the layman in the *Chief's Prayer after the Salmon-catch*, which—of its own initiative, without design—achieved the form and beat of the *Bilgula Death-Song* in the original tongue. The *Song of Full Catch* was suggested by the Canadian halfbreed voyageur song, *V'là le bon Vent*, and follows its melody, which seems more Indian than Gallic. The author says:

Primitive song was the spontaneous utterance of feeling. Intellectuality and learning were negligible. The spoken lines were in broken metre, and the idea, which was an emotional rather than an intellectual conception, was completed by the accompanying
instrumental theme. It was strongly endowed with the primal and essential qualities of poetry, viz., passion and aspiration: the lifting of the heart from the visible to that invisible of which it is symbolical.

We add a few notes explanatory of tribal customs on which these poems are founded:

Chief’s Prayer. With this tribe no prayer but one of thanksgiving is ever offered to Supreme One. They say, “He has all wisdom and knows what we need and we cannot advise Him; but the praise of those who know He is their Father and trust Him is pleasing to Him.” Kindness is the social and individual ideal of the tribe.

Ku-na-e is pronounced in three syllables, with the accent on the second.

The Search. The lover wanders in the forest asking the earth to show him where love is. Earth reveals to him the name of the maiden he desires, so he returns to her at dusk with the sanction of all Nature to give force to his wooing.

The Change Song. Some tribes bury their dead on the highest tree tops. They bend down the tops with ropes, etc., fasten the body thereon in an open coffin, then let the trees leap skyward again with the departed. They wrap the red-dyed mourning blanket round the oldest man and he goes alone secretly into the woods and buries the “grief of the tribe” in a place known only to himself. In the way of nature he will die next, supposedly, and then the “grief” will be utterly unknown: also Age bears the grief because it has no longer any thrilling joys to be clouded.

Whip-plaiting. In some tribes the lover brings a torch at night and sets it, alight, in the sand floor within his beloved’s doorway. If she accepts him she quenches the flame in the earth and goes to him in the darkness: The cedar-tree is literally the tree of life, supplying fibre for weaving baskets, cradles, mats, blankets, whips, the ornaments used in religious ceremonies and even food in fish famine, besides drooping boughs on which to hang babies in cradles for the wind to rock them.
Thomas Wood Stevens, poet, playwright, etcher and maker of pageants, lived until recently in Chicago, going thence to Pittsburgh, where he is now in charge of the Theatre of the School of Applied Design of the Carnegie Institute. Mr. Stevens has printed several small books of verse, among them the poetic pageants, Illinois, The Old Northwest, Independence Day, and The Daimio's Head.

Mr. Rupert Brooke is a young English poet who has recently crossed this country after a long sojourn in Tahiti and other South Sea islands. He is represented in Georgian Verse, and, together with Mr. Abercrombie and one or two other poets, he publishes, at irregular intervals, New Numbers, in which Retrospect will soon appear.

Florence Kiper Frank (Mrs. Jerome N. Frank) is a young Chicago poet who has published verse and prose in various magazines.

Agnes Lee (Mrs. Otto T. Freer) is well known to readers of Poetry.

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