Vol. XIII  No. IV

Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
January 1919

The Only Jealousy of Emer
A Myth Play by W. B. Yeats

Alice Corbin, Agnes Lee,
and Marjorie Seiffert

Five Years of Italian Poetry
with translations, E. Carnevali

543 Cass Street, Chicago

$2.00 per Year  Single Numbers 20¢
The University of Chicago Library

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Modernist Journals Project
Vol. XIII

POETRY for JANUARY, 1919

The Only Jealousy of Emer .... William Butler Yeats 175
Red Earth ........................................ Alice Corbin 194
Muy Vieja Mexicana—On the Acequia Madre—El Rito de Santa Fe
Candle-light and Sun .............. Alice Corbin 197
Candle-light—The Mask—Rain-prayer—Fame—Song of Sunlight
Pictures of Women ................. Agnes Lee 200
An Old Woman with Flowers—The Slacker—The Broken Tie—Bark-bound—In the Morgue—The Sweeper
The Old Woman .................. Marjorie Allen Seiffert 204
Five Years of Italian Poetry (1910-1915), with translations from Corrado Govoni, Salvatore di Giacomo, Piero Jahier, Aldo Palezzeschi, Umberto Saba, and Scipio Slataper ................ Emanuel Carnevali 209
Reviews:
Great Poetry ................. H. M. 219
Kreyborg's Plays for Poem-mimes .......... Marjorie Allen Seiffert 224
Our Contemporaries—Two New Ones ........ 227
Correspondence:
About Mr. Underwood's Prize ........ 228
Mr. Aiken and the Essential Industry .................. 230
Notes and Books Received ............. 232

Manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope.
Inclusive yearly subscription rates: In the United States, Mexico, Cuba and American possessions, $2.00 net; in Canada, $2.15 net; in all other countries in the Postal Union, $2.25 net. Entered as second-class matter Nov. 15, 1912, at the post-office, at Chicago, Ill., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published monthly at 543 Cass St., Chicago, Ill

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THE ONLY JEALOUSY OF EMER

ENTER Musicians, with musical instruments. The First Musician pauses at the centre and stands with a cloth between his hands. The stage can be against the wall of any room.

First Musician [during the unfolding and folding of the cloth]:
A woman’s beauty is like a white Frail bird, like a white sea-bird alone At daybreak after stormy night Between two furrows upon the ploughed land: A sudden storm and it was thrown Between dark furrows upon the ploughed land. How many centuries spent The sedentary soul In toils of measurement

[175]
Beyond eagle or mole,
Beyond hearing or seeing,
Or Archimedes guess,
To raise into being
That loveliness?

A strange unserviceable thing,
A fragile, exquisite, pale shell,
That the vast troubled waters bring
To the loud sands before day has broken.
The storm arose and suddenly fell
Amid the dark before day had broken.
What death? what discipline?
What bonds no man could unbind
Being imagined within
The labyrinth of the mind?
What pursuing or fleeing?
What wounds, what bloody press?
Dragged into being
This loveliness.

[When the cloth is folded again the Musicians take their place against the wall. The folding of the cloth shows on one side of the stage the curtained bed or litter on which lies a man in his grave-clothes. He wears an heroic mask. Another man in the same clothes and mask crouches near the front. Emer is sitting beside the bed.]

First Musician [speaking]: I call before the eyes a roof
With cross-beams darkened by smoke.
A fisher’s net hangs from a beam,
A long oar lies against the wall.
I call up a poor fisher’s house.
A man lies dead or swooning—
That amorous man,
That amorous, violent man, renowned Cuchulain—
Queen Emer at his side.
At her own bidding all the rest have gone.
But now one comes on hesitating feet,
Young Eithne Inguba, Cuchulain’s mistress.
She stands a moment in the open door.
Beyond the open door the bitter sea,
The shining, bitter sea is crying out,
[singing] White shell, white wing,
I will not choose for my friend
A frail unserviceable thing
That drifts and dreams, and but knows
That waters are without end
And that wind blows.

Emer [speaking]: Come hither, come sit down beside the bed
You need not be afraid, for I myself
Sent for you, Eithne Inguba.

Eithne Inguba: No, Madam,
I have too deeply wronged you to sit there.

Emer: Of all the people in the world we two,
And we alone, may watch together here,
Because we have loved him best.

Eithne Inguba: And is he dead?
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

Emer: Although they have dressed him out in his grave-clothes
And stretched his limbs, Cuchulain is not dead.
The very heavens when that day’s at hand,
So that his death may not lack ceremony,
Will throw out fires, and the earth grow red with blood.
There shall not be a scullion but foreknows it
Like the world’s end.

Eithne Inguba: How did he come to this?
Emer: Towards noon in the assembly of the kings
He met with one who seemed a while most dear.
The kings stood round; some quarrel was blown up;
He drove him out and killed him on the shore
At Baile’s tree. And he who was so killed
Was his own son begot on some wild woman
When he was young, or so I have heard it said.
And thereupon, knowing what man he had killed,
And being mad with sorrow, he ran out;
And after to his middle in the foam,
With shield before him and with sword in hand,
He fought the deathless sea. The kings looked on
And not a king dared stretch an arm, or even
Dared call his name, but all stood wondering
In that dumb stupor like cattle in a gale;
Until at last, as though he had fixed his eyes
On a new enemy, he waded out
Until the water had swept over him.
But the waves washed his senseless image up
And laid it at this door.

Eithne Inguba: How pale he looks!
Emer: He is not dead.
Eithne Inguba: You have not kissed his lips
Nor laid his head upon your breast.
Emer: It may be
An image has been put into his place,
A sea-born log bewitched into his likeness,
Or some stark horseman grown too old to ride
Among the troops of Mananan, Son of the Sea,
Now that his joints are stiff.
Eithne Inguba: Cry out his name.
All that are taken from our sight, they say,
Loiter amid the scenery of their lives
For certain hours or days; and should he hear
He might, being angry, drive the changeling out.
Emer: It is hard to make them hear amid their darkness,
And it is long since I could call him home;
I am but his wife, but if you cry aloud
With that sweet voice that is so dear to him
He cannot help but listen.
Eithne Inguba: He loves me best
Being his newest love, but in the end
Will love the woman best who loved him first
And loved him through the years when love seemed lost.
Emer: I have that hope, the hope that some day and somewhere
We'll sit together at the hearth again.

[179]
Eithne Inguba: Women like me when the violent hour is over
Are flung into some corner like old nut-shells.
Cuchulain, listen.

Emer: No, not yet—for first
I'll cover up his face to hide the sea;
And throw new logs upon the hearth, and stir
The half burnt logs until they break in flame.
Old Mananan's unbridled horses come
Out of the sea, and on their backs his horsemen;
But all the enchantments of the dreaming foam
Dread the hearth fire.

[She pulls the curtains of the bed so as to hide the sick man's face, that the actor may change his mask unseen. She goes to one side of platform and moves her hand as though putting logs on a fire and stirring it into a blaze. While she makes these movements the Musicians play, marking the movements with drum and flute perhaps. Having finished, she stands beside the imaginary fire at a distance from Cuchulain and Eithne Inguba.]

Call on Cuchulain now.

Eithne Inguba: Can you not hear my voice?
Emer: Bend over him.
Call out dear secrets till you have touched his heart
If he lies there; and if he is not there
Till you have made him jealous.

Eithne Inguba: Cuchulain, listen,

[180]
Emer: You speak too timidly; to be afraid
Because his wife is but three paces off,
When there is so great a need, were but to prove
The man that chose you made but a poor choice.
We’re but two women struggling with the sea.

Eithne Inguba: O my beloved, pardon me, that I
Have been ashamed and you in so great need.
I have never sent a message or called out,
Scarce had a longing for your company,
But you have known and come. And if indeed
You are lying there stretch out your arms and speak;
Open your mouth and speak, for to this hour
My company has made you talkative.
Why do you mope, and what has closed your ears?
Our passion had not chilled when we were parted
On the pale shore under the breaking dawn.
He will not hear me: or his ears are closed
And no sound reaches him.

Emer: Then kiss that image:
The pressure of your mouth upon his mouth
May reach him where he is.

Eithne Inguba [starting back]: It is no man.
I felt some evil thing that dried my heart
When my lips touched it.

Emer: No, his body stirs;
The pressure of your mouth has called him home;
He has thrown the changeling out.

Eithne Inguba [going further off]: Look at that arm—
That arm is withered to the very socket.

Emer [going up to the bed]:
What do you come for, and from where?

Figure of Cuchulain: I have come
From Mananan's court upon a bridleless horse.

Emer: What one among the Sidhe has dared to lie
Upon Cuchulain's bed and take his image?

Figure of Cuchulain:
I am named Bricriu—not the man—that Bricriu,
Maker of discord among gods and men,
Called Bricriu of the Sidhe.

Emer: Come for what purpose?

Figure of Cuchulain [sitting up and showing its distorted
face, while Eithne Inguha goes out]:
I show my face and everything he loves
Must fly away.

Emer: You people of the wind
Are full of lying speech and mockery.
I have not fled your face.

Figure of Cuchulain: You are not loved.

Emer: And therefore have no dread to meet your eyes
And to demand him of you.

Figure of Cuchulain: For that I have come.
You have but to pay the price and he is free.

Emer: Do the Sidhe bargain?

Figure of Cuchulain: When they set free a captive
They take in ransom a less valued thing.

The fisher, when some knowledgeable man

[182]
Restores to him his wife, or son, or daughter,  
Knows he must lose a boat or net, or it may be  
The cow that gives his children milk; and some  
Have offered their own lives. I do not ask  
Your life, or any valuable thing.  
You spoke but now of the mere chance that some day  
You'd sit together by the hearth again:  
Renounce that chance, that miserable hour,  
And he shall live again.

_Emer:_ I do not question  
But you have brought ill luck on all he loves;  
And now, because I am thrown beyond your power  
Unless your words are lies, you come to bargain.

_Figure of Cuchulain:_ You loved your power when but  
newly married,  
And I love mine although I am old and withered.  
You have but to put yourself into that power  
And he shall live again.

_Emer:_ No, never, never!  

_Figure of Cuchulain:_ You dare not be accursed, yet he has dared.

_Emer:_ I have but two joyous thoughts, two things I prize—  
A hope, a memory; and now you claim that hope.

_Figure of Cuchulain:_ He'll never sit beside you at the hearth  
Or make old bones, but die of wounds and toil  
On some far shore or mountain, a strange woman  
Beside his mattress.
Emer: You ask for my one hope
    That you may bring your curse on all about him.
Figure of Cuchulain: You've watched his loves and you
    have not been jealous
    Knowing that he would tire, but do those tire
    That love the Sidhe?
Emer: What dancer of the Sidhe,
    What creature of the reeling moon has pursued him?
Figure of Cuchulain: I have but to touch your eyes and
    give them sight;
    But stand at my left side.

[He touches her eyes with his left hand, the right being
withered.]

Emer: My husband there.
Figure of Cuchulain: But out of reach—I have dissolved
    the dark.
    That hid him from your eyes, but not that other
    That's hidden you from his.
Emer: Husband, husband!
Figure of Cuchulain: Be silent, he is but a phantom now,
    And he can neither touch, nor hear, nor see.
    The longing and the cries have drawn him hither.
    He heard no sound, heard no articulate sound;
    They could but banish rest, and make him dream,
    And in that dream, as do all dreaming shades
    Before they are accustomed to their freedom,
    He has taken his familiar form, and yet

[184]
He crouches there not knowing where he is
Or at whose side he is crouched.

[A Woman of the Sidhe has entered, and stands a little inside the door.]

Emer: Who is this woman?

Figure of Cuchulain: She has hurried from the Country-Under-Wave,
And dreamed herself into that shape that he
May glitter in her basket; for the Sidhe
Are fishers also and they fish for men
With dreams upon the hook.

Emer: And so that woman
Has hid herself in this disguise and made
Herself into a lie.

Figure of Cuchulain: A dream is body;
The dead move ever towards a dreamless youth
And when they dream no more return no more;
And those more holy shades that never lived
But visit you in dreams.

Emer: I know her sort.
They find our men asleep, weary with war,
Or weary with the chase, and kiss their lips
And drop their hair upon them. From that hour
Our men, who yet knew nothing of it all,
Are lonely, and when at fall of night we press
Their hearts upon our hearts their hearts are cold.

[She draws a knife from her girdle.]
Figure of Cuchulain: And so you think to wound her with a knife.
She has an airy body. Look and listen—
I have not given you eyes and ears for nothing.

[The Woman of the Sidhe moves round the crouching Ghost of Cuchulain at front of stage in a dance that grows gradually quicker, as he slowly awakes. At moments she may drop her hair upon his head, but she does not kiss him. She is accompanied by string and flute and drum. Her mask and clothes must suggest gold or bronze or brass or silver, so that she seems more an idol than a human being. This suggestion may be repeated in her movements. Her hair too must keep the metallic suggestion.]

Ghost of Cuchulain: Who is it stands before me there,
Shedding such light from limb and hair
As when the moon, complete at last
With every laboring crescent past,
And lonely with extreme delight,
Flings out upon the fifteenth night?

Woman of the Sidhe: Because I long I am not complete.
What pulled your hands about your feet,
And your head down upon your knees,
And hid your face?

Ghost of Cuchulain: Old memories:
A dying boy, with handsome face
Upturned upon a beaten place;
A sacred yew-tree on a strand;

[186]
A woman that held in steady hand
In all the happiness of her youth
Before her man had broken troth,
A burning wisp to light the door;
And many a round or crescent more;
Dead men and women. Memories
Have pulled my head upon my knees.

*Woman of the Sidhe:* Could you that have loved many a woman
That did not reach beyond the human,
Lacking a day to be complete,
Love one that, though her heart can beat,
Lacks it but by an hour or so?

*Ghost of Cuchulain:* I know you now, for long ago
I met you on the mountain side,
Beside a well that seemed long dry,
Beside old thorns where the hawk flew.
I held out arms and hands, but you,
That now seem friendly, fled away
Half woman and half bird of prey.

*Woman of the Sidhe:* Hold out your arms and hands again.
You were not so dumbfounded when
I was that bird of prey, and yet
I am all woman now.

*Ghost of Cuchulain:* I am not
The young and passionate man I was,
And though that brilliant light surpass
All crescent forms, my memories
Weigh down my hands, abash my eyes.

**Woman of the Sidhe:** Then kiss my mouth. Though memory
Be beauty's bitterest enemy
I have no dread, for at my kiss
Memory on the moment vanishes:
Nothing but beauty can remain.

**Ghost of Cuchulain:** And shall I never know again Intricacies of blind remorse?

**Woman of the Sidhe:** Time shall seem to stay his course,
For when your mouth and my mouth meet
All my round shall be complete
Imagining all its circles run;
And there shall be oblivion
Even to quench Cuchulain’s drouth,
Even to still that heart.

**Ghost of Cuchulain:** Your mouth.

[**They are about to kiss, he turns away.**]

O Emer, Emer!

**Woman of the Sidhe:** So then it is she Made you impure with memory.

**Ghost of Cuchulain:** Still in that dream I see you stand, A burning wisp in your right hand,
To wait my coming to the house— As when our parents married us.

**Woman of the Sidhe:** Being among the dead you love her, That valued every slut above her While you still lived.
O my lost Emer!

And there is not a loose-tongued schemer
But could draw you if not dead,
From her table and her bed.
How could you be fit to wive
With flesh and blood, being born to live
Where no one speaks of broken troth—
For all have washed out of their eyes
Wind-blown dirt of their memories
To improve their sight?

Your mouth, your mouth.

If he may live I am content,
Content that he shall turn on me—
If but the dead will set him free
That I may speak with him at whiles—
Eyes that the cold moon or the harsh sea
Or what I know not's made indifferent.

What a wise silence has fallen in this dark!
I know you now in all your ignorance
Of all whereby a lover's quiet is rent.
What dread so great as that he should forget
The least chance sight or sound, or scratch or mark
On an old door, or frail bird heard and seen
In the incredible clear light love cast

[189]
All round about her some forlorn lost day?
That face, though fine enough, is a fool's face
And there's a folly in the deathless Sidhe
Beyond man's reach.

Woman of the Sidhe: I told you to forget
After my fashion; you would have none of it;
So now you may forget in a man's fashion.
There's an unbridled horse at the sea's edge.
Mount—it will carry you in an eye's wink
To where the King of Country-Under-wave,
Old Mananan, nods above the board and moves
His chessmen in a dream. Demand your life,
And come again on the unbridled horse.

Ghost of Cuchulian: Forgive me those rough words. How
could you know
That man is held to those whom he has loved
By pain they gave, or pain that he has given—
Intricacies of pain.

Woman of the Sidhe: I am ashamed
That being of the deathless shades I chose
A man so knotted to impurity.

[The Ghost of Cuchulain goes out.]

Woman of the Sidhe [to figure of Cuchulain]: To you that
have no living light, but dropped
From a last leprous crescent of the moon
I owe it all.

Figure of Cuchulain: Because you have failed
I must forego your thanks, I that took pity

[190]
Upon your love and carried out your plan
To tangle all his life and make it nothing
That he might turn to you.

Woman of the Sidhe: Was it from pity
You taught the woman to prevail against me?

Figure of Cuchulain: You know my nature—by what
name I am called.

Woman of the Sidhe: Was it from pity that you hid the
truth
That men are bound to women by the wrongs
They do or suffer?

Figure of Cuchulain: You know what being I am.

Woman of the Sidhe: I have been mocked and disobeyed—
your power
Was more to you than my good-will, and now
I’ll have you learn what my ill-will can do:
I lay you under bonds upon the instant
To stand before our King and face the charge
And take the punishment.

Figure of Cuchulain: I’ll stand there first,
And tell my story first; and Mananan
Knows that his own harsh sea made my heart cold.

Woman of the Sidhe: My horse is there and shall outrun
your horse.

[The Figure of Cuchulain falls back, the Woman of the
Sidhe goes out. Drum taps, music resembling horse hoofs.]

Eithne Inguba [entering quickly]: I heard the beat of hoofs,
but saw no horse;

[191]
And then came other hoofs, and after that
I heard low angry cries, and thereupon
I ceased to be afraid.

Emer: Cuchulain wakes.

[The figure turns round. It once more wears the heroic mask.]

Cuchulain: Eithne Inguba, take me in your arms—
I have been in some strange place and am afraid.

[The First Musician comes to the front of the stage, the others from each side. They unfold the cloth, singing.]

The Musicians:

What makes her heart beat thus,
Plain to be understood?
I have met in a man's house
A statue of solitude,
Moving there and walking;
Its strange heart beating fast
For all our talking.
Oh, still that heart at last!

O bitter reward!
Of many a tragic tomb!
And we though astonished are dumb
And give but a sigh and a word,
A passing word.

Although the door be shut
And all seem well enough,
Although wide world hold not
A man but will give you his love
The moment he has looked at you,
He that has loved the best
May turn from a statue
His too human breast.

O bitter reward!
Of many a tragic tomb!
And we though astonished are dumb
Or give but a sigh and a word,
A passing word.

What makes your heart so beat?
Some one should stay at her side.
When beauty is complete
Her own thought will have died
And danger not be diminished;
Dimmed at three-quarter light,
When moon's round is finished
The stars are out of sight.

O bitter reward!
Of many a tragic tomb!
And we though astonished are dumb
Or give but a sigh and a word,
A passing word.

[When the cloth is folded again the stage is bare.]
RED EARTH
MUY VIEJA MEXICANA

I've seen her pass with eyes upon the road—
An old bent woman in a bronze black shawl,
With skin as dried and wrinkled as a mummy's,
As brown as a cigar-box, and her voice
Like the low vibrant strings of a guitar.
And I have fancied from the girls about
What she was at their age, what they will be
When they are old as she. But now she sits
And smokes away each night till dawn comes round,
Thinking, beside the piñons' flame, of days
Long past and gone, when she was young—content
To be no longer young, her epic done:

For a woman has work and much to do,
And it's good at the last to know it's through,
And still have time to sit alone,
To have some time you can call your own,
It's good at the last to know your mind
And travel the paths that you traveled blind,
To see each turn and even make
Trips in the byways you did not take—
But that, por Dios, is over and done,
It's pleasanter now in the way we've come;
It's good to smoke and none to say
What's to be done on the coming day,
No mouths to feed or coat to mend,  
And none to call till the last long end.  
Though one have sons and friends of one's own,  
It's better at last to live alone.  
For a man must think of food to buy,  
And a woman's thoughts may be wild and high;  
But when she is young she must curb her pride,  
And her heart is tamed for the child at her side.  
But when she is old her thoughts may go  
Wherever they will, and none to know.  
And night is the time to think and dream,  
And not to get up with the dawn's first gleam;  
Night is the time to laugh or weep,  
And when dawn comes it is time to sleep . . .

When it's all over and there's none to care,  
I mean to be like her and take my share  
Of comfort when the long day's done,  
And smoke away the nights, and see the sun  
Far off, a shrivelled orange in a sky gone black,  
Through eyes that open inward and look back.

ON THE ACEQUIA MADRE

Death has come to visit us today,  
He is such a distinguished visitor  
Everyone is overcome by his presence—  
"Will you not sit down—take a chair?"

[195]
But Death stands in the doorway, waiting to depart;
He lingers like a breath in the curtains.
The whole neighborhood comes to do him honor,
Women in black shawls and men in black sombreros
Sitting motionless against white-washed walls;
And the old man with the grey stubby beard
To whom death came,
Is stunned into silence.
Death is such a distinguished visitor,
Making even old flesh important.

But who now, I wonder, will take the old horse to pasture?

EL RITO DE SANTE FE

This valley is not ours, nor these mountains,
Nor the names we give them—they belong,
They, and this sweep of sun-washed air,
Desert and hill and crumbling earth,
To those who have lain here long years
And felt the soak of the sun
Through the red sand and crumbling rock,
Till even their bones were part of the sun-steeped valley;
How many years we know not, nor what names
They gave to antelope, wolf, or bison,
To prairie dog or coyote,
To this hill where we stand,
Or the moon over your shoulder . . .
Let us build a monument to Time
That knows all, sees all, and contains all,
To whom these bones in the valley are even as we are:
Even Time's monument would crumble
Before the face of Time,
And be as these white bones
Washed clean and bare by the sun... . .

CANDLE-LIGHT AND SUN

CANDLE-LIGHT

It might have been me in the darkened room
With the shutters closed,
Lying straight and slim
In the shuttered dusk,
In the twilight dim;
Like a silken husk
When the corn is gone,
Life withdrawn.
I am living, and she is dead—
It might have been me instead.

THE MASK

Death is a beautiful white mask,
That slips over the face, when the moment comes,
To hide the happiness of the soul.

[197]
RAIN-PRAYER

A broken ploughed field
In the driving rain,
Rain driven slant-wise
Over the plain.
I long for the rain,
The dull long rain,
For farmlands and ploughlands
And cornlands again.
O grey broken skies,
You were part of my pain!

FAME

Fame is an echo
Far off, remote—
But love is a sweetness
You taste in the throat,
Friendship a comfort
When twilight falls.
But fame is an echo
Through empty halls.

SONG OF SUNLIGHT

Sunlight is in my eyes,
Every house edged with light;
Open fields are before me,
Mountains across the sky.

[198]
What have I to do with cities?

Here the gods are clean, wind-swept.
They run along the hills,
Mad with sunlight;
They tumble into a deep canyon;
They take hold of a cloud
And swing with it—listen!—
They drop far off, noiselessly,
Beyond the blue mountain.

At night they lie down under the moon.
Do you see that hill move—
Heavily, like a sleeper,
Wrinkling his skin,
Moving the contour of pines and rocks,
Resting his hips?

It is not far to the stars,
Not far for them to lean down and whisper . . .

Sunlight, I am mad with your light.
Rocks, I have never known you before.
Earth, your red canyons
Are sluiced through me,
The crests of your hills
Break over me—
I ride upward to meet them.
I like to see the eager-faced old woman
Walking at sunset down the city street.
Always she holds against her heart with fervor
Her sprays of meadow-sweet.

She passes daily, and I never see her
Without the flowers she gathers to her so.
I do not know how destiny softens, hardens
The ways her feet must go,

Nor what her eyes forever are beholding
Beyond the sordid walls and grimy towers,
Nor what against her aged heart she presses,
Pressing the meadow flowers.

THE SLACKER

The snow is lying very deep.
My house is sheltered from the blast.
I hear each muffled step outside,
I hear each voice go past.

But I'll not venture in the drift
Out of this bright security,
Till enough footsteps come and go
To make a path for me.
THE BROKEN TIE

How the wind blew,
And the snow threw
Its ermine softness at my window-pane!
Now I am there again,
In the old house as once on a winter night.
About the rooms I stray,
A stranger, yet at home forevermore.
A creak of the floor—
Why, here comes Rosalie,
Here's Gordon tiptoeing to me,
Holding his candle high.
Children, children, I have come back—yes, I!

What has become of the house I have forsworn?
What other forms are they,
Bringing new garnishment to nook and hall?
I see them not at all,
As here I sit, a mother miles away,
And roam the rooms and roam the rooms till morn.

BARK-BOUND

In her home a woman I know
Is a bark-bound tree;
The flowers bloom at her feet,
But she does not see.
The knife has glittered by  
To the forest to prune,  
And left her deaf to the wind  
And blind to the moon.

She must live on her sap  
In her ease and dark,  
Until she shrivels and dies  
In her walls of bark.

Unless the glittering knife  
Should return her way,  
And set its steel to the bark  
And let in day.

IN THE MORGUE

She who walked with flaming dress  
And the gems of idleness,

She who counted in her troop  
Young man Dream and old man Dupe,

Comes at last to lay her head  
Here among the unclaimed dead.

She was weary as the sages  
With the riddle of the ages,
Saying to midnight: "Whether or no,  
Half the world is builded so;"

Saying to morn: "Come do your mocking!—  
But there's money in my stocking!"

Now, with strong, insistent voice  
Calling, urging to the choice,  

More than gems or loves that were,  
The stern sea has tempted her.

THE SWEEPER

Frail, wistful guardian of the broom,  
The dwelling's drudge and stay,  
Whom destiny gave a single task—  
To keep the dust away!

Sweep off the floor and polish the chair.  
It will not always last.  
Some day, for all your arms can do,  
The dust will hold you fast.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

THE OLD WOMAN
A Morality Play in Two Parts

I

Doctor: There is an old woman
Who ought to die—

Deacon: And nobody knows
But what she's dead—

Doctor: The air will be cleaner
When she's gone—

Deacon: But we dare not bury her
Till she's dead—

Landlady: Come, young doctor
From the first floor front,
Come, dusty deacon
From the fourth floor back—
You take her heels
And I'll take her head—

Doctor and Deacon: We'll carry her
And bury her—
If she's dead!

House: They roll her up
In her old red quilt,
They carry her down

[204]
At a horizontal tilt.
She doesn't say, "Yes!"
And she doesn't say, "No!"
She doesn't say, "Gentlemen,
Where do we go?"

Doctor: Out in the lot
Where the ash-cans die,
There, old woman,
There shall you lie!

Deacon: Let's hurry away,
And never look behind
To see if her eyes
Are dead and blind,
To see if the quilt
Lies over her face.
Perhaps she'll groan,
Or move in her place!

House: The room is empty
Where the old woman lay,
And I no longer
Smell like a tomb—

Landlady: Doctor, deacon,
Can you say
Who'll pay the rent
For the old woman's room?

[205]
House: The room is empty
Down the hall;
There are mice in the closet,
Ghosts in the wall.
A pretty little lady
Comes to see—

Woman: Oh, what a dark room!
Not for me!

Landlady: The room is large
And the rent is low;
There’s a deacon above,
And a doctor below—

Deacon: When the little mice squeak
I will pray—

Doctor: I’ll psycho-analyze
The ghosts away—

Landlady: The bed is large
And the mattress deep;
Wrapped in a featherbed
You shall sleep—

Woman: But here’s the door
Without a key—
An unlocked room
Won't do for me!

Doctor: Here's a bolt—

Deacon: And here's a bar —

Landlady: You'll sleep safely
Where you are!

Woman: Good-night, gentlemen,
It's growing late.
Good-night, landlady,
Pray don't wait!
I'm going to bed—
I'll bolt the door
And sleep more soundly
Than ever before!

Deacon: Good-night, madam,
I'll steal away—

Doctor: Glad a pretty lady
Has come to stay!

House: She lights a candle—
What do I see?
That cloak looks like
A quilt to me!
She climbs into bed
Where long she's lain;

[207]
She's come back home—
She won't leave again.
She's found once more
Her rightful place—
Same old lady
With a pretty new face.
Let the deacon pray
And the doctor talk—
The mice will squeak
And the ghosts will walk.
There's a crafty smile
On the landlady's face—
The old woman's gone
And she's filled her place!

Landlady:  It's nothing to me
If the old woman's dead—
I've somebody sleeping
In every bed!

Marjorie Allen Seiffert
COMMENT

FIVE YEARS OF ITALIAN POETRY (1910-1915)

CARLUCCI and Pascoli are dead, and D'Annunzio has reached the appreciation of fat American reviews. This article is about a few young poets who were acknowledged in, and contributed to, the magazine La Voce and the futurists' organ Lacerba. As for the rest, let me right here mention, and rid me of, the Mackaye type and the Woodberry type of poet. They are many in Italy—imitators of D'Annunzio or Carducci, over-visioned, over-inspired, overwhelming saviours-of-the-world or sons-of-the-Muses; and the most popular of them is Sem Benelli, known to the French and American public for his dramatic poems.

Now I should speak of characteristics, schools and tendencies; but I am thinking of Verlaine, Laforgue, Browning, Verhaeren, and of how they stood out and above all schools, and of how puzzled a critic would be who should want to pigeon-hole them. The first good poem that was ever written started the school of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare; and in so far as a poet succeeds in writing poetry, he belongs to that school and no other.

Here, then, are a few names:

Palazzeschi: Simplicity and naïveté of a modern St. Francis of Assisi. Wonder-eyed playboy, swift and light artist.

Papini: "At twenty, each idea is to be suspected, each man is the enemy;" having suffered our own great way, we have
POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

our own great remedies to suggest. But after, most of us shrink, become humbler—out of some defeat perhaps. Papini has fulfilled the desire of his heart of twenty—he has not shrunk. More than a warrior or a martyr has Papini given his life to his country, his people; in tempestuous autobiographical complaints, articles—criticism and pragmatism. Get the suggestion, in these titles, of articles which are Papini's best poems: *Give us Today our Daily Poetry; The Two Literary Traditions* (Dante, Petrarca); *To Become Geniuses.*

Slataper: Died, very young, in the war. Wrote of the Carso mountains, the sheer, hard landscapes where he lived—a big, hard and clean boy.

Govoni: The writer of the most musical, most humane free verse I have read. Delicate as a girl, if at times he sings the luridist, obscenest facts in the life of an old Italian city, he does so with the same delicate voice. Something of Frost in him—or, I should rather say, something of Govoni in Frost.

Di Giacomo: Writes in Neapolitan dialect short stories and poems of the irremediable sadness and the irrational tragedy of the old Naples. With a tenderness that is real in Italy because of the climate, etc.; and would be sentimentality in America. He has been acknowledged by Croce and is considered to be the national poet.

Jahier: "Man of many scruples," believing that a poet is any man bothered by a great conscience. Works in an office for a living. No language and no grammar fits Jahier;
and they must widen and become more hospitable in order to accept him. Jahier knows that it is the poet who shapes languages and grammars, and accomplishes many other things.

Soffici: Most advanced of them all, fights his way through French influences to a broken jagged sort of poetry (words at liberty, and lyric simultaneities) which is as haphazard as life itself.

And then Clemente Rebora, very earnest and very rich, who overflows into an imagism that is an orgy of cold senses, and dwindles into a unanimism that is emotional vagueness. Also Umberto Saba, Luciano Folgore and Camillo Sbarbaro, poets with too definite an attitude—that is, too narrow—sometimes borrowed.

Palazzeschi, Govoni and Papini were of the futuristic movement for a time; and more consistently than they, so was Soffici, who is well known as a painter.

When a heavy mood of mine crushes the appreciative attitude that I like to maintain, I see the flaws of Italian poetry as all being liable to definition under one name—Futurism. Futurism was built upon the mistakes, exaggerations and aberrations of some of the poets I have mentioned. It was born of the need for fellowship among those poets, and, with Marinetti, of the need for notoriety; and was fostered by the hustling of many vacant souls, who made out of these exaggerations, etc. (which were all they could reach), a theory and a way of art. The movement, being largely a furious reaction, was largely a merely negative manifestation. The attitude was: Since the Passatisti were obvious, we
will be obscure. Since they were grandiloquent with faith, we will struggle from irony to despair and backward. Since with them sexual matters were more or less fig-leafed, we will trace the minutes and the seconds of our sexual sophistication. Since they were too definite, rough-drawn, soared too high astride voluminous Pegasuses blown by the wind of universal moods, we will herald the unimportance of art; we will trace the formation of the mood, but be careful to evade the mood itself; write elements of proto-psychology (and Mallarmé started it). Above all let’s hate the bourgeois.

The trouble with them was, as Prezzolini put it, that they were bourgeois themselves. Vicious circles of weariness and sensualism, disease and cynicism—aren’t these very bourgeois? Squalor of unemployed senses, where literature becomes an obsession; wantlessness—as with Ezra Pound, who spends too many pages of his Lustra worrying whither and wherefore and when and how his songs go (Do they go?); well, snobs and freaks and business men are also always occupied with disoccupations of the sort. All the vicious circles, all the insanities, all the decadences, are of the world that the artist hates. But he hates it because he suffers at seeing it thus; he does not resolve upon hating while still he is in it and lives no better than anybody else—this the bourgeois does and the futurist also. And as to obscurity: faces turn sour, stale, lurid, twisted, and are eaten up from inside; in the street today every face is heart-rending—because people do not understand, they do not see and cannot talk. And to whoever would preach obscurity: out, out
in the open, to be simplified by the clean weather! Out in the open and less in the rooms, for the sake of health!

And then, of course, their theories being absurd, these writers betray their theories. Marinetti is more grandiloquent, more obvious, and writes noisier classical bombast than any cheap passatista. That's why they hear him around the world. But Prezzolini, lovable critic, full of strength and cleanness, has fixed him and his gang, in the only intelligent articles on futurism that have appeared in Italian magazines, where pigheaded professors have waged war against it, and nasty ignorant youths have defended it.

After all this, I see in these five years of Italian poetry something that I want to call modern. And if participation in futurism of the best poets of Italy has any good significance at all, it means that it was the effect of a consciousness of modernity in those poets. Whether there is or is not anything new under the sun, things which must (if you will) be repeated are said in a line, whereas in olden times they required a whole strophe. Modern man, grown into a consciousness that science and the experience of dead artists have given him, sees a more intricate and nearer, even if apparently smaller, world than the large one of the old artists; and I think it is Yeats who says that no traditional pose is adequate to express it. Here, a friend suggests that a kind of sophistication recurs more than once through the ages, with the suavity of old civilizations. Though I advance my view humbly and would defend it from attack by saying that it is mainly pragmatic, I am thinking that my friend's
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

observation rather confirms it than confutes it. Let this be food for speculation for those whose opinion that there is nothing new under the sun is also pragmatic, and I agree to drop the subject.

I want, finally, to point out the simple way of expression of Palazzeschi, Govoni and Jahier; which suggests to me that the only school is that of simplicity. It has been said that making poetry is the process wherewith one frees the thing seen of all that is not artistic—the unnecessary, the commonplace, the grandiloquent and the poetical. And I should dare to say that simplicity is then also the quality of being true, which means human, which means beautiful.

And I realize here that I owe an apology to Ezra Pound.

Emanuel Carnevali

CORRADO GOVONI

HAPPINESS

I don't know why,
but I'm happy this morning.
Is it that I heard through the streets of the village
the voice of the letter-carrier?
Opening the green window, have I
felt that the little swallows were born?
have I seen the empty shells over the side-walk?
Have I listened to the little hog
grunting against the door of the pig-sty
with joy, hearing my mother
who was crossing the yard
with a pail of warm slop
calling him like a child?
Have I seen the wife of the cowherd
take out from the oven
rosy crosses of bread?

[214]
or the white oxen
coming back from the fields
with the red cart crammd full of grass?
or the peddler
in the yard
weighing out to an old farmer
cherries into his trembling scale?
Has the knife-grinder come
With his damp castle?

I am happy,
perhaps because there far away
the cuckoo—
this grey gull
of the dark-green sea of hemp—
asks himself questions and answers them;
because the spikes of the ripe wheat
are like blond tiny braids.

SALVATORE DI GIACOMO

OLD-FASHIONED DITTY

Listen. . . . if you see him,
that crook of Gennarino,
tell him he is a murderer!
No. . . . don’t tell him that!
Tell him. . . . yes, yes, tell him
that he is a beast, a snake,
and always has been that.
No. . . . wait. . . . don’t tell him that!

And if you’d tell him, “Rose
would have her fling, she too;
but then. . . . she. . . . herself. . .
would want to know if you. . . .”?

No. . . . tell him that I’m crying. . .
tell him I’m burning. . . . see. . .
tell him I’m dying, dying. . .
But bring him here to me.
I admit it has been an insult, miss.
I know how things went: you had answered with enthusiasm—you had—to the call of your country. . . . Your tight waist was new, in it you looked really like Italy over the buildings of the exposition. And you didn't carry poison in your basket, but oranges, which are already so dear this season that maybe no reservist has tasted of them anymore—now that they're so refreshing and juicy, but dear in this time of the year; and tempting cigarettes, smoke for gentlemen!
It's an insult to refuse so much courtesy!
That terrible 127! he shall be forever dishonored among the young ladies who distribute in oranges the gratitude of the fatherland in the stations.
It's an insult and that's all!

But let it be, now; I forbid you to explain, “These men have no fatherland,” because one has cried: “Down with the war!” which is not “Down with the fatherland!”
You too cried: “Hurrah for the war!” which is not yet “Hurrah for the fatherland!”
It's an insult—that's right—to throw the orange after you, miss.

It's lack of education—that's all, but that's enough; don't go any further to the heart of education; because I too then am forced to appeal to the heart.
And I tell you: go along with the young men.
You see this was a reservist, miss, and under the uniform a man of sorrows.
Queer moment, this sorrow! that one can't even eat oranges and smoke cigarettes offered by young ladies!
To go to war—in spite of all the flags it was grave and serious to him, like going to die.
Because he wasn't young any more; he was a reservist—not young—aged. Ah! the young fellows, that's different! They can live with death near; they are strong; and maybe they are going to be happy—it's worth while to risk: you too—a pill of sublimate among mad blond curls if love betrays!
But he was a reservist. Aged. Many things are already irremediable.
The will has its limits.
To go to war was serious and grave to him, like going to die.
Go along with the young men next time, miss.

And possibly, students.
For they are your companions, and they are not impressed by the fine odor of flesh, O young lady forbidden to the man of the people.
Go with the students, and you won't need to mortify them looking at them as they look at a watch-dog, young ladies!
He wasn't a student. He was an aged reservist, sad in the moment of going away.
A strange moment, the departure: one may realize that life has been all a mistake.
If you knew how life is—for others than young ladies!—temptations, weaknesses, saloons; the children sometimes forgotten; and that little woman sneered at because she went to church—and sometimes even beaten up; a little woman who remains with 0.75 and two kids—she and the kids.

And they are over the bridge because they would not let them pass.
Then, for a compensation, you come, the most beautiful of your class-room, with your orange in your hand and your patronizing look.
Ah! if he just threw it at you—now I won't admit that it was an insult, miss.

ALDO PALAZZESCHI

INDIFFERENT

I am your father.
Is that so?
I am your mother.
Is that so?
This is your brother.
Is that so?
That is your sister.
Is that so?
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

THE TWO ROSES

Poor soldier,
who press strong against your temples
the white rose of the pillow
to still the ardor
of that hidden red one
that makes you burn,
poor soldier,
who hurt you?

UMBERTO SABA

THE PIG

(Extract—last lines)

But if, while looking, I put myself in his place,
I feel down in his flesh the pain of the knife,
hear that scream, that fearful quarrel
while to the group a dog bays
and from the threshold laughs the housewife. . . .

SCIPIO SLATAPER

FROM MY CARSO—A LYRIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I love the rain heavy and violent. . . .
It comes down tearing off the weak leaves. . . .

The water is good and fresh. It invades everything. If you put
your finger in the ground around the trunks you feel how the
roots suck it. All the lives in pain breathe freely.
For the earth has a thousand pains. On every creature a stone
weighs, or a torn branch, or a bigger leaf, or the fine dirt a
mole has left, or the step of some animal. All the trunks have
a scar or a wound.

The Carso is a country of stone and junipers. A terrible cry in
stone. . . .

[218]
But if a word shall be born of you—kiss the wild thymes that squeeze their life from the rock! Here is stone and death. But when a gentian attains to lift her head and bloom, in her all the deep sky of spring is gathered. Press your mouth against the ground and do not speak!

The night; the waning stars; the warm sun; the evening tremor of branches; the night; I walk.

God said: let even Sorrow have its peace. God said: let even Sorrow have its silence. Let even man have his solitude. Carso, my fatherland, I bless you.

REVIEWS

GREAT POETRY

On Heaven and Poems Written on Active Service, by Ford Madox Hueffer. John Lane Co.

Has England any up-to-date, twentieth-century poet of large calibre? Has she given us any poetry of war true to the motive of this war and the spirit of these times, and unlit by the rose-and-purple glint of ancient glamours, of time-exaggerated ideals? Has any of her poets expressed our kind of spirituality, the hope and faith and power that carry us through our days of agony, and bring us our flashes of joy?

Yes—this book is the proof of it. A man-size book by a poet who does not shirk the bitterest issues of life and death, and who admits no rose-color of romance between his eyes and the white light of truth; by a poet moreover whose molding of English words into a form fit and shapely and abso-
lutely expressive, has become, after long practice and experiment, as sure as a master potter’s molding of clay.

Going through this small volume with a favoring pencil, one finds oneself noting all the poems and getting a fresh delight, a fresh illumination, from each. The light shines through them as through prismatic glass, separating into its pure and vivid color-elements. The book has the effect of justifying our modern spirituality—our twentieth-century ideals which have fought and won the greatest of all wars; as against the fragmentary visions, the ecstatic closet-divinations, which fought and won those lesser wars of the past—wars temporal and spiritual that passed the torch along through the centuries. Not that there is any remotest hint of propaganda, any trace of the pulpit or the rostrum: the poet never states, he never directly tells us anything. But through the depth and clarity of his own emotion he makes us feel what he feels; and what he feels, what his illumined mind knows, is simply the whole immense range and beauty of the modern science-illumined search for truth.

One is tempted to compare, or contrast, this soldier-poet—for even On Heaven, printed by POETRY in June, 1914, reads like a soldier’s poem—with that other English soldier-poet, Rupert Brooke. Brooke was moved by all the old romantic glamours: he sang the glory of war, the rapture of death in battle; and, true to type, completed the image by dying in beautiful youth, in inviolate faith. Hueffer is moved by sterner forces; unaided by illusion, he can yet follow his country’s flag and the world’s hope through four long years
of agony, knowing always the criminal absurdity of war, yet always completing the paradox with a deep realization of war's sublimities of devotion and sacrifice. As Brooke's glamorous death was typical, so is it typical that the more modern poet has lived through the four arduous years of battle to face the new struggle for the remaking of the world. And if Brooke's shining muse wore classic draperies, Hueffer makes no apologies for naked beauty in such poems as *One Day's List*, *Clair de Lune*, *The Old Houses of Flanders*, or *Footsloggers*, which begins and ends with this strophe:

What is love of one's land?
                Ah, we know very well
It is something that sleeps for a year, for a day,
For a month, something that keeps
Very hidden and quiet and still,
And then takes
The quiet heart like a wave,
The quiet brain like a spell,
The quiet will
Like a tornado, and that shakes
The whole being and soul . . . .
Aye, the whole of the soul.

Perhaps the whole contrast—the difference between the old and the new—is suggested in *When the World Crumbled*:

Once there were purple seas—
Wide, wide . . . .
And myrtle-groves and cyclamen,
Above the cliff and the stone pines
Where a god watched. . . .

And thou, O Lesbian . . . .

Well, that's all done!

[221]
The two longer poems, which open and close the book, are *Antwerp* and *On Heaven*. Both are written in a rhymed conversational free verse, the rhymes ringing those little bells of surprise which present-day technique aims at rather than the exactly measured chime of the more accepted forms. Mr. Hueffer's *Collected Works* show how expert he has been in the manipulation of the usual measures, but he has graduated into the freer form because—let him tell us:

It is because I simply can't help it. *Vers libre* is the only medium in which I can convey any more intimate moods. *Vers libre* is a very jolly medium in which to write and to read, if it be read conversationally and quietly. And anyhow, symmetrical or rhymed verse is for me a cramped and difficult medium—or an easy and uninteresting one.

In the opinion of at least one reader, Mr. Hueffer's poetry in this medium is as much more beautiful than his earlier work as it is more simple and "intimate." The extreme skill which has gone into the making of these poems is most happily concealed under the easy distinction and clarity of an achieved style. The poet complains of "sloppiness" in *On Heaven*; indeed for four years he refused to reprint it, leaving to *Poetry* the honor of exclusive publication; and even now the earlier version contains a beautiful passage of thirty lines super-critically omitted from the book. But while the style has not that hardness which the imagists aim at, being more fluent and less patterned than their discreet counsel admits as the latest vogue, it has a silken richness shining and flowing with many colors in the wind, and absolutely responsive in texture and movement to the delicate amenities of the theme.
This theme, "a materialist's Heaven," is Mr. Hueffer's present excuse for printing the poem.

I know at least that I would not keep on going if I did not feel that Heaven will be something like Rumpelmayer's tea-shop. . . . For haven't we Infantry all seen that sort of shimmer and shine, and heard the rustling and the music, through all the turmoil and the mire and the horror? . . . . We must have some such Heaven to make up for the deep mud, and the bitter weather, and the long lasting fears, and the cruel hunger for light, for graciousness and for grace!

It may be questioned whether this Rumpelmayer Heaven is any more material than the mansions of gold and pearl and the harping angels of an earlier revelation. At any rate the poem expresses, in our unpretentious, even a bit humorous, modern way, the same yearning for joy in love and beauty under the divine approval of a super-human but strictly personal God—"a man-and-a-half," so to speak—which our ancestors, throughout the Christian ages, have persisted in expressing through their more assertive and grandly gesticulatory arts. And moreover it expresses also, in spite of our more difficult modern questionings, their faith that this little earth and its fragile fabric of lives are not the whole story:

For God is a very clever mechanician;
And if he made this proud and goodly ship of the world,
From the maintop to the hull,
Do you think he could not finish it to the full,
With a flag and all,
And make it sail, tall and brave,
On the waters, beyond the grave?

*Antwerp* is a heroic ode conceived in the modern spirit and
fashion—it is a tribute to the bravery of Belgium, to the bravery moreover of the common man:

With no especial legends of marchings or triumphs or duty—
Assuredly that is the way of it,
The way of beauty.

The book, as a whole and in detail, makes us feel that “that is the way of it”; that kings and knights and conquerors and all the pomp and pageantry of human grandeur and bluster have had their day, and that the new “way of beauty” will follow the footsteps of the common man and penetrate the byways of his homely heroisms.  

H. M.

KREYMBORG’S PLAYS FOR POEM-MIMES

Adults who remember their first Punch-and-Judy show may smile at the assertion that there is an element of similarity between that experience and the reading of Alfred Kreymborg’s plays. The grim and crude materialism of the former are ages and civilizations apart from the idealism and gentle humor of the latter, yet it is through the use of puppets in both cases that the imagination is seized and carried beyond the limits of experience. One feels now as then that the author draws upon an outside universe, a supernatural world, which though unfamiliar compels our acceptance. One does not question the queer old “figure” who talks and guides the puppets in When the Willow Nods, any more than of yore one doubted the devil who carried off wicked Punch, though one doesn’t “believe in” either. The
Kreymborg’s Plays for Poem-mimes

loves of *Manikin and Minikin*, the bisque figurines, are as real as the sorrows of Judy once were—more real for the moment than our own. The marvel is that now it is over sophisticated, unimaginative, adult minds that the poet-performer casts his spell. We accept whole-heartedly the idealism of *Blue and Green* and *People Who Die* though we have never met it; we suffer the tragedies of *Jack’s House* and *When the Willow Nods* only half comforted by the delicate humor with which the poet pretends to veil them.

Through their presentation as puppets the loves and dreams of his characters are seen far-off, as through the small end of the opera-glass, and we, the audience, grow correspondingly to the size of immortals, or super-mortals. *When the Willow Nods*, the first play in the book (printed in *POETRY* last March) uses the device of an “old figure” who interprets and suggests the action of the dancing children.

In *Blue and Green* and *People Who Die* the actors themselves are mysteriously withdrawn till they look upon themselves and interpret themselves for us. To them their past experiences become embodied as dreams. This intensifies still further their detachment from reality. These characters are groping toward interpretation—turning away from realism, from the undigested morsels of their experiences.

When we look through Mr. Kreymborg’s glass we see the human comedy with whimsical sadness and humorous pity. There is delicate farce in *Jack’s House, Lima Beans* and *Manikin and Minikin*, modulated by a deeper note, the ironic sadness of human destiny; while the stark tragedy of
theme in *When the Willow Nods, Blue and Green,* and *People Who Die* is lightened by a delicate accompaniment of humor. A very individual grotesquerie is found in the loveliest passages; love is not a theme for violins only—the piccolos blow delicate bubbles of mirth at it.

Kreymborg is unquotable. One cannot "lift" a line or a speech from his plays and retain their beauty, any more effectively than one can play a detached bar of music.

The mention of music carries a hint of the special magic in this poet's style. He chooses words with an apparently naïve simplicity, only to combine them subtly into repetitions which form delicate rhythms not unlike the patterns of a fugue. With each repetition the theme develops, the harmonies deepen. He gains his effect as directly, as mysteriously, as does music; there is indeed a kinship between Kreymborg's style and Bach's. I can think of no other musician combining his cerebral quality, economy of ornament and architectural sense of form. It may be considered slip-shod criticism to interpret one art in terms of another, but this illustration will aid readers who know music in "feeling" Kreymborg. There is all too little co-operation between music and poetry—arts so closely allied might gain much from juxtaposition in the creative workshop of the artist. Hitherto only the modern French poets have felt this kinship, only in modern French poetry have genuine musical effects been heard. But Mr. Kreymborg, who is a thoroughly educated musician, has drawn upon the technique of counterpoint and melody in a wholly original man-

[226]
Kreymborg's Plays for Poem-mimes

ner, thereby greatly enriching his style, and introducing a new element into American verse.

People who have seen these plays performed report that they gain immensely in beauty and poignance on the stage: every word goes home, every situation shines. On the stage the obscurities which trouble the hasty reader clarify into action. In short Alfred Kreymborg is a born dramatist as well as a poet. Marjorie Allen Seiffert

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

TWO NEW ONES

New magazines tread on each other's heels! Here are two dedicated especially to the newly risen generation.

Youth, which will speak for the Harvard Poetry Society—and others—every two months, does not run quite true to form in the first number, wherein poets quite mature elbow the younglings. However, several of the latter start off well, and there will be associate editors in various colleges and countries. We shall hope to be kept aware of the doings of young poets throughout the world.

Of Playboy, a Portfolio of Art and Satire, which will appear "at intervals," the discreet must beware—"Playboy will always elude the Wise Men, for HE is Today." He is to be edited and published by Egmont Arens at the Washington Square Bookshop, and we are promised a "merry company" of poets and artists in the first number.

[227]
To the Editor: I am enclosing herewith a newspaper clipping of The Song of the Cheechas, which has only just come to my notice. The poem is listed as having been printed in the June, 1918, issue of POETRY. I have had no opportunity of seeing it as printed there, and therefore I am unaware if mention was made that it is a very close paraphrase of certain passages in my book, With Serbia into Exile, published in 1916 by the Century Company. For your convenience I am also enclosing a copy of the passages referred to above, which appear on pages 71-73. Other phrases and figures of speech which appear in the poem are just as obviously drawn from other parts of my book. Frankly, I may say I am delighted that Mr. Underwood should have been thus impressed with the spirit of the Cheechas as I attempted to picture them, and by a skilful arrangement of my impressions and my words should have fashioned this effective chant. I should be very unwilling to be guilty of any meanness in the matter, but it seems to me he has contrived to add so very little to the original source of his verse that only simple honesty must have impelled him to give due credit to that source. If, in reality, this was not done, I cannot but think there was a definite desire to deceive the public. In view of the fact that he has taken a valuable prize without, so far as I know, having made any such acknowledgment, it appears to me but fair that you and
About Mr. Underwood’s Prize

those who passed upon the merit of his work should be made familiar with its origin.  

Paul Fortier Jones

Passages from With Serbia into Exile:

The cheechas defended Chachak. Three times the Germans wrested the town from them, and each time the cheechas retook it. Only when four-fifths of them had been put out of action did the Germans finally succeed in holding the place.

With rifles of every possible description, too old for real soldiers, rejected by the first three lines of defense, the cheechas of Chachak faced as fine troops as Germany could muster, perfectly equipped, splendidly provisioned, and feeling with increasing assurance a whole nation crumbling before them. For the cheecha knows not only how to thrive on half a pound of dry bread a day, and nothing else; he knows how to lie against a tree or turn himself into a stone, and with Serbia in her death-grip, he only wished to die.

I believe the cheechas felt the loss of their country more keenly than anyone else. Most of them had lived through nearly all of her free history. Unlike the educated Serb, they could not see a bright political lining behind the present pall of blackness. But I have yet to hear a complaint from one of them. There was Dan, one of the orderlies who retreated with the English nurses. He had been to America, and he had numerous failings, but no one could see him at that time without forgetting everything except his grief. The suffering he underwent, the cold and hunger, seemed to matter nothing to him; but by the hour, at night, he would squat by his smoldering fire and mumble:

“Well, I care ‘bout myself? What a mount to? T’ree million people lost! Nuthin’ else don’t matter. T’ree million people—t’ree million—lost!”

When, seven weeks after Chachak, I passed a company of the fourth line on top of the Montenegrin mountains, during days when there was absolutely no food for them, when they saw their comrades drop by the hundred, dead of starvation, cold, and exhaustion, when not one foot of Serbian soil was free; separated from their families in all probability forever, at best for years; miserable it seemed to me, beyond all human endurance—the cheechas were singing. I cannot forget that song. The fine sleet cut their faces, and formed grotesque icicles on their woolly
beards. The mountain wind blew their voices to shreds—voices mechanical, dreary, hopeless, unlike any Serbians I had ever heard before. Not until I was right among them did I recognize the song, a popular one that had sprung up since the war, its content being that “the Suabas are building houses the Serbians shall live in; the Suabas are planting corn the Serbians shall eat; the Suabas are pressing wine the Serbians shall drink.”

Note by the Editor: Unquestionably Mr. Underwood will be quite willing to acknowledge that his poem was based upon Mr. Jones’ book; and if he were not the most disratt and the least explicit of men, he would probably have so informed the editors of POETRY in sending them the poem.

Whether knowledge of this fact would have influenced the jury in its award of the Helen Haire Levinson Prize it is now impossible to say. In any case the award is irrevocable. It may seem characteristic of the tribe of poets in general, and of this poet in particular, that our first information of Mr. Underwood’s receiving the prize came from Santa Fé newspapers, which acknowledged the receipt of our check for two hundred dollars as his contribution to the United War Work Campaign.

Frankly, we do not think that such knowledge should have biased the jury. The passages above quoted are prose; deriving from them his basic material and his inspiration, Mr. Underwood made a poem. It was manifest that this poet, a native American who had never travelled in Serbia, must have drawn his material from printed or oral accounts. In our opinion, The Song of the Cheechas is not a mere paraphrase of Mr. Jones’ excellent prose, but a transmutation into poetry.

MR. AIKEN AND THE ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY

Dear POETRY: Your editorial in the November issue does me too much honor. It would have been indeed quixotically courageous of me to have asked military exemption on the ground that I was a poet—it would even more, perhaps, have been presumptuous. That I did not do, however. It was not the real point at issue, for I was already

[230]
in Class II. The question was whether under the Work-or-Fight Law the writing of poetry was to be classed as non-productive—along with billiard-marking, setting up candle-pins, and speculation in theatre-tickets—and whether artists in general would have to change their occupation. I merely submitted that poetry should not be so classed, and that it was not specifically implied in the terms of the law. Was the consequent decision more commercial, perhaps, than idealistic in motive? _Hac itur ad astra!_ Conrad Aiken

**NOTES**

The poets in this number require little introduction.

Mr. William Butler Yeats, of London and Dublin, will soon issue a book of plays, including _The Only Jealousy of Emer_, from the Cuala Press in Dublin, which has published the first editions of most of his books of late—_Poems and a Play, Per Amica Silentiae Lunae_, etc. Later editions have been issued by the Macmillan Co.

Agnes Lee (Mrs. Otto Freer), of Chicago, is the author of two books of verse published by Sherman French & Co.

Marjorie Allen Seiffert (Mrs. Otto S.), of Moline, Ill., has contributed to most of the special magazines; sometimes with the Spectrists, of happy memory, under the pseudonym of Elijah Hay.

Alice Corbin (Mrs. Wm. P. Henderson), who is now in Santa Fé, N. M., is the author of _The Spinning Woman of the Sky_ (Ralph Fletcher Seymour), and has been from the beginning associate editor of _Poetry_.

By a curious slip of the editorial mind Mlle. Lysiane Bernhardt was mentioned last month as the niece of Sara Bernhardt when we all know that she is the granddaughter.

We would remind our readers that next May—the last day thereof—will be the centenary of Whitman’s birth. It would be a great pleasure to _Poetry_, its editors and subscribers, if one or more of its contributors should send in a poem, or poems, suggested by the occasion, which might enable the magazine to honor fitly the great American poet.
BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:
The Bliss of a Moment, by Benoy Kumar Sarkar. Poet Lore Co.
Young Adventure, by Stephen Vincent Benét. Yale Univ. Press.
In the Valley of Vision—Poems Written in Time of War, by Geoffrey Faber, Captain. Longmans, Green & Co.
Sonnets and Poems, by Eleanor Farjeon. Longmans, Green & Co.
Sonnets of the Strife with Songs, by Robert Loveman. Cornhill Co.
The Charnel Rose and Other Poems, by Conrad Aiken. Four Seas Co.
War the Liberator and Other Pieces, by E. A. Mackintosh, M. C. With Memoir and Portrait. John Lane Co.
Forward March! by Angela Morgan. John Lane Co.

ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:
War Poems from the Yale Review. Yale Univ. Press.
Corn from Olde Fieldes—An Anthology of English Poems from the 14th to the 17th Century, with biographical notes. Ed. by Eleanor M. Brougham. John Lane Co.

PROSE:
Scènes de la Vie Littéraire à Paris, par André Billy. La Renaissance du Livre, Paris.
Dream Boats—Portraits and Histories of Fauns, Fairies, Fishes, and other pleasant creatures, written and illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker. Doubleday Page & Co.
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