When the Willow Nods: 
A Play for Poem-mimes 
by Alfred Kreymborg

In Barracks—soldier poems 
by Baker Brownell 
E. Carnevali, Susan M. Boogher 
and Gladys Cromwell

543 Cass Street, Chicago 
$2.00 per Year  Single Numbers 20¢
POETRY for MARCH, 1918

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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 at Post-office, Chicago.

Published monthly at 543 Cass St., Chicago

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WHEN THE WILLOW NODS

A Dance-play for Poem-mimes

SCENE—A dense and dusky wood which surrounds a willow leaning over a pool. Sun-splotches penetrate the shadows. An old figure is seated on a low stone ledge at the right of the pool. He is dressed in a simple hooded robe, and he speaks with a detached air, like one who improvises, occasionally caressing a small hidden instrument, or drum, with exquisite haphazard rhythms. Later a girl and boy enter, simply dressed in thin flowing garments of vivid color. They, and afterwards a second boy, act the improvisation of the figure in a dance or pantomime which discloses a series of unconscious poses, naive, awkward, uncertain, shy. They appear to be the physical embodiment of the thought-play of the figure. He is unseen by them, but it is evident that they can hear him, most of the time, separately. It is questionable whether the figure can see them. A clear unity of the
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vague elements of scene and lights, speech and silences, poses and pantomime, is observed throughout the play. At the rise of the curtain, the figure is alone.

The Figure:

Only when the willow nods
Does the water nod;
Only when the wind nods
Does the willow nod;
Only when a cloud nods
Does the wind nod:
And, of course, nod
Rhymes with God.

[The girl wanders in; looks up at the willow; approaches the water; kneels.]

Better that you look
Lovely, than that you are
Lovely. Yes, oh yes, touch your blouse, touch your hair—
When he comes, touch your cheeks with the pink that flies.
But his glance will do more for your look than these.

[Indefinite poses of self-contemplation. The first boy wanders in, carrying a small basket.]

Your least shy look
Recreates folk to your image.
Not that they know what your image is,
Nor that they care, but—won't you look at him?

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He'd like to look like you—
Then you'll love him? . . .

[Rapture holds the boy; he sets the basket on the ground.

The girl stiffens into another pose.]
She has made cups of her hands;
She holds them, palms waiting, under her breasts.
If you look still higher, you may see
Three more cups—her mouth, her eyes.
Brave lad, can you resist so many?

[The boy's ecstasy crumbles to excitement as the girl looks
at him vaguely.]

What can you—what should you—what shall you say?—
So—so only—so only she'll . . .
What can you—what should you—what shall you swear?
Could I let you give her the earth or a tree—
Lend you something more than you, more than me?
How can you, how should you—how else could you
Make her, urge her to—have her say, whisper,
Breathe—breathe she—breathe that she . . .
What can you—what should you—what shall you do?
You might—jump—jump off—and never come back!
And she—she only—she only say—no! . . .

[The girl looks at the boy, clearly. She moves from the
water. He follows. She stops beyond the willow. He
hesitates.]
Do you feel him a thing of silk—now you can hear him?
Must you be always tearing his flesh—
With your eyes, and your silence?
Put a quick finger on one of his pores, touch it at least—
Or he will fall, bloodless, at your feet,
And leave you nobody.
You wouldn't enjoy turning ghoul?
Faun girl, you are beautiful—
Be kind to yourself...

[The girl starts toward the boy; permits him gradually and gently to caress her.]
Place your cool mouth to his.
Press hard and long.
There will come opening
Things which have never sung before:
Things even you will never understand; nor he.
Turn your large eyes to his. Enter.
You will see what you heard—and the mystery grow.
At the last, bring your curious touch to his.
Hands move to the breeze...

[Frightened, the girl draws away, and suddenly disappears.
Awed, the boy cannot follow her.]
She loves you?
And who are you—who are you that she should?
Don't ask me that—ask tiny questions.
She of the yellow hair, she of the cool green eyes,
Alfred Kreymborg

She of the queer red mouth—I know whom you mean.
Come, lad, tell me more about her, don't be afraid.
She loves you?—so you said.
Let's sit on the grass; it gives so pleasantly.
Now we can talk. She loves you?
But let's talk, talk about her!
You can't? Neither can I...
Away, away from this place—
There's a pond past these trees.
Let's steal to a boat, a long eerie boat,
And drift to the water-lilies:
Pink, blue or white, lilies are quiet thoughts.
We won't break them for her; we don't have to.
Eh? She loves you? Poor boy,
Are you so happy you're sad?
That's right, shut your eyes.
Wake you when we reach the lilies?—
I'll try, I'll try.

[The boy is gone.]
She loves you.
I can assure you now you're asleep.
Dream, boy, lilies will wake you,—pink, blue or white.
No matter the color, no harm can come: she loves you.

[Interlude.]
Trees, too, are innocent entities.
Sap sings through them in time with the weather.
One can see they care little about their fellows,
Though they do have a way

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Of waving branches to each other.
For themselves, they have a way of nodding pleasantly.
Also of trying on dresses near a rain glass or a snow glass.
Also of staying where they happen to be. . . .
There are folk who doubt whether they care at all.
It would be mean though
To censure trees—they're trees. . . .

[The lovers come running upon the scene, he chasing her.
He throws the basket aside; buttercups fall out.]
What animals you are!—
Or whether you are
Animals, I am too dumb to tell.
Some moments, I feel you've come out of the earth,
Out of some cool white stone deep down in the earth.
Or there brushes past and lurks in a corner
The thought that you slipped from a tree
When the earth stopped spinning,
That a blue shell brought you
When the sea tired waltzing.
You might be two mice,
The dryads of woodpeckers,
Or a pure tiny fish dream.
You might be something dropped from the sky;
Not god-children—I wouldn't have you that—
Nor clouds, though I love clouds.
You're something not birds, I can tell.
If I could find you somewhere outside
Of me, I might tell—
But inside? . . .

[The boy catches the girl; she no longer resists; he kisses her.]

Said the Mother:
She is lovely.
Her mouth is red.
Give her a kiss—
She wants it.
And when you are through—
Give her another!
But you don't understand?—
Why should you? . . .

[Exhausted, the girl draws away. The boy reluctantly builds her a throne of fallen leaves. She sits down; he hands her the buttercups, and some colored scarfs.]

Do not make her so happy
That when the time comes to make her unhappy
She will be so unhappy she will die, lad.
Can't you be cross with her?
Can't you fail to bring her those buttercups?
Can't you twang somewhere else now and then?
She'll love you the more?
Then hers is the crime if she dies!
It isn't? Whose is it?
Better make her unhappy at once!
You can't? Well—
I don't know what you should do . . .

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[The girl, possibly sated with attention, stretches out on the leaves. The boy watches her; comes closer; seems doubtful; stops. Then he sits down near her. Something holds him still; something else draws him still closer.]

She wears no scarf over her hair,
No mask over her eyes, over her mouth.
Nor do you ask her to: thus, you love her.
Nor do you see veils round her breasts,
Veils down her limbs.
Ask you to? I speak to a stone.
You love her, thus . . .

[The girl is startled. The boy touches her. She looks at him, rouses herself, gets up. He turns aside. She moves away. He does not follow her.]

If he were sober
He would love you as you wish to be loved,
And as he would love you
If his muddled thought of you were clear of desire.
It is sad that one so young should be drunken so soon,
But had you not answered him,
Had you not answered him . . .
I know, I know
It wasn't your fault. . . .

[Slowly the lovers depart in opposite directions.]

May the sun blink open your eyes
And find the room within all blue,
And that tiny broken relic
Of the night's unhappiness

[294]
Vanish like a moth,
You will see: no bird
Can fly more swiftly away . . .

[Interlude.]
Again, under the spell
Of these warm-scented troubadour winds,
Brushing winter's convent with insinuating madrigals,
Those novices, the trees,
Clicking their crooked black needles,
Are knitting lace—is it yellow, is it green?—
Timid in pattern, as clouds are,
What with their dropping of stitches.
Later, grown almost heretic
Through warmth of their own,
Or under the foolish persuasion
That beauty can add to beauty, and hold beauty,
One or two will work in patches of flowers . . .
Once again, the troubadours—
Some sated, some broken-hearted—
Will slip away, and the convent be as before.
Maybe the Mother Superior
Frowns them off. . . .

[The boy enters, dejectedly. His movements are indeterminate, but he stops near the willow.]
You are so straight and still—
What does it mean?
Are you concerned in the tops of you now
With sky matters and winter butterflies?

[295]
Do not the leaves you colored trouble you longer?
Try and recall!
Try and recall:
Over this path she used to tread her way,
Over there he used to throne them for her:
Green, brown, red, yellow!
Did you look at me?
Did you say something? . . .

[The boy departs. The girl enters, dejectedly. She sits down near the scattered remains of the throne.]

Girl, is the sap in you tired
That you no longer resist the wind?
Did you feel the rain,
The rain that was here in the night?
You aren't old—what then?
Another rain may be lighter?
Even if it isn't—no? . . .

[A silence.]
She loved her love for him.
But ask her how it died, she will cry,
His faults came and stabbed it.
Over the tomb she has scrolled,
"My love for him is dead, but my love lives on."
And her love carries white flowers
To what was her love for him.

[The second boy enters. He looks at the girl. But as the figure continues, the boy passes aimlessly through.]
Beware, lad.
There's a lane of cherry trees
On the turn from his grave.
Don't look at her,
Or you'll be plucking blossoms
In blossom time, blossoms being pink,
Or cherries in cherry time, cherries being red.
And seeing they're a pretty variation from the white,
Her love will carry them
To what was her love for him. . . .

[The girl has not seen the second boy. She leaves the
wood. A silence.]
Only when the willow nods
Does the water nod;
Only when the wind nods
Does the willow nod;
Only when a cloud nods
Does the wind nod:
And, of course, nod
Rhymes with God . . .

[Slow curtain.]
THE SPLENDID COMMONPLACE

IN THIS HOTEL

The headwaiter says:
"Nice day to-day!"
He smiles sentimentally.
The headwaiter says:
"It will rain to-day!"
He frowns gracefully.
Those are the greetings, every morning,
To every old lady,
And every old gent,
And every old rogue,
And every young couple—
To every guest.

And I, who do not sleep, who wait and watch for the dawn,
One day I would come down to the world.
I would have a trumpet as powerful as the wind,
And I would trumpet out to the world
The splendid commonplace:
"Nice day to-day!"
And another day I would cry out in despair,
"It will rain to-day!"
For every old lady,
And every old gent,
And every old rogue,
And every young couple—
Are they not guests in this hotel,
Emanuel Carnevali

Where the ceiling is the sky
And the floor is the earth,
And the rooms are the houses?

But I, I—this wretched, tired thing—
May I ask for a job
As headwaiter
Of this hotel?

HIS MAJESTY THE LETTER-CARRIER

Half past seven in the morning
And the sun winks at me,
Half hidden by the last house of the street.
His long fingers
Scare away these trotting little men
Who rush westward from the east to their jobs.
Laughing, the sun pursues them . . .
Ah, there he is!
Who? . . . The letter-carrier, of course!
(What do you think I got up so early for?)
You never see him run—
He is so proud
Because he's got my happiness in that dirty bag:
He's got a kiss from my sweetheart,
Some money for me to buy some food,
And a white, nice collar.
That's why he's so conceited,
That's why he wants to show
That he doesn't know the sun is behind him,
That the laughing sun is behind him
Pushing him along to make him bring me my happiness:
A kiss from my sweetheart,
Some money to buy some food and a clean collar,
And a letter from an editor that says:
“You’re a great poet, young man!”

Damn it! I guess he heard me raving about him:
He passed by my door and didn’t even turn around.
What shall I do, what shall I do?

Oh, never mind—tomorrow, tomorrow!

DRÔLATIQUE-SÉRIEUX

Through the lowered awning’s chink
The sun enters my room with the glad fury
Of a victorious dagger wielded by an adventurous child.
I smoke:
On the blade of the golden dagger
The smoke of my cigarette
Writhe, struggles, seems to wail and protest,
Then escapes, runs away, hurriedly, out of the window.
It meets the sun—
This blue, dream-fed smoke meets the sun.
The sun has no dream—
Perhaps it is Truth itself,
So beautiful!
Then it's wrong, very wrong,
To puff my dream in the radiant face of Truth?
Is it blasphemous, cowardly?
Is it to insult the Sun?

WHEN IT HAS PASSED

Love—I thought it was a long ride in a boat
Over a quiet lake: around
The weeping willows let fall their hair
Into the water;
And amid those hairs, the rays
Which the sun had forgotten to take with him going away
Were of indigo-rose-purple-blue.

But now that it has passed I know it was a stream
That swept by roaring, destroying all, all.
In my soul, all that is left is a shrub
That sways and waves at the wind like the hair of a witch,
That whistles and curses the wind like the ghastly arm of a
witch:
The remembrance.

TO THE POETS

Essences of the peoples' beautiful selves,
Violins whose strings quiver
With long, soft, delicate harmonies—
Even when touched by the world's rough fingers,
Even when touched by Grief's cold fingers—
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Think of the day when you, sleeping in your graves,
Shall be awakened by the thunder of your own voices
And by the strong, cool winds of your own music:
For in the fertile soil of the years
Your voices will blossom and become thunder,
Your music will become winds that purify and create.

SENTIMENTAL DIRGE

Sweetheart, what's the use of you—
When the night is blue,
And I'm sad with the whisper of the skies,
And I'm heavy and I'm weary
With my many lies?
There is no music around me—
Not a sound
But the whisper of the skies:
I am bound
To my sadness with so slender, so thin ties—
Oh, so thin, still you can't break them.
Sweetheart, what's the use of you?

And within me, what then pains,
When it rains?
Ah, the drops fall on the wound
And it pains.
For my soul's a naked wound,
The rain-drops are salty tears.
Are they tears of some great giant
Who still fears,
Emanuel Carnevali

Just like me,
For the morrows, for the things that passed away—
For the dead, dead yesterday?

Sweetheart, what's the use of you?—
When the laughers are too few;
When the trees will no more sing
For the wind;
When they wave their ghastly arms,
Naked arms,
In despair, and no one heeds;
And my soul is like the reeds
Stooing under the low wind
Hopelessly—like the reeds,
Broken, that shall rise no more
And sing softly as before—
For the wind has been too cruel
And too strong.

'Neath the snow, wet, lies the fuel:
And the flame
Of my laughter, of all laughers,
Now is dying. Oh, for shame!—
All you promised that first day!
What'll you do for me, now, say,
What'll you do for me?
What's the use
Of you, sweetheart, what's the use?

Emanuel Carnevali

[303]
THREE POEMS

ALCHEMY

Since I have loved you
Every man I pass
Goes by me with some hint of you:
Some windy grace
Of your swift movement through the crowd;
Some similarity of up-flung brow
That lifts me with the thrill of mountains;
Some glance of eyes, like yours,
That whisper phraseless things.
Since I have loved you
Every man I pass
Goes by me with some hint of you.
Since I have loved you
Are you all men?
And has love made
All men
You?

THE HARLOT'S CHILD

She is a little downy
Baby-thing,
With eyes as quick as mirrors
To give back what she sees.
And she has a sidelong way
Of peeking in the corners
Of Life’s eyes
As though she begged a chance
To please,
As though she promised
To agree.
She knows somehow the colors of the world
Are fast:
Chameleon of soul, she sets herself
To acquiesce.

WAR

I have forgotten
My old grief
Because you love me not;
I have forgotten
The slow rust
Of loneliness upon my soul;
I have forgotten
All my ways and woes of life;
I have forgotten
My life
Now!

[305]
SONGS OF THE DUST

FOLDED POWER

Sorrow can wait,
For there is magic in the calm estate
Of grief; lo, where the dust complies
Wisdom lies.

Sorrow can rest,
Indifferent, with her head upon her breast;
Idle and hushed, guarded from fears;
Content with tears.

Sorrow can bide,
With sealèd lids and hands unoccupied.
Sorrow can fold her latent might,
Dwelling with night.

But Sorrow will rise
From her dream of sombre and hushed eternities.
Lifting a Child, she will softly move
With a mother's love.

She will softly rise.
Her embrace the dying will recognize,
Lifting them gently through strange delight
To a clearer light.

THE MOULD

No doubt this active will,
So bravely steeped in sun,
Gladys Cromwell

This will has vanquished Death
And foiled oblivion.

But this indifferent clay,
This fine experienced hand,
So quiet, and these thoughts
That all unfinished stand,

Feel death as though it were
A shadowy caress;
And win and wear a frail
Archaic wistfulness.

AUTUMN COMMUNION

This autumn afternoon
My fancy need invent
No untried sacrament.
Man can still commune
With Beauty as of old:
The tree, the wind's lyre,
The whirling dust, the fire—
In these my faith is told.

Beauty warms us all;
When horizons crimson burn,
We hold heaven's cup in turn.
The dry leaves gleaming fall,
Crumbs of mystical bread;
My dole of Beauty I break,
Love to my lips I take,
And fear is quieted.

The symbols of old are made new:
I watch the reeds and the rushes,
The spruce trees dip their brushes
In the mountain's dusky blue;
The sky is deep like a pool;
A fragrance the wind brings over
Is warm like hidden clover,
Though the wind itself is cool.

Across the air, between
The stems and the grey things,
Sunlight a trellis flings.
In quietude I lean:
I hear the lifting zephyr
Soft and shy and wild;
And I feel earth gentle and mild
Like the eyes of a velvet heifer.

Love scatters and love disperses.
Lightly the orchards dance
In a lovely radiance.
Down sloping terraces
They toss their mellow fruits.
The rhythmic wind is sowing,
Softly the floods are flowing
Between the twisted roots.

[308]
What Beauty need I own
When the symbol satisfies?
I follow services
Of tree and cloud and stone.
Color floods the world;
I am swayed by sympathy;
Love is a litany
In leaf and cloud unfurled.

STAR SONG

There are twisted roots that grow
Even from a fragile white anemone.
But a star has no roots; to and fro
It floats in the light of the sky, like a water-lily,
And fades on the blue flood of day.

A star has no roots to hold it,
No living lonely entity to lose.
Floods of dim radiance fold it;
Night and day their silent aura transfuse;
But no change a star can bruise.

A star is adrift and free.
When day comes, it floats into space and complies;
Like a spirit quietly,
Like a spirit, amazed in a wider paradise
At mortal tears and sighs.

Gladys Cromwell
On—turgid, bellowing—tramp the freshet rills,
Heaped up with yellow wine, the winter's brew.
Out-thrown, they choke and tumble from the hills,
And lash their tawny bodies, whipping through.
With flattened bells comes scudding purple rain;
The cold sky breaks and drenches out the snow.
Far from the perfect circle of the sky
The heavy winds lick off the boughs they blow;
And fields are cleansed for plows to slice again,
For April shall laugh downward by and by.

With purifying blasts the wind stalks out
And sweeps the carrion of winter on;
It prods the dank mists, stamps with jest about,
And sows the first blooms on the greening lawn.
Far up the planks of sky the winter's dross
Goes driven to the north; her rank smells wave
In unseen humors to the icy pole.
The charwomen of the sky, with brushes, lave
And wash the fields for green, and rocks for moss,
And busily polish up the earth's dull soul.

Edwin Curran
VERNON CASTLE

Killed in the Aviation Service Feb. 15th, 1918.

Dead dancer, how is this?—the laurel here
Upon your bier?
The brazen wings, the sword—and the shrill tone
Of bugles blown?

Why do you wear, light-footed one—O proud!—
The flag for shroud?
Where have you danced? from what high-spheréd dome
Have you come home?

Bravo!—you trod the measure gallantly,
Swiftly flew free!
Goodbye—perhaps your flight has just begun
Under the sun.

Harriet Monroe

[311]
IN BARRACKS

DEPARTURE

America in shuffling crowds
Pelted high-voiced goodbyes
Upon the ragged troop train.
Muddled sound of partings,
An accent here and there acute,
Popping, sudsy soap-sprays,
A girl's bright dress, a frantic flag.

America, shuffling, clattering
To her high moment—
A swelter of faint calls,
Upraised civilian arms, and then
Curdy floculations of vague color—
Drifted about the boarded station-house,
Upholding it like an ark,
Ever more in the distance.

L Company drifted crankily down the track,
Entrained in hasty coupled cars
For mobilization,
And left there, behind, Democracy,
Slack Democracy on the station boards;
Left America clattering into emotion
And shuffling heterogeneously home.
“Emotional—not spiritual,” one said,
Who, with Company L, saw

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A new America somewhere,
Waiting, unknowing the future.

THE NUMBER

The sheet of the morning Tribune bent
With thin crashing and clutters of sound.
Tight hands held it; its fabric
Rattled in fragile catastrophe.

Sudden figures in the morning Tribune—
Three with sudden, significant being
Among slight marks by thousands
Strewing the page—raised themselves
In lustreless knobs, small, black, metallic,
Above the dim paper breadth.

A man, Woodby, saw three numerals
That rose in dull, significant lumps
From the creaking page of the Tribune.
His own number! carved
Of hard, stupid material they seemed.

Woodby, drafted man, left
His familiar papers, his thesis
On an unfinished and ancient past,
Forever, to learn the cold accuracy
Of near material, of steel, of half-ounce bullets.

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REVEILLE

Sleep-soaked bodies are pried
Out of the obese night; laziness,
Yearning in porous flesh,
Is squeezed as from a sponge.

Silver tubes lifted upward by young buglers
Spout glistening sound
Upon the murk of early day.
The sounds of first call
Clink and glisten in the early air;
Bright chips of sound tinkle and clash sweetly
Like ice in the dusky water of an urn.

Reveille and the murmur of men—
A murmurous cloud of dusk lifts
From the earthen floor. A murmur
Distant, huge, sweet with Being's joy,
Rises from the awakening thousands
Of earth-born bodies.
The blare of regimental bands
Hoists finally night's curtain
With distant shattering.

ON THE ROAD

The world sweats
In a bedding of throbbing, thick light;
Heat soaks like a bitter oil
Into the texture of being;

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Dust steams from the earth
Under the feet of infantry
And coats the air with minute fur.

Along the smothered road men plod
Between silent horizons,
Between thin, yellow borders of the earth
Pressed flat under a burden of light.
Painted, vivid silence
Waits along the desert's rim.

SOUTHWARD

Forbidden Mexico
Four hundred yards away—
A drunken, tawny beast—
Slept across the southward path.
"There shall no soldier go,"
The order was, "beyond
The murky middle of the stream."

Forbidden Mexico!—
Its drifting slopes
Slid back into sun-hid distance.
Its tawny skin, sleek
With clean aridity,
Lay unpunctured by man's growth.
Four hundred yards away—
A thousand years could sink
Into the gap between this river-bank and that.
MAJOR FITZPATRICK

His back had the sabre's curve,
Clean sitting on his mount.
His words were winged words, steel-tipped,
Loosed on drab men drilling.
His was the drama of the harpoon
Driving barbed oaths, driving deep
Into drab men drilling
On the battalion parade.
The dynamic of the oath was his,
Its knife energy, its thrust.
At the third battalion Major Fitz
Hurled personality like bitter shrapnel.

FREEBOURNE'S RIFLE

"It's an old gun," the major said,
"But clean—give him excellent;"
And pushed the oil-scrubbed gun
Back on private Freebourne's chest.
"An old gun! Hell, yes!" said Freebourne,
When he tried to turn it in
To the Q. M. for a new one;
"I put two hours a day on it."
But Freebourne loved its steel;
He never took the other.
Two hours on steel, man's metal,
Till the inner twirl of bore
Carried the light in gleaming gutters
Round, coiled round on itself,
To lurch pointed bullets true
A thousand yards. Two hours
Testing the severe materiality of steel:
Steel thought, steel calculation,
Severe, absolute in hardness,
Loyal to existence—
It could transcend sense sogginess and flesh.
Two hours the soldier loved his steel,
Its truth, its edge,
Its fearlessness of fact, its bitterness of line,
Its certainty and decision.

PRIVATE RAUSCH

Prisoner in life, Rausch, a private,
Thumped at steel-clad existence
Unavailingly.
Caught in the impassive tank
Of the dull day, firm
With a cool crust of metal
Wrapped around his fluid soul,
Rausch thumped and failed
To break the riveting.

Booze Rausch found one day
At a small bar under Corrine’s room,
And soul found vent
In a joyous spout.

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Rausch was a gush
Out of a windowless, dull tank;
Soldier life, armor of discipline,
The close tyranny of small events,
Broke, and Rausch, full of booze,
Spouted himself expressively.

Rausch died of tremens one pay-day
While finding his legitimate soul.

THE HURRICANE

The wind soured into night.
Acid of a narrow rain
Pitted the sentries' paces
With spits of cold.

The wind grew in hoarse breaths
With the night's age,
Until the night was wind,
And darkness spouted on the prone earth
From the West's nozzle.

Wind and night, roaring
Like mated beasts,
Pressed huge bodies
On the bulging walls
Of tied Sibley tents.
One by one the double-headed pegs
Pulled with a souseling kiss
From the rain-weak earth.

A rope snapped; a wall flap
Jumped; the tent heaved,
Bulged upward
With scared awkwardness,
And fell on a broken tripod.

The wind, night, rain,
With huge onwardness,
West, south, east, north, poured itself
Bitterly on the flat earth.

Three Nature-whipped sentries,
Tied into their ponchos,
Pried through the heaving night
Like tired swimmers.

TAPS
Into pure night
A strand of golden sound
Weaves a design.

Life woven in sound
Is night and song.

Pathos—of a soul—
Inspires the darkness.

Baker Brownell
IT IS difficult to say anything about the war without being platitudinous—in these days when so much is being said, and said often absorbingly well, by people who are in it. And yet the emotion of the moment is too keen for silence, even if too keen for adequate utterance. What right have we to live when so many are dying? What right have we elders to send youth into battle while we keep our safe places by the fire? What right has the thinker to his problem, the artist to his vision, the poet to his song, while fresh lives are giving up their hope of thought and art and song? How can we take the new era at our soldiers’ hands—how can we who have laid on their shoulders the burden of the past, accept the future from them who should have lived to possess it, from them to whom not the past but the future belonged?

All other issues seem small beside this heroic issue on which we stake those infinitely precious lives. If agriculture and commerce become the feeders, the tool-makers, of war, the arts seem at first glance to be a pottering with toys, a lisping of words, out of relation with these marching armies, out of the current of great events. What flattering unction shall we poets lay to our bruised souls as we chant our little songs while battles are won and lost? What are we doing to make the world safe for democracy?

Well, it may be that we are doing more than we know. Poets have made more wars than kings, and it is for them,
and not for kings, to make an end of war by removing its veil of glamour. Kings are, after all, impotent. It was men's imaginations that once gave them power and splendor, but for a century or two men's imaginations have been de-throning them and stripping their pitiful figures bare. "War remains what it always was—a contest not so much of material forces as of spiritual forces." And the poet, the artist, are makers of spiritual forces, leaders of men's imaginations.

For years the poets, the artists, have been dictating terms of peace to the next age. Every painter of his own wood-lot, every poet singing the beauty of working-girls instead of queens, or the bravery of common men instead of princes, has been doing his bit to democratize the world. The work has been done not only by Titans like Whitman but also by the sheer mass and weight of lesser men moved by the same spirit and leading their neighbors and admirers in the same direction. The Kaiser is a man of straw against a force like this. Whitman and Millet beat him before he was born—our soldiers have but to finish the job.

Never was the artist more necessary than now—his freedom of spirit, his self-assertion, his creative fire. When the whole world is in the melting-pot, when civilization is to be reminted and no one can tell what stamp its face and reverse will bear; when ideas, which flowed hitherto in separate channels, are gathering into vast tides that overwash the boundaries of nations; when this swarming earth, sun-lit, moon-guarded, seems a little ball fingered for a throw by some colossal Pitcher with his eye on the Ultimate Event—

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then the stand of the individual against immensities, a stand always hazardous, becomes a gesture of incredible power and pride, an attitude of almost impossible heroism, the lonely uprising of a naked pigmy between overpowering hordes and the abyss.

This is the ultimate test of the poet. This must be his attitude today between the forces of life and death—between the embattled nations sweeping decrepit and rotten things into the gulf, and those invisible rangers of the air whose breath is the future. Puny unit of the unconquerable will, he must hold up his little torch between the old and new—

Unhurt amid the war of elements,
The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds!

H. M.

REVIEWS

SWINBURNE VERSUS BIOGRAPHERS


Gosse's Life of Swinburne is merely the attempt of a silly and pompous old man to present a man of genius, an attempt necessarily foredoomed to failure and not worth the attention of even the most cursive reviewer. Gosse has written one excellent book: Father and Son, prompted according to gossip by his wife's fear that Mr. George Moore, having been rashly allowed access to Mr. Gosse's diaries, proposed to steal the material. Mr. Gosse has also held divers positions of trust under the British government, in

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one of which, at least, he has fulfilled his functions with great credit and fairness. Apart from that he resembles many literary figures of about his age and generation, who coming after the more or less drunken and more or less obstreperous real Victorians, acquired only the cant and the fustiness.

Tennyson, "so muzzy that he tried to go out through the fire-place;" Morris (William, not Lewis) lying on the floor biting the table-leg in a rage because Gabriel had gone off before he, Morris, had finished what he was saying; Swinburne at the Madox Browns' door in a cab, while the housekeeper lectures the cabman: "Wot! No, sir, my marster is at the 'ead of 'is table carving the j'int. That's Mr. Swinburne—taike 'im up to the barth:'" were all vital and human people. The real pre-raphaelites lived with Ford Madox Brown's hospitable address sewn inside their coats, in case of these little events. Tennyson, personally the North-country ox, might very well take refuge from his deplorable manners in verbal patisserie; Thackeray might snivvel over not being allowed to write with desirable openness: most of these people surround themselves with extenuations, but for the next generation there is not much to be said save that they go like better men toward extinction. We do not however wish a Swinburne coated with veneer of British officialdom and decked out for a psalm-singing audience.

Gosse in the safety of his annual pension of £666, 16 shillings, 8 pence, has little to fear from the slings of fortune.
or from the criticisms of younger men. If he preferred to present Swinburne as an epileptic rather than as an in­temperate drinker, we can only attribute this to his taste, a taste for kowtowing.

The "events at the art club," which he so prudishly glozes over, were the outcome of alcohol, and the story is worth while if only for the magnificent tanning that Whistler administered to the Arts Club committee: "You ought to be proud that there is in London a club where the greatest poet of your time can get drunk if he wants to, otherwise he might lie in the gutter."

There is more Swinburne, and perhaps more is to be told of his tragedy, in a few vignettes than is to be found in all Gosse's fusty volume. Swinburne's tragedy was that he ended as a deaf, querulous old man in Putney, mediocre in his faculties. W. H. Davies tells the story of the little old man looking into a perambulator in front of a pub, and a cockney woman hastily interposing herself and pulling the clothes over her infant's head with, "Narsty old man, 'e sharn't look at my baby."

Thus departed his mundane glory, the glory of a red mane, the glory of the strong swimmer, of the swimmer who when he was pulled out of the channel apparently drowned, came to and held his French fishermen rescuers spellbound all the way to shore declaiming page after page of Hugo.

As George Moore, in his writings, nearly always attributes to himself the witty remarks wherewith other men have
extinguished him in conversation, we may be pardoned for
another tale, which may as likely as not contain verity. It
is said that Moore desired greatly to look upon Swinburne,
and having obtained his address repaired to the Temple, and
heavily climbing the stairs heard noises

come fa mar per tempesta.

They proceeded from Swinburne’s rooms. Moore knocked—
the door was already open. No answer was given. The
booming increased and diminished and increased. Moore
entered—the room was empty; he proceeded to the next
open door, and to still another. He stood aghast; Swin­
burne, hair on end and stark naked, strode backwards and
forwards howling Aeschylus. Moore stood paralyzed.
Swinburne after some moments caught sight of him; thun­
dered “What the hell do you want?” Moore summoned
his waning powers of expression, and with mountainous
effort brought forth the verbal mouse: “Please, sir, are these
Mr. Jones’ chambers?”

“No, sir!”

Whereat Mr. George Moore departed.

It is impossible that a self-respecting biographer should not
have found many such tales of Swinburne. The anaemic
Gosse prefers the epileptic version. Any poet might be
justified in taking to drink on finding himself born into a
world full of Gosses, Comstocks, and Sumners.

Swinburne’s art is out of fashion. The best imitations of
him are by the Germans. The nineties refined upon him,
and Kipling has set his 'cello-tunes to the pilly-wink of one banjo.

Swinburne recognized poetry as an art, and as an art of verbal music. Keats had got so far as to see that it need not be the pack-mule of philosophy. Swinburne's actual writing is very often rather distressing, but a deal of his verse is no worse written than Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. He habitually makes a fine stanzaic form, writes one or two fine strophes in it, and then continues to pour into the mould strophes of diminishing quality.

His biography is perfectly well written in his work. He is never better than in the *Ballad of Life*, the *Ballad of Death*, and the *Triumph of Time*. To the careful reader this last shows quite clearly that Swinburne was actually broken by a real and not by a feigned emotional catastrophe early in life; of this his later slow decline is a witness. There is a lack of intellect in his work. After the poems in the *Laus Veneris* volume (not particularly the title poem) and the poems of the time when he made his magnificent adaptations from Villon, he had few rallies of force, one of them in *Sienna*.

He neglected the value of words as words, and was intent on their value as sound. His habit of choice grew mechanical, and he himself perceived it and parodied his own systemization.

Moderns more awake to the value of language will read him with increasing annoyance, but I think few men who read him before their faculty for literary criticism is awak-
ened—the faculty for purely literary discrimination as con­
trasted with melopoeic discrimination—will escape the en­
thusiasm of his emotions, some of which were indubitably
real. At any rate we can, whatever our verbal fastidious­
ness, be thankful for any man who kept alive some spirit of
paganism and of revolt in a papier-maché era, in a time
swarming with Longfellows, Mabies, Gosses, Harrisons.

After all, the whole of his defects can be summed up in
one—that is, inaccurate writing; and this by no means ubiqui­
tous. To quote his magnificent passages is but to point
out familiar things in our landscape. *Hertha* is fit for pro­
fessors and young ladies in boarding-school. The two ballads
and the *Triumph of Life* are full of sheer imagism, of pas­
sages faultless.

No one else has made such music in English, I mean has
made his kind of music; and it is a music which will compare
with Chaucer’s *Hide Absalon thi gilte tresses clere* or with
any other maker you like.

The Villon translations stand with Rossetti’s and the
*Rubaiyat* among the Victorian translations. The ballad,
*Where ye droon ane man I drown twa*, is as fine as any
reconstruction, and the cross-rhythms are magnificent. The
*Itylus*, the *Ballad of Burdens*—what is the use of naming
over poems so familiar to all of us!

“As yet you get no whole or perfect poet.” He and
Browning are the best of the Victorian era; and Browning
wrote to a theory of the universe, thereby cutting off a fair
half of the moods for expression.
No man who cares for his art can be deaf to the rhythms of Swinburne, deaf to their splendor, deaf also to their bathos. The sound of *Dolores* is in places like that of horses' hoofs being pulled out of mud. The sound in a poem of sleep is so heavy that one can hardly read it aloud, the voice is drawn into a slumber. (I am not sure that this effect is not excessive, and that it does not show the author overshooting his mark; but for all that it shows ability in his craft, and has, whatever one's final opinion, an indisputable value as experiment.) Swinburne's surging and leaping dactyllics had no comparable forerunners in English.

His virtues might be largely dug from the Greeks, and his faults mostly traceable to Victor Hugo. But a perception of the beauties of Greek melopoeia does not constitute a mastery in the creation of similar melopoeia. The rhythm-building faculty was in Swinburne, and was perhaps the chief part of his genius. The word-selecting, word-castigating faculty was nearly absent. Unusual and gorgeous words attracted him. His dispraisers say that his vocabulary is one of the smallest at any poet's command, and that he uses the same adjectives to depict either a woman or a sunset. There are times when this last is not, or need not be, *ipso facto* a fault. There is an emotional fusion of the perceptions, and a certain kind of verbal confusion has an emotive value in writing; but this is of all sorts of writing the most dangerous to an author, and the unconscious collapse into this sort of writing has wrecked more poets in our time than perhaps all other faults put together.
Forth, ballad, and take roses in thine arms,
Even till the top rose prick thee in the throat
Where the least thorn-prick harms;
And gird thee in the golden singing coat... .
Borgia, thy gold hair's color burns in me... .

The splendid lines mount up in one's memory and overwhelm any minute restrictions of one's praise. It is the literary fashion to write exclusively of Swinburne's defects; and the fashion is perhaps not a bad one, for the public is still, and will presumably remain, indiscriminate. Defects are in Swinburne by the bushelful: the discriminating reader will not be able to overlook them, and need not condone them; neither will he be swept off his feet by detractors. There are in Swinburne fine passages, like fragments of fine marble statues; there are fine transcripts from the Greek:

A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.

And there is, underneath all the writing, a magnificent passion for liberty—a passion dead as mutton in most of his contemporaries, and immeasurably deader than mutton in a people who allow their literature to be blanketed by a Comstock and his successors; for liberty is not merely a catchword of politics, nor a right to shove little slips of paper through a hole. The passion not merely for political, but also for personal, liberty is the bedrock of Swinburne's writing. The sense of tragedy, and of the unreasoning cruelty of the gods, hangs over it. He fell into facile writing, and he accepted a facile compromise for life; but no facile solution for his universe. His unbelief did not desert him; no, not even in Putney.

Ezra Pound
A GLASS-BLOWER OF TIME


Reading in a single volume Ezra Pound’s poems of the last few years, one discovers, or at least should discover, in oneself a certain misjudgment of this poet. Though he has the habit of putting his unpopular foot forward, so that one must be on one’s guard, he is not the extremist, the bête noir, one had thought him.

Neither in form nor in substance is he the radical so many readers have assumed him to be. What with his quantities, stresses, alliterations, iterations and heaven only knows what, his style is certainly not anarchical nor arbitrary. On the contrary, it is elaborate; his forms are much more difficult, and require more fineness of touch, than a sonnet. Neither is he the extremist in his choice of subjects; indeed, he seems almost timid about them. One might imagine that this poet would not dare treat a subject that had not been sanctified, or the reverse, by Catullus, Villon, Arnaut Daniel, or some other ancient of the many he knows.

What are Pound’s most important qualities? and what are his most important contributions to English poetry?

To me his most important quality is grace. No matter what he takes up, it melts into extreme grace. Grace is present in the idea as well as in the form. The movement of many of his poems suggests what a Greek dance must have been like; they are rhythmical with a deep, solemn, graceful rhythm, with never a shade of triviality or vulgarity. One
can find proof of this almost anywhere in the book: in Dance Figure, in The Spring. Here is a part of The Fish and the Shadow:

As light as the shadow of the fish that falls through the water, She came into the large room by the stair. Yawning a little she came, with the sleep still upon her.

"I am just from bed. The sleep is still in my eyes. Come. I have had a long dream."
And I: "That wood?
And two springs have passed us."

"Not so far, no, not so far now, There is a place—but no one else knows it—
A field in a valley,
Qui'ieu sui avinen
Ieu lo sai."

"She must speak of the time
Of Arnaut de Mareuil," I thought, "qui'ieu sui avinen."

Light as the shadow of the fish
That falls through the pale green water.

Or this from the River Song:

The purple house and the crimson are full of spring softness. South of the pond the willow-tips are half blue and bluer; Their cords tangle in mist against the brocade-like palace. Vine-strings a hundred feet long hang down from the carved railings, And high over the willows the fine birds sing to each other and listen, Crying—"Kwan, Kuan," for the early wind and the feel of it. The wind bundles itself into a bluish cloud and wanders off. Over a thousand gates, over a thousand doors, are the sounds of spring singing.

His other important quality is clearness. Pound speaks of having seen the dome of pure color: it is this—purity of color—which distinguishes him. In Provincia Deserta
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is a rich emotionalism, in *The Social Order—II* is humor, in *Cabaret Dancer* is robustness—All these qualities are found in other poets writing in free or metric verse; yet the extreme cleanness and clearness with which these effects are expressed is the mark of Pound’s uncompromising art-soul.

Of course readers will be irritated by one thing or another in this book. The very subtle grace to which almost every poem-subject is reduced—the butterfly grace which gives it a sort of rarefied atmosphere—together with the absolutely flawless technique, will irritate some readers. There is also the feeling, to put it very crudely, of the poet-reformer with which he seems possessed. This may be needed, perhaps more needed than anything else; yet the mind slightly resents it.

Outside of the Chinese group—of which his friend Ford Madox Hueffer writes intriguingly that if they were Pound’s own they alone would make him the greatest poet of our time—some readers will feel a lack of pabulum. It is not more lyrical poems like *Provincia Deserta*, nor more robust poems like *Cabaret Dancer* that would best make up for this need; but rather poems in the manner of *The Return*, with the infinite possibilities of the fantastic-real.

Our resentment though is often due to the fact that our palates have been spoiled by the cloying sweetness of much of what we read. The lack of pabulum is often only superficial. When Pound writes of a beautiful woman

\[
\text{The odor of your patchouli . . .}
\text{Assails me, and concerns me almost as little—}
\]

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the lines, though seemingly trivial, will mean much to a mind which can grasp the delicacy of balance between the two objects.

Pound is an important poet of our era, just as other poets who are now classics were of their eras. He is not hard reading, or mysterious, or anything else uncanny. Any intelligent person who comes to him with an open mind will feel much of his beauty. It is only the denseness of many of our established opinion-makers which has kept thousands of lovers of poetry away.

This poet evidently pays his respect to such critics in *The Faun*:

Ha! sir, I have seen you sniffing and snoozling about among my flowers.
And what, pray, do you know about horticulture, you capriped?
Come, Auster, come Areliota,
And see the Faun in our garden!
But if you move or speak
This thing will run at you,
And scare itself to spasms.

*Max Michelson*

A GROUP OF ENGLISH CONTEMPORARIES

*An Annual of New Poetry, 1917.* Constable and Co., Ltd.

An anthology has the same advantages that an exhibition of pictures has, and it has also the same disadvantages. It introduces work that might otherwise not gain the attention of the public; and, on the other hand, it gives us perhaps too slight a showing of any one man's work for that full understanding which comes with a more extended view. But
whether retrospective or contemporary, anthologies and exhibitions are usually very vital things, since they enable us to perceive the work of various poets and artists in juxtaposition; making it incumbent upon the reader or observer to make his own choice and selection and thereby become, as Mr. Spingarn claims, a critic who is also creative. Certainly the task of reviewing an anthology of contemporary work, unless it be merely perfunctory, is far more difficult than that of reviewing a single author and making choice of pictures or poems that all have a certain unity in personality and style; particularly when, as in the present case, the work represented is not dominated by any intention to write in any given way or to follow any definite school or "ism."

Of the eight contributors to this annual, Gordon Bottomley, W. H. Davies, John Drinkwater, Edward Eastaway, Robert Frost, W. W. Gibson, T. Sturge Moore, R. C. Trevelyan, all are Englishmen except Robert Frost; though this of itself is, of course, no guarantee of unity either. Yet the poets seem to be divided somewhat into groups: Messrs. Drinkwater, Davies and Gibson in one; and Messrs. Bottomley, Eastaway and Frost in another; with Mr. Moore and Mr. Trevelyan in the third. Of course this grouping applies only to this collection, and is not meant in too strict a sense.

The first group we may call the Wordsworthian. These poets seem to follow the Wordsworthian convention of making simple folks more simple than they really are. One re-
calls in this connection Poe's "Why with William on a stone when we can have Jacques under an oak?" In Mr. Davies this tendency falls to the level of such a poem as *Brothers*, which pictures imbecility in a truly imbecile fashion. In Mr. Drinkwater's section we have a pretty picture of a group of working people falling under the spell of nature, in pre-Wordsworthian style, out from "the city of mean emprise" into the world of June:

Beneath cool clustered branch and bloom,
Littered with stars of amethyst,
Sun-arrows glancing through the gloom,
They slept; the lush young bracken kissed
The tired forms. Ah, wellaway,
Within so wide a peace to see
Fellows who measure every day
Merely the roads of misery.

In Mr. Gibson this tendency amounts almost to a fixed idea. And what can one say of the monotony of Mr. Gibson's style? Is there any reason why poetic diction should be subjected to less stringent criticism than the language of prose? Must we accept in poetry what would prove insufferable in prose? A part of the monotony of Mr. Gibson's style comes from his persistent use of the colorless nameless third person "he," who is the protagonist of all the poems but who never does anything of himself or without Mr. Gibson's prompting. And one continually feels Mr. Gibson prompting. One gets the gist of the poems at three removes—what the author says "he" thinks or feels about things. "He sniffed the clean and eager smell;" "He liked the daffodils"—until the "he"-ness or "her"-ness amounts to a
positive grayness that blunts the mind. And through all this writing about “him” or “her,” one becomes conscious of a growing resentment that Mr. Gibson should so persistently exploit, in poetry, the working classes. It amounts to a literary propaganda, and, like much social propaganda, it carries with it the suspicion of a rather patronizing attitude. Folk poetry, of or about the people, is never class-conscious. One feels continually that this poet is. One feels, as Dostoievsky said, that this is “a ‘gentleman’ writing about the masses.”

We find a very different spirit in the poetry of T. Sturge Moore and R. C. Trevelyan, for whom today and yesterday are one. Mr. Sturge Moore, having chosen, or been chosen by, a Biblical subject, invests it with new imaginative atmosphere and through the intensive study of character and mood creates and develops a crisis that is sharply modern. Mr. Moore’s verse is involved, but it has beautiful texture; and, however involved his style is, one realizes that it is so on account of the nature of the thought, which it follows and reveals; whereas the poetic inversions to which one objects are those awkward externalities which are merely makeshifts and reveal nothing. (It is unfortunate for Mr. Garnett’s recommendation of this annual as a good-style book that the first poem in it should be an example of what not to do in the matter of inversions.)

An even more exotic note is found in The Pearl Tree, by R. C. Trevelyan. If this is not a translation, it is an even more remarkable production, having the very spirit
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and accent of the Hindu originals, which celebrate the loves of Krishna and Radha with that union of secular and divine love which is so astonishing to our cruder western minds. This is a poem in the form of a drama, very beautiful in conception and verse.

There is a new intensive lyricism in the work of Gordon Bottomley, Edward Eastaway, and Robert Frost—a new landscape, a new life. Other men have looked on the earth to love it, but with less sense of a merged identity. Other men have written of love or of nature, but in a more general way—love being love—and with less precision in regard to the emotion. These men know the value of the thing so often disregarded, they appreciate the shadow as well as the light; and as Mr. Frost says in The Oven Bird,

The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

Mr. Frost is represented here almost exclusively in a pastoral vein, no doubt to bring him in closer harmony with the others, but one wishes that his Hill Wife, which is one of the most beautiful and perhaps the most lyric of his poems, could also have been included.

Mr. Bottomley’s poetry has a personal and intimate charm, and the quality noted above is apparent in such poems as Atlantis, Sinai, A Surrey Night, and New Year’s Eve, 1913. Unfortunately much of his work is marred by awkward inversions, as in The Ploughman, and by occasional infelicities of sound (unconsidered apparently by Mr. Garnett) as in

The thin light films a wider sky
Than I have lived beneath.
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His blank verse has a greater security of style than one finds in the stanzaic poems, although one may question if—

Because I have no body to hide my thoughts
That are being scanned, as if by unseen eyes,
Perused and judged, ineluctably judged,
I shivering in that exposury
Until dissemination is complete,

representing a certain rush of words to the pen, represents also that distinction of style which the American poet is advised to emulate.

The poems of Edward Eastaway (the pseudonym of Edward Thomas, who was killed in action last April) are like hazel nuts hid in a hedge. Their meaning only shyly reveals itself; the words play with it and then reveal it, although they are sometimes twisted and crossed a little, like the branches of a tree through which the sky is more beautiful. This poet experiences nature not as something seen, outside one’s self, but within one. His identity is only complete through nature. The secret of it is in the poem called Beauty:

What does it mean? Tired, angry, and ill at ease,
No man, woman, or child alive could please
Me now. And yet I almost dare to laugh
Because I sit and frame an epitaph—
“Here lies all that no one loved of him
And that loved no one.” Then in a trice that whim
Has wearied. But, though I am like a river
At fall of evening when it seems that never
Has the sun lighted it or warmed it, while
Cross breezes cut the surface to a file,
This heart, some fraction of me, happily
Floats through the window even now to a tree
Down in the misting, dim-lit, quiet vale,
Not like a pewit that returns to wail

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For something it has lost, but like a dove
That slants unswerving to its home and love.
There I find my rest, and through the dusk air
Flies what yet lives in me. Beauty is there.

One would like to quote more from Mr. Thomas, but already an American edition of his poems has been published by Henry Holt & Co., and readers will appreciate for themselves this poet's rare quality.

A. C. H.

IMAGISM: SECULAR AND ESOTERIC


In this anthology we meet again the six poets who have appeared under this title in the volumes of 1915 and 1916; each one a little less provocative and challenging, it may be, now that imagism has become a staple in the market. That is the way with all rebels—they will go and get accepted and become fashionable. Nowadays everyone is writing imagist vers libre, or what the writers conceive as such, particularly those who at the beginning made the most outcry against it. Free verse is now accepted in good society, where rhymed verse is even considered a little shabby and old-fashioned.

The term Imagism was invented to fit a certain element of poetry, involving also a certain artistic approach or method. The name alone was new—this and the determination of a small group of poets living in London to write poetry as entirely imagistic as possible. All the poets have been imagistic at times, some more consistently than others. In the March, 1913, number of Poetry, Mr. Ezra Pound de-
defined an "image" as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time:" a definition to which all who are in doubt upon the subject should be referred.

Unfortunately, imagism has now come to mean almost any kind of poetry written in unrhymed irregular verse, and "the image"—referred solely to the visual sense—is taken to mean some sort of a pictorial impression!

Even so astute a critic as Padraic Colum says, in a recent review of Arthur Symons' "All are most efficiently rendered, and as one reads them one queries why the imagists, if they want only to render the visible thing, should strive after a new technique."

Yet, even though imagism has become more of a catchword than a key to understanding, the imagists, early and late, have added much to our enjoyment, not only as poets, but as sprightly antagonists. In the latter aspect, they have shown a marked disposition to "come back at" their critics. Adverse criticism has been as meat and bread to them. It has furnished them with the most capital material for advertisements, the one that I remember best being that in which certain unfavorable, not to say vicious, remarks by Professor William Ellery Leonard were set side by side with extracts from the Blackwoods article condemning John Keats under the bold caption, Is History Repeating Itself?

But to turn to the present volume. It is not with any light mood that one reads the poems of Richard Aldington, filled as these are with the note of regret, the unhappiness
of the conscript who has no taste for war and who is too honest to bolster up his spirits with any false enthusiasm. He records instead the few moments that he can steal off by himself, he longs for solitude, and if he refers to the war and to his condition it is only through allusion, inevitably Greek; as in Captive:

They have torn the gold tettinx
From my hair;
And wrenched the bronze sandals
From my ankles:
They have taken from me my friend
Who knew the holy wisdom of poets,
Who had drunk at the feast
Where Simonides sang.

One always gets the effect of a double image when reading Aldington's poems, it is like watching Hyacinth looking at his own reflection; but in this case it is a young Englishman who sees himself as a Greek youth. One would like, occasionally, to feel the image more single. Curiously enough, these poems are more like H. D.'s in method than Mr. Aldington's usually are—particularly Inarticulate Grief, and they seem less like the poet of Choricos, who has more fluency than H. D. Mr. Aldington has never surpassed that poem. He may hate it, because it is so often quoted; but it has permanence, nevertheless.

One detects a deeper note of passion in H. D.'s poems. What her work lacks is sequence—the kind of music that involves and envelopes the thing. It is hard to read more than two or three of the poems at a time because of a certain broken quality. It reminds one of the work of certain
modern painters who are so intent on giving "form" to each object in a picture that the whole lacks cohesion. Poetry is the language of crisis, and H. D.'s verse is admirably adapted to passionate utterance, but all crisis and no relief is like a jewel with no setting. Her work could be more fluid without loss of precision.

Mr. Fletcher's poems are more descriptive than usual, a tendency which he knows how to avoid on occasion, although it sometimes swamps his poems. In these verses his words seem to have been mustered into service somewhat unwillingly. They serve his mood, but they do not themselves create or evoke the mood as in some of his most distinctive work.

The war seems to have had a peculiarly unhappy effect upon Mr. Flint's poetry; it is almost purely reportorial, without the excuse of journalism, which is to convey news. Bare statement, even statement of sensations, will not of itself make a poem. Mr. Lawrence, on the other hand, is introspective to the point of obscurity, but he is not in the least unintelligible to one who understands states of consciousness beneath the surface. Terra Nuova records a psychological experience with the sort of unflinching truth which one has learned to expect from Mr. Lawrence. There are, perhaps, people so undifferentiated that they could not possibly understand what Mr. Lawrence "is driving at:" to them this poem will be as dark as the tomb.

Miss Lowell's contribution to the book is a series of Lacquer Prints, translations or reflections from the Japanese.
expressed with true Japanese brevity, delicacy of feeling, although a little more terse and epigrammatic than one feels Japanese originals to be.

A. C. H.

NOTES

Mr. Alfred Kreymborg, of New York, is well known as the author of Mushrooms (Alfred A. Knopf), and the founder and first editor of Others, the interesting and provocative organ of the more radical vers-librists. When the Willow Nods, as the readers of Poetry were informed in our January number, was given for the first time by the Players' Club of St. Louis, on the evening of December third, Mr. Orrick Johns enacting the cryptic commentator with an effect of rare dramatic beauty. The play, or dance-accompanied monologue—if the miming girl and boys may be said to have danced—proved to be born for the stage, and its author was saluted by the enthusiastic audience as a poetic playwright of rare quality.

Lieutenant Baker Brownell, who has been for some months in training at Camp Doniphan, Ok., and Fort Myers, Fla., makes his initial appearance as a poet. St. Charles, Ill., is his birthplace and residence; in 1912-13 he held the James Walker travelling fellowship in philosophy from Harvard, and since then he has done journalistic and editorial work until he entered the army.

A still younger poet is Mr. Emanuel Carnevali, of New York, who was born in Florence twenty years ago, was educated in Italian technical schools, and came to America at sixteen. Since then he has earned his living in various difficult ways, studied English, and written his first poems in both languages. He writes: “I want to become an American poet because I have, in my mind, rejected Italian standards of good literature. I do not like Carducci, still less d'Annunzio. . . . Of American authors I have read, pretty well, Poe, Whitman, Twain, Harte, London, Oppenheim and Waldo Frank. I believe in free verse. I try not to imitate.”

Mr. Edwin Curran, of Zanesville, O., is also a stranger to printer's ink. He is a telegraph operator on duty in a railroad tower from 10 P. M. to 6 A. M., and most of his writing is done in the wee sma' hours.
Another poet new to our readers, though a contributor to *Reedy's Mirror, The Smart Set* and other magazines, is Susan M. Boogher (Mrs. John P.), of St. Louis.

Miss Gladys Cromwell, of New York, who has appeared before in *POETRY*, is the author of *The Gates of Utterance* (Sherman, French & Co.). Miss Cromwell sailed for France last month to work for the Red Cross.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

**ORIGINAL VERSE:**
- *Songs of the Skokie and Other Verse*, by Anne Higginson Spicer. Ralph Fletcher Seymour, Chicago.
- *Hillsboro in the War*, by Richard D. Ware. Gorham Press.

**ANTHOLOGIES:**

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Poetry
A Magazine of Verse

VOLUME XI
October-March, 1917-8

Edited by
Harriet Monroe

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Page 257, line 4 from foot of page:
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The editor deeply regrets to record the death of one of POETRY's guarantors during the past half-year. Mr. James Harvey Peirce, the well-known Chicago lawyer, who died in December, was always a loyal friend, and a generous supporter of whatever he believed in.

The editor has entered upon POETRY's second five-year period with a renewed confidence in the need of such an organ for the art, a confidence supported by proofs too strong to be resisted; and with renewed confidence also in the readiness of the people to support the enterprise by endowment and subscriptions. Besides the guarantors above listed about fifty Supporting Subscribers contribute ten dollars a year each to the Fund. For the generosity and the good will of all POETRY's patrons and subscribers the editor expresses her grateful acknowledgments.
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