Poetry
A Magazine of Verse
Edited by Harriet Monroe
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Swift’s Pastoral
by Padraic Colum
A Good-night
by Wm. Carlos Williams
Poems by Mary Austin
and Edgar Lee Masters

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JANUARY 1921

SWIFT'S PASTORAL

A Story That Has for its Background Saint Patrick's Purgatory

Characters: Jonathan Swift and Esther Vanhomrigh

ESTHER. I know the answer: 'tis ingenious.
I'm tired of your riddles, Doctor Swift.

Swift. Faith, so am I.

Esther. But that's no reason why you'll be splenetic.

Swift. Then let us walk.

Esther. But will you talk too? Oh, is there nothing For you to show your pupil on this highway?

Swift. The road to Dublin, and the road that leads Out of this sunken country.
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Esther. I see a Harper:
A Harper and a country lout, his fellow
Upon the highway.

Swift. I know the Harper.

Esther. The Doctor knows so much, but what of that?
He'll stay splenetic.

Swift. I have seen this Harper
On many a road. I know his name too—
I know a story that they tell about him.

Esther. And will it take the pucker off his brow
If Cadenus to Vanessa tell the tale?

Swift. God knows it might! His name's O'Carolan—
Turlough O’Carolan; and there is a woman
To make this story almost pastoral.

Esther. Some Oonagh or some Sheelah, I'll engage.

Swift. Her name
Was Bridget Cruise. She would not wed him,
And he wed one who had another name,
And made himself a Minstrel, but a Minstrel
Of consequence. His playing on the harp
Was the one glory that in Ireland stayed
After lost battles and old pride cast down.
Where he went men would say:
"Horses we may not own, nor swords may carry;"
But Turlough O'Carolan plays upon the harp,  
And Turlough O'Carolan's ten fingers bring us  
Horses and swords, gold, wine, and victory.”

Esther. Oh, that is eloquence!

Swift. I know their rhapsodies. But to O'Carolan:  
He played, and drank full cups; made proper songs  
In praise of banquets, wine-cups, and young maids—  
Things easily praised. And then when he was old—

Esther. How old?

Swift. Two score of years and ten.

Esther. But that's not old!

Swift. And that's not old! Good God, how soon we grow  
Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death!—  
Not into the Valley, Vanessa, mark, of Death,  
But into the Shadow! Two score of years and ten—  
Have we not three score and some more to live?  
So has that tree that's withered at the top—  
Dead in the head! Aye, we, Vanessa, grow  
Into the Shadow, and in the Shadow stay  
So long!

Esther. I thought the story would divert Cadenus.

Swift. It will, it will, Vanessa. What was I  
Then saying?
Esther. When he was old—

Swift. When he was old
And blind—did I say he was blind?

Esther. You did not say it.

He cannot see
The wen that makes two heads upon the fellow
That goes beside him, hunched up with the harp;
He cannot see
The Justice to the assizes riding
With soldiers all in red to give him state.
He cannot see
The beggar's lice and sores.

I tell a story:
When this O'Carolan was old and blind,
As I have said, he made the pilgrimage:
'Twas to . . . No, no, 'twas not the place
That I'm proscribed to, but yet one that is called
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

'Tis on an island in a lake, a low
Island or islet. The water round
Is dun, unsunned; there are no meadows near,
No willows grow, no lark nor linnet sings.
A fissure in the island leads down to
The Purgatory of Souls, their fable says.
And now the Harper is but one of those,
The countless wretches, who have brought their sores
To that low island, and brought darkened spirits—
Such stream has flowed there for a thousand years.
I do not know
What length of time the Harper stays, while crowds
Are shambling all around him, weeping, praying,
Famishing themselves; or drinking the dun water
Of the lake for wine; or kneeling, with their knees
On sharpened stones; or crowded
In narrow, stony cells.

Esther. It is a place
Papistical.

Swift. It is a place
Most universal. Do we not walk
Upon a ground that's drenched with tears, and breathe
An air that's thickened with men's darkened spirits?
Aye, and on an islet,
Suffering pain and hearing cries of wretches;
Cut-off, remote, banished, alone, tormented!
Name the place as you will, or let it be
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

But comes a time the blind man rows to shore
From that low island. He touches shore, and cries,
"Hands for a blind man's help!" and hands were held—
He touched a hand.
Here then's the pastoral:
The hand, the fingers of the hand, the clasp,
The spirit flowing through—he knew them all.
He knew all well, and in an instant knew them;
And he cried out, "The hand of Bridget Cruise!"

Oh, in the midmost of our darkened spirits
To touch a hand, and know the truth within it—
The truth that's clasped, that holds, the truth that's all
For us—for every day we live, the truth!
To touch that hand, and then once more to turn
To turn around upon the world's highway,
And go alone—poor hand, poor hand!

But she,
This Bridget Cruise, was leaving that dull shore
For that low island, and had cares beyond
The memory of O'Carolan. Well, they passed,
He going and she coming; well, and then
He took his harp, and the country lout, his fellow,
Went with him, as we see them going now.

Esther. They've passed: there is no one now beside us.
And will you take my hand? You used to call me
A white witch, but there is no witchery
In this plain hand of mine!

You told a double story, Doctor Swift.

Padraic Colum

[180]
KEATS TO FANNY BRAWNE

Fanny! If in your arms my soul could slip—
Arms that my love first fancied—not the grave!
Cities of Hate and Madness round me rave;
And Love with anguish finger at the lip
Fares shelterless! These have my fellowship—
Memory and Loneliness! What's left? To brave
Death! But before it Tragedy: not to crave
You changed or truly seen! The hemlock drip
Of rains upon half-lived or ruined springs,
Where you dance, smiling, numbs me now, and soothes
Hopes that once sought a beauty gone before.
Losses have stripped me! But the vanishings
Of winter winds leave me to starry truths—
Who once desired you, but desire no more!

Edgar Lee Masters
A GOODNIGHT

Go to sleep—though of course you will not—
to tideless waves thundering slantwise against
strong embankments, rattle and swish of spray
dashed thirty feet high, caught by the lake wind,
scattered and strewn broadcast in over the steady
car rails! Sleep, sleep! Gulls' cries in a wind-gust
broken by the wind; calculating wings set above
the field of waves breaking.
Go to sleep to the lunge between foam-crests,
refuse churned in the recoil. Food! Food!
Offal! Offal! that holds them in the air, wave-white
for the one purpose, feather upon feather, the wild
chill in their eyes, the hoarseness in their voices—
sleep, sleep . . .

Gentlefooted crowds are treading out your lullaby.
Their arms nudge, they brush shoulders,
hitch this way then that, mass and surge at the crossings—
lullaby, lullaby! The wild-fowl police whistles,
the enraged roar of the traffic, machine shrieks:
it is all to put you to sleep,
to soften your limbs in relaxed postures,
and that your head slip sidewise, and your hair loosen
and fall over your eyes and over your mouth,
brushing your lips wistfully that you may dream,
sleep and dream—

[182]
A black fungus springs out about lonely church doors—
sleep, sleep. The Night, coming down upon
the wet boulevard, would start you awake with his
message, to have in at your window. Pay no
heed to him. He storms at your sill with
cooings, with gesticulations, curses!
You will not let him in. He would keep you from sleeping.
He would have you sit under your desk lamp
brooding, pondering; he would have you
slide out the drawer, take up the ornamented dagger
and handle it. It is late, it is nineteen-nineteen—
go to sleep, his cries are a lullaby;
his jabbering is a sleep-well-my-baby; he is
a crackbrained messenger.

The maid waking you in the morning
when you are up and dressing,
the rustle of your clothes as you raise them—
it is the same tune.
At table the cold, greenish, split grapefruit, its juice
on the tongue, the clink of the spoon in
your coffee, the toast odors say it over and over.

The open street-door lets in the breath of
the morning wind from over the lake.
The bus coming to a halt grinds from its sullen brakes—
lullaby, lullaby. The crackle of a newspaper,
the movement of the troubled coat beside you—
sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep . . .

[183]
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It is the sting of snow, the burning liquor of the moonlight, the rush of rain in the gutters packed with dead leaves: go to sleep, go to sleep.
And the night passes—and never passes—

William Carlos Williams

FEEL OF BRAMBLES

She will bear him children with straight backs and sturdy limbs,
Clear-eyed children with untroubled minds.
Mine would have been brown things, questioners—
With little hoofs, I think;
Lovers of wind and rain
And twisted brambly paths over the hills.
But he was afraid—afraid of the brown-hoofed ones;
And more afraid that sometimes,
As we grew old together,
I would slip away from him to the hills;
Where he—because of gout, or girth, or civic dignity—
Could not come after.

He need not have been troubled:
Long before that I should have lost the feel of brambles.

Hazel Rawson Cades

[184]
THROUGH WINDOWS

LUMBERMEN

I watch the lumbermen
Winding up the mountain
Between the autumn branches.
I see
Leaves gold, red, flame and green,
With flashes of faded blue between
Of their overalls.
Straining and pulling,
Horses brown and soiled white
Stagger up the mountain-side
Before them,
Dragging huge and heavy timber.
Down in the valley
I can hear the echo
Of the men's muffled curses,
And the quick snap
Of long thin whips.

SOILED HANDS

After everyone had left,
It was always so wonderful sitting in the dark theatre with you.
There was a mystery about it,
As though the echo of many plays
Still lingered in the folds of the curtain,
While phantom figures crouched low in the chairs,
Beating applause with vapor hands.

Do you remember how we always sat silently?
I would shut my eyes to feel your closeness nearer.

Then slowly and like a ritual
I would take your hand,
And you would laugh a little and say,
"My hands are awfully sticky"—or
"I can't seem to keep my hands clean in this theatre."

As if that mattered... as if that mattered...

Through the window-pane I see your face,
Its outline a little vague
In the dimness of the shadow.

But the whiteness of your skin
Is like a clean ship's sail,
Standing out in the darkness of a night.

And your eyes, I see them like two golden bowls,
With the rays of a thousand moonbeams sweeping over them.

As I pass out into the blackness,
I wonder if I have ever really known you—
Or if you exist at all,
And are not but a twisted, fevered, silver creation of my brain.

[186]
And the unreality of you comes over me,
Like a mist upon a lonely sea.

TO VOULETTI

There is not a leaf grown,
Not a breeze that's blown,
Not a sweet fragrant tree,
That is not you to me.

In the sunlight I feel your smile,
In the moonlight, the whole long while,
I feel the pressure of your hand,
And feeling this I understand.

I understand all sacred things,
The depths of life, the secret wings
That carry beyond the dreary way,
Turning dark to light, and night to day.

All things fine, and straight, and true,
I know better because of you;
While your sweetness is like a warm fresh shower,
And your face and soul like a sun-kissed flower.
POETRY: A Magazine of Verse

THREE POEMS

DEIRDRE

Now thou art hidden, I have no place of rest.
Where should I sleep when the earth lies on thy heart?
The darkness had no peril when thy arms were round me,
    Naoise,
But where shall I hide from the night now that I am alone?
The stones that will cover my body are all I desire.

The light of the sun is a burden too heavy for me.
I would I could shut out all but the darkness wherein thou
dwellest.
I that had more treasure than the great kings of the world—
I am bare to the wind, without shelter, without love.
Henceforth for ever I have nothing but grief and silence and
weeping.

SILENCE

Be wroth then if thou wilt, but no more be silent!
Wrath love will heal, but a sword is forged in thy silence;
For then is heard the crying for love in my breast,
And the echoless beating of my heart.

DISILLUSION

Darkness and the wind are between the tall stones of the
temple.
Moireen Fox a Cheavasa

No priest is there, no voice, no fire on the altar;
Silence alone and darkness, and the mocking wind.

This is the end of dreams. O empty sky,
O deaf and silent earth, O broken dreams!
I have besought the dust that my hands hold.

Moireen Fox a Cheavasa

THE SORROWFUL MASQUERADE

Even as to a music, stately and sad,
The young girl's feet begin to move in a dance,
And curiously for joy shift and advance;
So to a mournful waltz, sombre and sweet,
All laughing things move with delighted feet,
So all things that draw light and laughing breath
Move to the mournful waltz of life and death.
Comedy is a girl dancing in time
To the tragic pipes, sorrowful and sublime;
And ever she laughs back, and as she skips
Mimics the mournful music with her lips;
Then for sheer anger at her own pretense
Sobs violently at her own vehemence,
And mocks her tears. But when the pipings sleep
She needs must cover up her face and weep.

John Hall Wheelock
TO ONE WHO ASKS

Curious you should not see my feet are weary—
Weary of the way you see so fair—
As wondering you look along each silver path with question
Why I will not tread.

Curious you should not see my eyes are weary,
Weary of the sorrow and the passion they have seen;
Asking now to close, the last kiss given,
The last word said.

Curious you should not see my hands are weary,
Weary with their ceaseless fluttering round little things;
Concerned no longer with caresses nor with loving,
Still and uncomforted.

Your young desire would take away my sorrow,
Do you not see I have but ashes for you?
I would not lay upon your eager breast
My weary head.

Your feet are hurrying, your soul is hungering—
You of the intent eyes, the questing will.
Why do you ask my two tired, empty hands
To give you bread?

You will not see my very soul is weary—
I think it died long, long ago, or fled.
Would you ask caresses from a shadow-woman—
Kisses from the dead?

Mary Aldis
LYRICS

I

Your hands—
Lilies of white flame!
Your hands
That knew . . .

But now,
Crossed thus
And cold,
They are more beautiful
Than eucharist lilies cooled with snow.

II

All day her hair lay spread upon the grass
    Where winds pass;
    (I could not pass).

And now,
Here in the midst of heaven—
In this music room,
God's resting room—
Above angelic singing
Through my heart will pass
This memory, this song:

*All day her hair lay spread upon the grass*
    *Where winds pass;*
    *(I could not pass).*

Harold Cook

[191]
TWO POEMS

WHENCE?

I do not know who sings my songs
Before they are sung by me.

For my mind is an ordered house
Where never a song should be;
And the world is the sort of a place
That my judicious spirit grieves.
Yet when my thoughts are seated round
With their eyes upon the ground,
The little songs come flimmering
Like swallows round the eaves.

And when my life is as dry as a gourd,
My heart the pebble, rattled by despair,
Shaken at the funeral
Of all the gods that were,
I stretch my thoughts in the empty room—
And suddenly my songs are there.

UNWORTHY LOVE

How is it with my heart
Since I can love you?
Flawed in the casting,
So that your spirit,

[192]
When I strike it with nobleness,
Rings no tone truly.

Yet, at that flattened note,
The soul of every sense,
Shouldering each on each,
Runs and looks out of the windows,
While deep in the house of life
Age-long, unimagined instincts
Bay at the voice of the master.

PRESAGE

He has loved me for my gaiety,
   Not for quiet moods or thoughts that bless;
He has loved me for my wayward grace,
   Not because he knew my tenderness.

So our love is transient, and as frail
   As a moth or darting dragonfly.
There’s no memory of peace to heal
   Any wound that comes. Our love will die.

F. S. Putnam
He said he knew nothing of love;
And asked the flower to tell him
What it meant.
The flower turned its face upward,
And sunbeams came to kiss it
While it held the bee in its embrace.
He shook his head—"I do not understand."

He called upon the bird for love;
And the bird began to sing so sweetly,
That one could but listen.
A mate was soon returning the serenade;
And then, they met and were off together.
His face was perplexed.

The snow, he thought, might know
What love truly was;
But his fleecy friends were seeking peace
On earth's warm breast.
He moved slowly on.

I tried to tell him what he sought:
Two parts of a soul, that were cut
By the shears of God,
Unite—this is called love.
He was solemn.

[194]
One night he passed away,
And I saw him in a dream.
"I am in love with Death,"
He said.
I did not understand.

GONE

She is gone!
Gone?
The night was moaning
Under the whip of the wind.
I was off through it,
Throwing myself against its emptiness
As it clutched me
And sent a shiver down my back.
Where were the stars and the moon?—
Some thief had taken them
As he had taken her.
The hairless trees were talking wildly—
They were as mad as I,
But I was speechless.
The lazy hours slowly plodded along,
Until God took pity
And placed a red light in the east,
While Peace sprinkled her flowers everywhere.
And I found her!

[195]
I know where you got
Your blushing cheeks,
Red rose;
And why you can bedeck
Yourself in blue,
O succory!

You too,
Fields of wheat,
Are in this plot.
You tried to keep
The secret of your grace
With the wind;
But we fools called poets
Understand your language.

And you, pure lilies of white,
You also I must call thieves.
But I'm glad you are!—
I'm glad you all are!
For Mary's journey is far-flung,
And I must see
A glimpse of her
As she trips along.
So blush your reddest, my rose!
Show me her eyes, my succory!
Dance again, O fields of wheat!

[196]
Benjamin Rosenbaum

And you, my lilies, just be white
As her little white hands.

MY PURPLE GOWN FROM TYRE

Pink azaleas and dogwood
Are crowded close at my feet.
Whitethroats and warblers
Are weaving a trail between the trees
And cobalt-golden sky.
Now I'll mount Ole Tony and ride
The rolling fields!
Old Ninevah's riches will be around me,
And my overalls will be
My purple gown from Tyre!

Benjamin Rosenbaum

THE FEARLESS

As Winter, fleeing,
Leaves the shreds of its ermine
To be crunched into murk,
The fearless leave
Their names.

Mortimer J. Adler

[197]
SPECTRE-THEME

My little new love
Is like a wistfully singing violin on a moon-drenched hill.
So I wrapped her carefully in my thoughts,
And carried her to a room
Where she might surrender her eyelids to my lips
And dry my tears in her hair.
But suddenly you were there,
Beloved ghost,
With your eyes like two open doors to sorrow's chamber.
You were so nearly afraid to speak
Your words were blown toward me
Like fragments of mist
Distorted and scattered by wind.
But my little new love—
She who is more shy than drops of rain—
Trembled and fled from me;
And then there were only we two
Poor ghosts,
Shrinking against opposite walls of the room,
Staring.

Leone Baker
REFLECTIONS

NEIGHBOR MOON

I
Like a bulb of ivory ready to burst
The moon came up beside us;
It reminded me of her beautiful body,
Beginning to swell with my new child.
The swelling moon smiled down
Half in pain, half in fear,
And laid her long fingers on my wife’s hair.
My love beside me pressed my hand,
Proud with white majesty
From the mother moon.

II
Gentle moon,
Will you kiss it, my baby,
When it lies sleeping
Beside her?
Give it
Her beauty,
Her passion,
Gentle moon.

III
Already her breasts are swollen.
Suddenly the light of the moon penetrates her
And proudly she takes me in her arms.

In the moonlight her hair seems like cold metal,
But when I touch it, it is soft and warm.
She is tired and quiet in my arms,
And listens absently to the little noises of the night.
In her eyes
I see the reflection of the blood running
Through her bosom into the veins of her child.

IV

Moon, chaste one,
Forgive me
If under your rays
I have been brutal with caresses.
You had many breasts then,
You were insatiable then,
Chaste moon.

PROFILE

The clear line of her profile reminded me of an ancient relief
I saw at the Louvre—some Caesar's wife
Tranquil and wise, gazing unregretfully
Across the hysterical ages into old Rome.

Long, long ago, I thought, some great senator
Lay at her feet, and watched the evening light
Stamp her face on the smooth wall; and wondered
At her beauty—and how the shadows of her lashes
Made fine laces on her cheeks, and how her eyes
 Caught the sun and burned deeply and evenly.
And he smiled at the amorous curve of her chin and wished
To touch her lips—wine and silk and poesy.

That was, perhaps, in Rome; but I know now
My lady has a leper's heart; her lips
Are torture, and her eyes reflect such shame
There is no help; and on her cheek there clings
The sad voluptuousness of drunken Time,
Dancing like a cretin in an aimless swirl.

I find no harmony; I had no right to try
To gain such end while all the wise ones sneer.
When years have tired, and turn their meagre faces
Again to the old, there may again be peace
For poets singing; there may again be love.

OLD PLACES

I must flee the prod of my neighbor.
I want to go back to old places,
Where I can sit in revery and watch time crumble,
Think thoughts that have served and become useless;
Listen to the piping of senile gods
And the prayers of long-forgotten priests.
I want to go back to old places
Rotten with beauty, dying with beauty.

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THOUGHT OF WOMEN

What is there that mocks me in a woman's eyes?
There is a taste of disdain even in my mistress's kiss.
And I have told them I am very wise.

What is the melodrama I'm the victim of?
I fear I'm a songbird for a show of marionettes:
So says the playman, a tender little dove.

If their skirts swish like clarinets
And their breasts are silken tambourines,
Then I've a little opera, but it's not enough.
Why holds that merriment in the pipes of love?

What's in a woman's head, what under her hermiton?
Not a sigh, not a wound will the cure be,
But laughing, the wind laughing
Over the torn trees as the elder satyrs
Run drunken before it and the maenads
Hide in the old caves.

HERONS

Many, many herons
Fly across the sky,—
Sky full of my thoughts.
They are moving among my thoughts,—
Many V-shaped birds
Like boats for my thoughts to sail in.
Many, many heroes
Fly with the herons—
Men and ladies among the stars,
Poets and lovers I know;
Many swift heroes
Humming like words for a poem.

IMPROVISATION

Tell me the singing glory of my woe,
Poet who can hold the pen to paper, for I go
Silently down the neuter-tinted pathways of old streams
Lazily frowning, waiting still the beams
Of suns extended in some dazzling secret sky
To show me beauty on my heart before I die—
Great Beauty shrouded in her multi-colored pall
With kisses for my lips, and sweetness for the gall
That stings them.

So some have always gone;
My burden's but a little flowery load upon
Old monks and lovers smiling in their graves,
And singing kings somewhere who once were slaves
Like me.

Why scan so long? O poet, say,
"He wandered and he waited till he found where Beauty lay."

Charles deGuire Christoph
“WHAT are the women’s clubs doing?” said the critical observer somewhere in Iowa, where the editor happened to be journeying through the Indian summer weather. “Here is the richest—per capita—state in the Union, with more colleges to the square mile than it knows what to do with, and all the women organized into clubs which are fiddle-faddling with every subject from Homer to garbage. Yet we can’t get anything done which requires a little tight-fist loosening—even the roads that our rich farmers drive their Fords through are made of mud! Why don’t the women’s clubs wake people up—start something—instead of holding good-clothes meetings and lionizing the latest celebrity?”

I looked around—it was the same familiar crowd of women—yes, and a few men—somewhat too well dressed and well fed for a tempered human weapon in this democratic age; the same rather wistful crowd of housed and guarded souls, holding resolutely to the material goods they felt sure of, and casting about doubtfully and frugally for half-suspected spiritual joys. What were they doing? Anything beyond the satisfaction of personal ambition and curiosity?—beyond of kind of intellectual bargain-hunting involving emotions of triumph almost as keen as the underprice purchase of a fur coat?
The dryness, the drabness, the thinness of life in this land where generous nature invites to richness and beauty—that is the danger which has come with the waning of the Puritan ideal. The original Puritan lived an intense religious life; his faith was narrow, perhaps, but it struck deep. He walked in the light of it; he lived with his stern exacting God. He was frugal, no doubt, but saving money was not his chief problem—he had to save his soul. His religion fed his imagination with visions of heaven and hell; under the impulse of it spiritual life—embryonic or more developed—was possible.

But as time went on, bringing new generations and scientific revelations, this heavenly manna turned to dust and ashes. The village-bounded Puritan ideal could not reach out with modern science and grow with international experience. Though it may still survive with some vitality in little strangely islanded and isolated church-groups here and there, it has been swept away as a spiritual motive from minds aware of their world.

Now when mediaeval Christianity was swept away as a spiritual motive by the deluge of the Renaissance, its long and sedulous cultivation of the creative instinct of beauty left the arts as a refuge for human souls. Roman Catholicism had become merely a symbolic social system, perhaps, for men caught in the new current; but in the ever-creative arts they could live, vitally and imaginatively, the life of the spirit. But to the Puritan the arts were a temptation of Satan; even the creative instinct of beauty was suspect.
So when his fenced-in religion withered, his spirit had nothing left to feed on; grasping at material desires—mere food-and-shelter splendors—the spirit in man, starving but undying, found these, as it must always find them, the gilded husks of death.

We have come a long way from women's clubs, perhaps, but not too far to get back. The women's clubs were one response to this spiritual need—a wistful search for living grain instead of husks. And they have done much—they have ploughed up the ground, perhaps fertilized it, for a new harvest. The only trouble is, they don't know what to plant; they lack insight and direction. They get too much blind satisfaction out of good works—useful material benefits—and fail to realize that their planting should be of food for the spirit, that the one indispensable need of this country is for an enriched spiritual life.

Now an enriched spiritual life, in any community, is possible only through development of the imagination—the creative instinct of beauty. Religion does that whenever and wherever it springs, in each individual soul, from a real and vital faith. The arts do it whenever and wherever they spring, in each individual soul, from a real and vital faith. No human being was ever created who had not, somewhere within him, the instinct to create beauty. The zealot creates God, the supreme beauty. The lover creates his ideal mistress, the mother creates the child—both love-shaped into living beauty. The statesman, the philosopher, create beauty in orderly societies and abstract unities, the
What are They Doing?

carpenter in his panelled wall, the farmer in his evenly planted field. The too common suppression of this universal instinct—through misuse of the machine, through the marshalling of "hands" (without brains) to monotonous labor, through the idle pleasures and accumulations of the rich, through other time-consuming, soul-destroying abuses of modern "civilization"—is chiefly responsible for social unrest; and the perversion of this instinct is chiefly responsible for crime.

To develop and direct this instinct for the creation of beauty, to resist the tendency toward sterilization of the mind in our educative and industrial processes—in short, to enrich the imaginative life of the people—this should be the primal aim of our women's clubs and all our cultural organizations. In admitting, for example, as any frank observer is compelled to, that clothes are the only form of artistic self-expression of which nine-tenths of our young girls are keenly aware, is to draw up an indictment against their parents and teachers, and the whole system which has brought them up to such sterility of the imagination. Joy in clothes is better than no creative joys at all, but why shouldn't these girls have been led to sing, dance, rhyme, carve, make toys or furniture, textures or garments, or even delicious dishes—to create something of their own? And this not by the imposition of laws and examples from the past, but by the exercise of that personal impulse toward artistic expression which animates the little dancing, picture-drawing child?

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Every woman's club should be an agency through which its members, their children and their community in general, can advance to more complete self-expression in beauty. It should aim at the discovery and encouragement of each person's imaginative impulse or artistic aptitude—of each person's special dream; and not be discouraged if the response is often crude or trivial.

But perhaps this would mean a reversal of systems of education and schools of thought beside which the Russian revolution is as a molehill to a mountain! 

H. M.

The recent death of two poets enforces a sharp contrast between their characters and careers. John Reed and Louise Imogen Guiney were alike only in their courage and spiritual integrity, and in their love of the art, which they practised too fitfully; in all other details no two human beings could be more different than the shy recluse who died in Oxford, and the rash adventurer of countless wars who died in Moscow.

John Reed was so active in radical politics as to have too little time left for poetry; but in this place it is proper to record that his neglect of the art was accident and not intention. Like Jack London, he was always dreaming of tomorrow's masterpiece. Knowing himself for a poet, he hoped to prove his vocation by many poems worthy to
Two Poets have Died

endure; but life was so exciting, and the social struggle in these States and Mexico, in Finland, Russia—everywhere—so tempting to a fighting radical, that poetry had to wait for the leisure which—alas!—never came.

My too slight acquaintance with John Reed dates from a letter of September 11, 1912, written at Portland, Oregon, which began as follows:

Dear Miss Monroe: This is the first time I have ever been invited to contribute poetry (or verse) to anything. I shall not be slow to take advantage of it; and herewith enclose several verses as a starter. There are many of us who have published in the magazines, and who, without any feeling that a materialistic public refuses us recognition, still feel that the magazines are degrading the quality of poetry in America just as they have begun to degrade the Short Story, for which they were originally responsible. I am myself on the staff of a magazine, and have often heard the editors say that poetry was a declining art. The reasons they gave might interest you as they did me: "That the public had lost the appreciation of rhythm, because verse was no longer spoken or sung; and that the printed poem conveyed no sense of melody to those who read only with the eye."

I do not believe this to be so. And I have found that among men of whatever class, if they are deeply stirred by emotion, poetry appeals; as indeed, all the arts appeal. The apathetic, mawkishly-religious middle class are our enemies. A labor-leader, for example, who has been indicted for complicity in the dynamite plots, read aloud to me Neihardt's _Man Song_ more naturally and beautifully than I have ever heard a verse read. And I think that wherever men are deeply stirred, all their living becomes attuned to the unheard systole and diastole of their pulses. Art must cease, I think, to be for the aesthetic enjoyment of a few highly sensitive minds. It must go back to its original sources.

But there is no fairness in excluding the aristocracy from the democracy of art. So I am delighted at the broadness of your aims in _Poetry_, which is open to all forms and all thought. Only in the open forum can anything vital or lasting be evolved.
Enclosed in this letter came the beautiful ballad Sangar, dedicated to Lincoln Steffens and symbolizing what Reed called his "magnificent try for peace during the trial of the McNamaras." Today we might almost apply the poem to Reed himself; for although he loved a fight as well as any soldier, his dream was of a peaceful, co-operative world which, I fear, he would have found very dull—that wonderful "new world" in which, as Gorky says of Lenin's dream, "all men are reasonable," and "the earth is a gigantic jewel, facetted with beautiful evidences of the labor of a free humanity." In the fight for his dream he died—would it violate his knighthood to wish him peace at last?

Sangar has been reprinted in The New Poetry, so it is unnecessary to repeat it here; but it may be in order at this moment to remind our readers of John Reed's last appearance in the magazine, with the beautiful lyric in praise of Proud New York:

By proud New York and its man-piled Matterhorns,
The hard blue sky overhead and the west wind blowing,
Steam-plumes waving from sun-glittering pinnacles,
And deep streets shaking to the million-river—

Manhattan, zoned with ships, the cruel Youngest of all the world's great towns,
Thy bodice bright with many a jewel, Imperially crowned with crowns, . . . .

Who that has known thee but shall burn In exile till he come again To do thy bitter will, O stern Moon of the tides of men!

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Miss Guiney too had a fighting spirit, though her life was stilled by circumstances. The editor remembers with gratitude how valiantly she, then an influential Bostonian, spoke out for the *Columbian Ode* in its first moment, when the scornful East was waiting to fall upon Chicago for assigning this honor to a local “young and unknown” poet. Her books of verse—*The White Sail, A Roadside Harp* and *The Martyr’s Idyl*—reveal her fine high quality, and two or three prose works reveal her scholarship. The flavor of the nineties is in her poetry, and much of it seems a bit old-fashioned today. But her final selected and collected *Happy Ending* contains a few memorable lyrics. This one, *The Knight Errant*, suggested by Donatello’s Saint George, has always seemed to me a keenly personal confession:

Spirits of old that bore me,
    And set me, meek of mind,
Between great dreams before me,
    And deeds as great behind—
Knowing humanity my star,
    As first abroad I ride,
Shall help me wear with every scar
    Honor at eventide.

Let claws of lightning clutch me
    From summer’s groaning cloud,
Or ever malice touch me
    And glory make me proud.
Oh, give my youth, my faith, my sword
    Choice of the heart’s desire:
A short life in the saddle, Lord!—
    Not long life by the fire.

Forethought and recollection
    Rivet mine armor gay!

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The passion for perfection
Redeem my failing way!
The arrows of the upper slope,
From sudden ambush cast,
Rain quick and true, with one to ope
My Paradise at last!

I fear no breathing bowman,
But only, east and west,
The awful other foeman
Empowered in my breast.
The outer fray in the sun shall be
The inner beneath the moon;
And may Our Lady lend to me
Sight of the Dragon soon!

They were true to the vision, both these dead poets, even though their achievement was, as with all the high-desiring, imperfect and incomplete. One may wish them fulfilment —either peace or a good fight—in a happier world.

H. M.

REVIEWS

THE OLD ADAM


It is a pity that Mr. Untermeyer should have prefaced his book of love-poems with a Note on the Poetry of Love, for it induces in the reader a too critical attitude, a mood inimical to love-poems. In spite of one's attempt to shut the preface from one's mind in reading the poems, one wonders if the poems themselves have not grown out of a too
conscious effort to produce an effect or sustain a theory, rather than to record a passion. Are there any poems in the book in which the poet has really lost himself—as one feels that Burns, for instance, lost himself in his? Or are there any that move us as Burns’ songs move us, or as Mr. Yeats’ love-poems move us? And Mr. Yeats, by virtue of his romanticism, is akin to the Victorian poets cited by Mr. Untermeyer as not knowing “how to express what love between the sexes really meant.” Burns, by the way, is not mentioned in Mr. Untermeyer’s preface, and he might include him as a sentimental poet, therefore not akin to the modern school which supposedly discards the sentimental. (Although there was certainly nothing of “red plush,” “Dresden China,” “perfumed” or “perverse” about Burns’ passion!) But the fact is that love is a sentimental passion; and the more deeply in love the poet is, the less likely he is to analyze it, or to objectify the subject of his passion. If one cite in contradiction to this the analytical fervor of Mr. D. H. Lawrence, one may answer that the analysis here is really a detailed progression of the passion, more subjective than objective, and that Woman, or even a woman, is no more revealed in Mr. Lawrence’s poems than in Swinburne’s, Tennyson’s, or Rossetti’s, according to Mr. Untermeyer. The fact again is that, as passion is the real subject of love poetry, so, whether written by man or woman, love poetry always reveals the writer rather than the object of his love. Dramatic poetry, of course, has more objective scope; and hence one may find in it the
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images of both loved and lover. But, if Tennyson is thin, he is quite as thin on the masculine as on the feminine side.

However, let us turn to Mr. Untermeyer's poems themselves. The first one in the book, The New Adam, is an expression of sexual passion, through symbols. One distinguishing feature of the older poets was what they left unsaid, probably because they thought some things could not be expressed. The effort to paint the sun is perhaps self-defeating at the start. And yet, although "the new Adam" is found to be "the old Adam" after all, it is in poems which show the struggle of a man against his passion—that is, against the subjugation of his personality—that Mr. Untermeyer is at his best. Perhaps this is the "modern note"—the source of masculine as well as feminine unrest. If the older poets did not feel it so much, it must have been that they were less, rather than more, sentimental about love than the moderns. At any rate, it is not a primitive characteristic, and modern love thus brings in its train, together with a heightened perception of itself, an equal degree of self-torturing analysis, negation and affirmation, much of which is perhaps, at the root, as falsely sentimental as the Victorians. Whether or not you capitalize Vice, Virtue, or Adultery, as Swinburne may have done, or call them with Dr. Freud, "complexes," the subjective matter of the Victorian love-poets and those of today is not greatly changed. A lovers' quarrel remains a lovers' quarrel, even though you call it neurosis. If Mr. Untermeyer wants to make a chasm between poets who write of love, it must,
therefore, be a chasm of greater distance. Certainly there is less in common between the poets of today and the Elizabethans, than between these poets and the Victorians.

It is obviously quite impossible to keep off Mr. Untermeyer’s preface! But I was going to say that A Marriage, Wrangle, Neurosis, are among the most successful in the book. He is curiously more able to stir angry passions than he is to arouse the softer ones. Some poets are better haters than lovers, and the note of protest, which is one side of hate, has always been a distinctive feature of this poet’s work. Thus, Words for a Jig—To Be Danced on the Grave of an Enemy has a sprightly vitality.

Mr. Untermeyer’s book will live for me, however, because of one perfect line. It occurs in an otherwise imperfect poem, Infidelity, of which I quote only the middle stanzas:

It is not you I love, it is the form
And shadow of all lovers who have died
That gives you all the freshness of a warm
And unfamiliar bride.

It is your name I breathe, your hands I seek—
It will be you when you are gone.
And yet the dream, the name I cannot speak
Is that that lures me on.

A poem more perfect as a whole is Matter. Here are the last two stanzas:

But after a lifetime
Of hunger and prayer,
I broke my heart trying
To make the world care.
And now, as I lie here
Feeding this tree,
I am more to the world
Than it is to me.

When it comes to treating of "derelicts," Mr. Unter­meyer hardly proves his case against Swinburne and Ros­setti; and, if he is less theatric, or if he has another kind of theatricality—

She drifts by under the lights
Flaunting her tattered sails,
Wreck of a thousand nights
And a thousand gales—

he is also less human, however humanitarian, and also less the poet. This last is of course the final test: only by sur­passing the earlier poets of love could Mr. Untermeyer have upheld the challenge of his preface. It was perhaps more courageous than judicious to invite comparison with the eighteenth and nineteenth century poets who were, he says, "in spite of their graceful decorations, clumsy in the use of their material; ignorant, at least as artists, of the possibilities of their most common property"—i.e. Woman as their sub­ject. Are there not many of us who can still read the love poems of Shelley, Keats, Byron, Wordsworth, Burns, Arnold, Dowson, Henley and others, without feeling that they are merely "stucco"?

A. C. H.
I wish Aldous Huxley hadn't written the poem *Leda*. He should have left that to Richard Le Gallienne, or some other sweet singer. It has a stale taste, an indigestible taste, in spite of the spice, which is plentiful. Better if he had reduced the myth to a symbol, and a mystery, as he did later with Helen and Priapus. How can a man today attempt a re-creation?

Reading the Greeks themselves is a corrective. Homer, Hesiod, the tragedians, even the philosophers, either believed in their gods and heroes, or lived where the worship of them, or the controversy over them, was alive, where the names had a very near and pregnant significance.

For a modern poet to try such a thing is a dilletantism. Either he makes watery paraphrases, as William Morris did, or he frankly gives plot and high names, like Hewlett, to men and women. If Huxley had believed in Jupiter he could have given him divinity without rhetoric. Not believing in him, all his careful memories, all his elaborate verbal façades, are not enough to make Zeus, God, or man or symbol. It was a nice fancy to indicate the god by rendering the women, touched by his mere scrutinizing glance, forever after incapable of mortal embraces. But he must explain how Leda, mother of his child, could still accept Tyndareus, by whom she bore a mortal twin to the son of divinity. That is to say, this device, like the others,
fails: Zeus is neither god nor man; his passion is neither of man nor of beast; its motivation is neither muscular nor mechanic. Essentially it is a bad poem; with some retrieving patches, lines of radiance and loveliness; but it is a poem that should not have been written.

It is among the other poems that one may find Huxley's real work. *Leda* is a digression, with strains in it that offer the cue to what follows: pieces of varying mood, the imitable philosopher's songs, a long question, or a search called *Beauty*, and the young man's day, *Soles Occidere et Redire Possunt*, which contains so equally paralysis and convulsion, and which is so like a symphonic poem, that a program note is prefixed.

To me, indifferent as to whether he got his forms from T. S. Eliot or not, all this is a consummate expression of the reactions of an artist facing the world today. Life has been well-nigh drained of beauty. Those who retort that the same protest was made in all ages should do some re-reading. In no period of human self-consciousness was the plaint of the barrenness and the ugliness of life so universal.

Reviewers have spoken about Huxley's disillusions as though they were personal disillusions. No: they are the artist's disillusions, the artist's even involuntary recording of the aspects of life. While the professional warblers are twittering as though there were still forests around them, the sensitive, the intelligent are either going outside of our age and culture for their beauty, or retiring into themselves, building about them an impenetrable idiom; or they

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are matching a raucous civilization with a raucous literature.

Huxley combines the two latter. He is a word virtuoso. His diction borders upon a preciosity depending upon cacophany. His themes (disregarding certain disguises) are all troubled exposures of the corruption of beauty. There is bitterness in it, a jaded mockery, teasing with ambiguous words—a mockery, however, that is too skilful, too attitudinous. In his diction there are too many grotesques and gargoyles, unfortunately hung on Greek cornices. It is this superficial smartness and sophistication which has made reviewers hail him as "the cleverest young poet in England." But there is in it a force and authenticity that make it an authoritative comment upon life. It puts him honorably high among his contemporaries.

It is not great poetry. It is my conviction, however, that no great poetry will be written for a long time. An upheaval as structural as Christianity has been breaking up the shapes of life and has left a formlessness; it has made tradition sterile and unfit for the cultivation of art. The first minds have turned eclectics, commentators—have almost abandoned creation; and there is no sustenance in our life itself. Artists may escape to the unencroached corners of existence, where beauty is still possible. But harshness and ugliness are closing in—will in time preempt them.

I have left only an aside. Since Huxley lives in England, where Negroes are still phenomenal, he has let his first strong reaction, and his imperfect ethnography, overbalance his artistic sense. Throughout, the Negro is his symbol
for the beast. The Negro is as mythical to him as a figure from the ancients, and can serve equally as a symbol—a symbol for animalism. It was so in *Happy Families*, in *Limbo*; it is so, indicated as distinctly, in *Leda*, *Verreys*, and *Frascatis*, and it is implied elsewhere.

To conclude, *Leda* is a curious, and always interesting, collection of poems by a young man of genius; it presents a definite individuality. Its relations with *Limbo* are very close: *Soles Occidere et Redire Possunt* contains the essence of *Happily Ever After*; the shorter poems are like the shorter pieces in *Limbo*; even *Leda* has the hot breath that rose in *The Death of Tully*.

Huxley is therefore salient, and palpable. Reviewers who see Keats in *Leda*, and T. S. Eliot in *Soles Occidere et Redire Possunt* (oh, for a handier title!) are apt to miss Aldous Huxley. I suppose it is hard for the reviewer to deny himself the gossip of influences; and knowingness feels so comfortably like discernment. *Hyperion* and *Leda* are as different as the meanings of the two words sensuous and ethereal; and Huxley and Eliot are as different—well, as different as *Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady* are from *Beauty* and *Soles Occidere*.

Isidor Schneider

THROUGH A MIST DARKLY

*The House of Dust*, by Conrad Aiken. Four Seas Co.

It is as though he had looked too long at the sun; and when he turns to nearer objects, he is half blinded—there
is always the shadow of his own concentration. For Mr. Aiken sees everything, from a cabaret scene to death itself:

Death is a chorded music, softly going
By sweet transition from key to richer key.
Death is a meeting place of sea and sea.

He sees everything through a mist of intensified reflection. It is his weakness and his strength. For though his dealing with reality has all the tenuous unsubstantiality of a sleep-walker, is never simple, direct, stark, is never real, still it pleases the senses, is a delicious narcotic to the mind. It is as though he romanced over the newspaper—for his knowledge of crime could have no other source—romanced with crudity, sordidness, touching them forgivingly with musical fingers.

And of course his faults, his languorous in-door objective-ness, his idealistic leaning to melodrama, are entirely lost, or are turned to assets, when he deals with nuances, with music—particularly with music—with overtones, undertones, interludes, chimeras, emotional and mental dreams and illusions. Here he is pre-eminent. He goes sure-footed among shadows. He is accustomed to the half-light. If he is looking at a tangible object, a clear-cut, ordinary Ugliness, he half closes his eyes in distress—and lo, half seeing it, he finds it not so ugly after all. "An absurdity, ugliness—I will not have it so." And he does not. But when he finds beauty, the faintest possibility of beauty abroad, he pursues, courts, sublimes it, makes of the possibility an
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ecstatic fact. He breathes his reverence upon beauty with a sheer delicacy, that is as frost on the silhouette of a tree.

*The House of Dust* is predicated a symphony; and though the parts are, in my opinion, of unequal merit, they are enough related to make quoting particularly difficult—almost unfair. And it is all so pleasing to read, has such soft rhythms. For instance, number VIII of Part I:

The white fog creeps from the cold sea over the city—
Over the pale grey tumbled towers,
And settles among the roofs, the pale grey walls;
Curls like a dream among the motionless trees,
And seems to freeze.

The fog slips ghost-like into a thousand rooms,
Whirls over sleeping faces,
Spins in an atomy dance round misty street lamps;
And blows in cloudy waves over open spaces.

And one from his high window, looking down,
Peers at the cloud-white town,
And thinks its island towers are like a dream.
It seems an enormous sleeper, within whose brain
Laborious shadows revolve and break and gleam.

*Marion Strobel*

**THE DEMOCRACY OF GENIUS**


This article is intended as a sketch rather than a criticism. According to my knowledge of French literature from the fifties to date, a quick glance shows us: a thunderstorm passing—Hugo; a heavy, bespattering, beslopping but puri-
fying rain—Zola; then the subtleties of uncertain weathers, short-lived phenomena, lacking solidity and quantity—Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Laforgue. Verlaine, the dead-calm nausea of sweet sophistication; Rimbaud, the earthquake of sophistication, soon over; Mallarmé, the magic, the mystery and the absurdity of sophistication, the contemplation of the apparently still—falsely still—skies of sophistication; Laforgue, the clever and pathetic suicide of sophistication—rain and mists and a sad play of wet elements. Sophistication, tangle, muddle, torment, struggle, mystery—all the uncertain weathers. Then the dawn came, which is often a phenomenon of indefinite colors; a beautiful dawn came, but with no great bursting of red in the sky: Charles Péguy, the honest man, the wonderful writer, the happy writer, the fire-works of a holiday of France; Charles Louis Philippe, France's Dostoeievsky. Then, in the trail of this dawn, the very brief false lights that are no longer dawn and not yet day: Jammes, Fort, Vildrac, Romains, Claudel. (I must here insert that my knowledge of modern writers is limited to poets, and I must confess little knowledge of Rolland's work.) Over these the great noontide of modern French literature will sweep...or it won't.

Very conspicuous among the new falsities is Claudel's. His particular attribute is pseudo-simplicity; he is falsely simple, illusorily tall, emptily big. These words are perhaps too strong: if they would fit a pseudo-simple American, they do not fit a pseudo-simple Frenchman. Claudel has French cleverness, erudition, culture, to help him deceive
us. But they all come to nothing because he wearies us. Wherefore we are spurred to seek the cause of our weariness.

Here are popes glittering with gold and majesty, here are generals and counts by the dozen, here is Tête d'Or (a splendid title, by the way); here is a cortège of grand things rumbling along, making one grand noise! But there is no restraint in noise, and we suspect that in this case the noise is made so that we shall not hear the words.

It will not be too strong to say: Paul Claudel is such an expert liar as to seem often an involuntary liar. And it will be wise, perhaps, to say that he is sometimes quite involuntarily a liar—that is to say, a sincere man, as some lines of his poems, beautiful, bear witness. It is very difficult to find him out, more difficult still to dislike him entirely, more difficult still to like him really; and, as you can imagine, quite difficult to criticize him.

His faults are either hidden, or camouflaged or moderate. His faults are not even entirely ugly, for his merits stand in the way of his faults. He is a man of great discernment, but with too many vices. We see his intelligence in this: his personages are false, but they are not fools; they are talkative, but they are not, like Drinkwater's, imbeciles.

Claudel is the substitute for a genius: Nietzsche writes Thus Spake Zarathustra; and Claudel, in Tête d'Or, writes the tale of a man who also accompanies with much shouting and lamenting the struggle of his spirit. But whereas Zarathustra convinces us that something is ailing him, in Tête d'Or we detect an effort to convince us in the too long-
winded oratorical exercises of Tête d’Or himself; and our faith is gone thereby. This effort that I am speaking of is a subtlety that is not subtle, a simplicity that is not, cannot be, simple: the simplicity of each single separate speech facing the revealing bluff of the enormity of the mise en scène. It’s a man talking like a baby and dressed like a king.

Whereas Carlyle writes a furiously beautiful, singingly romantic history of the French Revolution, studded, as with pearls, with beautiful anecdotes; Claudel gives us The Hostage, another play where the simplicity of each person is matched by the tangle of the whole: pope, conspiracy, Napoleon in the background, a woman courted by a sheer villain who represents nothing less than the French Revolution in Claudel’s mind—everything in the play, by this single fact, being made small and ridiculous.

Whereas Péguy writes a tale of love of Jeanne d’Arc and her country, which was his own, Claudel, too insistent on religious love, needs miracle and all the Catholic paraphernalia to express it.

Whereas Victor Hugo writes two dozen rotten poems and one good one for his pet abomination, Napoléon le Petit—in which poems, however, there is always real anger (dis-orderly anger, therefore not yet poetry, which might be anger but must be beautiful)—Claudel writes such war poems as a hundred others wrote during that great tremendous silence that was the World War—poems in which the popular sort of anger and the popular sort of enthusiasm are most absurdly unreal.
Most of his religion, when we come to it, is as empty, or as mysterious, as the resounding phrases of the Catholic rites uttered by an uncomprehending priest; indeed, it often consists of these very phrases.

As a synthetic social phenomenon Claudel has not even a seeming existence. His religion is not such as Verlaine's, which represented a sagging not only in literature but in life; it is, instead, mere thin and dissipated love for the grandiloquence of Catholic symbols and rituals. He is an individualist and an aristocrat. But his aristocracy is not so much a reaction to the democratic trend of today as it is that same mania for bombast, pomposity. He is a national in the wrong way—he is French, and national because he is theatrical. Theatricalism is a popular French vice, which arose almost to a virtue in Victor Hugo; inasmuch as Claudel is very theatrical he finds a response in France—he is admired, and was once the leader of a group or school. And, one must repeat again, it is not Rostand's theatricalism, pseudo-patriotic and nauseating; it is a better thing, better put up, sometimes almost sincere, sometimes even sincere. Here is a man, hitting, with an unsteady fist, big gongs: hit and hit and hit—sometimes he hits the center and a fine sound is heard; and besides, this racket he makes has a metallic undertow of sound that is not unbeautiful. Claudel is a man who misuses his own good material.

Today's France is prolific of these half-and-half men. There is no national genius, to my knowledge, but there are men who, within their limitations, are perfect. But—Ver-
laine said that perfection is mediocrity. Jules Romains does one kind of work perfectly; Francis Jammes is a perfect stammerer—gooish, girlish sweet man; Paul Fort is a drum-and-piccolo mountebank, greatly happy, whose prolixity never ceases to be at least entertaining; Charles Vildrac is a perfect heavy man; Gide a perfect clever one; Spire is unfortunately little known to me; and so Claudel is a perfectly faking, stern and tragic man, with a pedantry that is very near biblical, and a bombast that is very near Hugoish. But of course all these are not perfect: they are one-armed men.

Genius has perhaps become democratic—and in order to distribute its fire to so very many it has cut down the portions; for very numerous they are—these amusing, entertaining, funny, grand and glorious, but not great, men of the France of today.

Emanuel Carnevali

CORRESPONDENCE

MISS RITTENHOUSE EXPLAINS

Dear Editor of POETRY: Will you kindly print in your next issue the following item from the Bulletin of the Poetry Society of America:

Readers of the Bulletin have probably seen in the November issue of POETRY a letter from Edgar Lee Masters in which he states that "without fault on the part of the judges, two of them did not see or consider Starved Rock, which was published by the Macmillan Co. in early Dec., 1919." As an unfortunate and regrettable mistake has been made in regard to Mr. Masters' book,
I wish, as Secretary of the Society and the one responsible for it, to explain how it occurred.

When the judges were appointed by the Society, Mr. Wheeler asked me to send to each of them a copy of the Bulletin of February, 1920, containing the list of books recommended for library purchase, thinking that this list, while selective rather than complete, and therefore not to be taken as a basis for their findings, would serve as a ready reference to the more important books of the year. In sending out the list, however, I saw upon it several books not of 1919, such as Barbed Wire by Edwin Ford Piper, and Profiles From China by Eunice Tietjens, which dated back two years, and also The Golden Whales of California by Vachel Lindsay, which was prematurely on the list, not having been published until January, 1920. It was necessary, therefore, to clarify the list by marginal notes of the correct dates. In taking down book after book for examination, I came upon Starved Rock, and seeing that the title-page said 1920, I made this jotting on the margin of the list.

Now I know that publishers do occasionally date their books ahead, when they appear so near the end of the season, but this misleading practice is not so common as to form a rule, and it is one's natural instinct to look at the title-page of a volume, if the first edition, and to accept the date recorded there. Publishers so frequently copyright a book and print this date on the copyright page, but do not in reality issue it until later, that when one sees a disparity in the two dates, he is justified in thinking the later one to be correct. In the case in question, the copyright page of Mr. Masters' book says, "Published October, 1919," whereas he says it was not issued until December; and it was already January when the Macmillan Company sent me a press copy of the book, bearing the date 1920 on its title-page. I therefore feel that this mistake in my marginal note, which no one regrets more keenly than I, is one for which his publishers are equally responsible. If publishers deliberately print a date ahead to make the public think a book falls within a certain year, they must bear the consequences if the public takes them at their word.

Now no correspondence whatever took place between the judges and myself in regard to Mr. Masters' book and it was purely from this marginal date that the mistake occurred. Later, Mr. Wheeler asked me to send to Mr. Robinson, who was at Peterboro and without access to the new books, such titles of 1919 as I chanced to have in my own library; and, naturally, supposing Starved
Miss Rittenhouse Explains

Rock to be of 1920, it was not included. These books were sent on to Professor Lowes at his request, after Mr. Robinson had finished with them; but it was well understood by the judges that the books loaned by me comprised but a small portion of the output of 1919, not even covering all the books recommended by the Poetry Society, and that the award was not to fall within this group. As a matter of fact, books were sent to the two eastern judges (it was assumed that Mrs. Henderson, being on the staff of Poetry, would have them) up to the last moment, whenever any book was suggested as important. Not that it was incumbent upon us to furnish books to the judges, nor that we had made any agreement to do so, nor that they were to base their findings upon such books, but in order to insure the fullest group to choose from, I personally wrote to the publishers to send them books whenever one came to my knowledge as having been omitted. Is it likely, then, that I should have tried to withhold from them the work of one of the best known poets in America and a personal friend of mine?

The whole matter is a mistake due to the advance date of the Macmillan Company, and it can be rectified by having Starved Rock considered with the books of 1920.

Jessie B. Rittenhouse

Note by the Editor: Miss Rittenhouse's mistake was natural, probably it would be difficult to avoid all error in listing the books of verse published during a given year. But in this case one must acquit the publisher of Starved Rock, as the copy of that book sent to us for review bears the date 1919 on its title-page. Miss Rittenhouse's copy must have been of the second edition. Perhaps the best way to prepare annually for this prize would be to send a circular letter to the publishers, requesting from each a list of his verse-publications of the year. And it would be necessary also to round up the private publications.

POEMS IN “THE TOUCHSTONE”

The following notice will interest our contributors:

Dear Poetry: The Touchstone, 1 West Forty-seventh Street, New York, is to have a new department of poetry and criticism, to be edited by me. Mrs. Roberts, the editor, offers fifty dollars
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for the best poem or group of poems submitted each month to the department. Poems must be submitted anonymously, that decisions may be made impersonally. Poems in free verse must be shapely and musical to be available for this department, and those in regularly stressed meters must be individual, not mere echoes. I shall review the selected poem in the same number which prints it. For other details the magazine should be consulted.

Marguerite Wilkinson

NOTES

Mr. Padraic Colum, for some years resident in New York, is, as everyone knows, a native of Ireland. He is the author of Wild Earth and Other Poems (Henry Holt & Co.), and of a number of beautiful paraphrases of classic epics and sagas for children. Mr. Colum sends the following note in regard to Swift's Pastoral:

"Recollection of a famous episode in literary history will place the parties in this dialogue, and give their relations to each other. Esther Vanhomrigh (Vanessa), a young and brilliant girl, had followed Swift to Ireland from London, and was living in the country about twenty miles from Dublin. Swift, as readers of the Journal know, was devoted to Esther Johnson (Stella); but he had kept the existence of Stella hidden from Vanessa, and was not at all candid in the allusions he made to Stella about Vanessa. It may be supposed that the existence of Stella became known to Vanessa at the time of this dialogue.

"The story that Swift is made to tell is a well-known one. Turlough O'Carolan was famous as a minstrel and composer; but he was a poet, too, and he wrote a great deal of graceful and charming verse. Swift did not know O'Carolan's poems directly, but he had at least one translated for him from the Irish, the one he turned into O'Rourke's Noble Feast."

Mr. Edgar Lee Masters, of Chicago, has just published, through the Macmillan Co., Domesday Book, three episodes of which POETRY printed in June, 1919.

Dr. William Carlos Williams, of Rutherford, N. J., has published this autumn Kora in Hell: Improvisations (Four Seas Co.).

Mary Aldis (Mrs. Arthur T.), of Chicago, is the author of Flashlights (Duffield & Co.).

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Mr. John Hall Wheelock, of New York, is the author of three or four books of verse, of which _Dust and Light_ (Charles Scribner's Sons) is the latest.

Mrs. Moireen Fox a Cheavasa is an Irish poet, the author of _Liadain and Curithir_ (B. H. Blackwell) and _Midyir and Etain_ (Candle Press, Dublin).

Mrs. Mary Austin, the distinguished author of many books of prose, will soon publish her first book of poems.

The other poets in this number are new to our readers:

Mercedes de Acosta (Mrs. Abram Poole), of New York, is the author of _Moods_ (Moffat, Yard & Co.).

Mr. Harold Cook, last spring a resident of Albany, N. Y., but now travelling in Europe, has published verse in American and English periodicals.

Mr. Charles deGuire Christoph was born in Missouri of Austrian and Italian parents. Commissioned in the A. E. F. in 1917, he was wounded Nov. 3rd, 1918. He is now in the faculty of the New Mexico Military Institute at Roswell, N. M.

Miss Hazel Rawson Cades lives in New York, and is now in the employ of the Crowell Publishing Co.

Mr. Benjamin Rosenbaum, of Des Moines, Iowa, is now a student at Harvard. Mr. Mortimer J. Adler, of New York, writes for the _Sun and Herald_ and studies at Columbia. Miss Leone Baker lives in Boston. "F. S. Putnam" is a pseudonym.

The proposed Keats Memorial, described in _Poetry_ last July, has now a Chicago committee, to whom checks may be sent, care of _Poetry_, by any who may desire to contribute to the preservation, as a Keats museum, of the old London house in which the poet lived. The Chicago chairman is Mrs. Horace Martin; treasurer, Mrs. Alfred Hamill.
BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Pins for Wings, by Emanuel Morgan. The Sunwise Turn, N. Y.
The Song of Life and Other Poems, by Dombey. Stratford Co.
The White God and Other Poems, by Thomas Caldecot Chubb.
(The Yale Series of Younger Poets). Yale Univ. Press.
Poems and Essays, by Alfred Hitch. Pri. pr'd, Stockton, Cal.
The Well of Being, by Herbert Jones. John Lane Co.
Songs of the New Age, by James Oppenheim. Alfred A. Knopf.
The Elfin Artist, by Alfred Noyes. Frederick A. Stokes Co.
A Gentle Heart, by Elizabeth Allen Sutterthwait. Privately printed, Webster Groves, Mo.
A Little Book of Verse, by Violet Leigh. Pri. pr'd, Eau Claire, Wis.
An Aviator's Attic, by Edlie LaBlanc. Pri. pr'd, Zion, Ill.
Flame and Shadow, by Sara Teasdale. Macmillan Co.
Where Lilith Dances, by Darl Macleod Boyle. (The Yale Series of Younger Poets.) Yale Univ. Press.

PLAYS:

Plays for Merry Andrews, by Alfred Kreymborg. Sunwise Turn.

PROSE:

Tales of Darkest America, by Fenton Johnson. Pri. pr'd, Chicago.
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who has studied the poetry movement in all its phases, will give lectures and readings in the Carolinas and Georgia during the first half of March, and is prepared to consider other engagements in that region.

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