The Witch of Coös
by Robert Frost
Four Poems by
Wm. Carlos Williams
Marjorie Meeker
Glenn Ward Dresbach
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Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, the distinguished English poet, novelist and critic, wrote us last July:

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Vol. XIX

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I
STAID the night for shelter at a farm
Behind the mountain, with a mother and son,
Two old-believers. They did all the talking.

The Mother
Folks think a witch who has familiar spirits
She could call up to pass a winter evening,
But won't, should be burned at the stake or something.
Summoning spirits isn't "Button, button,
Who's got the button," you're to understand.

The Son
Mother can make a common table rear
And kick with two legs like an army mule.

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The Mother
And when I've done it, what good have I done?
Rather than tip a table for you, let me
Tell you what Ralle the Sioux Control once told me.
He said the dead had souls, but when I asked him
How that could be—I thought the dead were souls,
He broke my trance. Don't that make you suspicious
That there's something the dead are keeping back?
Yes, there's something the dead are keeping back.

The Son
You wouldn't want to tell him what we have
Up attic, mother?

The Mother
Bones—a skeleton.

The Son
But the headboard of mother's bed is pushed
Against the attic door: the door is nailed.
It's harmless. Mother hears it in the night
Halting perplexed behind the barrier
Of door and headboard. Where it wants to get
Is back into the cellar where it came from.

The Mother
We'll never let them, will we, son? We'll never!

The Son
It left the cellar forty years ago
And carried itself like a pile of dishes
Up one flight from the cellar to the kitchen,
Another from the kitchen to the bedroom,
Another from the bedroom to the attic,
Right past both father and mother, and neither stopped it.
Father had gone upstairs; mother was downstairs.
I was a baby: I don't know where I was.

The Mother
The only fault my husband found with me—
I went to sleep before I went to bed,
Especially in winter when the bed
Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow.
The night the bones came up the cellar-stairs
Toffile had gone to bed alone and left me,
But left an open door to cool the room off
So as to sort of turn me out of it.
I was just coming to myself enough
To wonder where the cold was coming from,
When I heard Toffile upstairs in the bedroom
And thought I heard him downstairs in the cellar.
The board we had laid down to walk dry-shod on
When there was water in the cellar in spring
Struck the hard cellar bottom. And then someone
Began the stairs, two footsteps for each step,
The way a man with one leg and a crutch,
Or little child, comes up. It wasn't Toffile:
It wasn't anyone who could be there.
The bulkhead double-doors were double-locked
And swollen tight and buried under snow.
The cellar windows were banked up with sawdust

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And swollen tight and buried under snow.
It was the bones. I knew them—and good reason.
My first impulse was to get to the knob
And hold the door. But the bones didn’t try
The door; they halted helpless on the landing,
Waiting for things to happen in their favor.
The faintest restless rustling ran all through them.
I never could have done the thing I did
If the wish hadn’t been too strong in me
To see how they were mounted for this walk.
I had a vision of them put together
Not like a man, but like a chandelier.
So suddenly I flung the door wide on him.
A moment he stood balancing with emotion,
And all but lost himself. (A tongue of fire
Flashed out and licked along his upper teeth.
Smoke rolled inside the sockets of his eyes.)
Then he came at me with one hand outstretched,
The way he did in life once; but this time
I struck the hand off brittle on the floor,
And fell back from him on the floor myself.
The finger-pieces slid in all directions.
(Where did I see one of those pieces lately?
Hand me my button-box—it must be there.)

I sat up on the floor and shouted, “Toffile,
It’s coming up to you.” It had its choice
Of the door to the cellar or the hall.
It took the hall door for the novelty,
And set off briskly for so slow a thing,
Still going every which way in the joints, though,
So that it looked like lightning or a scribble,
From the slab I had just now given its hand.
I listened till it almost climbed the stairs
From the hall to the only finished bedroom,
Before I got up to do anything;
Then ran and shouted, "Shut the bedroom door,
Toffile, for my sake!" "Company," he said,
"Don't make me get up; I'm too warm in bed."
So lying forward weakly on the handrail
I pushed myself upstairs, and in the light
(The kitchen had been dark) I had to own
I could see nothing. "Toffile, I don't see it.
It's with us in the room, though. It's the bones."
"What bones?" "The cellar bones—out of the grave."

That made him throw his bare legs out of bed
And sit up by me and take hold of me.
I wanted to put out the light and see
If I could see it, or else mow the room,
With our arms at the level of our knees,
And bring the chalk-pile down. "I'll tell you what—
It's looking for another door to try.
The uncommonly deep snow has made him think
Of his old song, The Wild Colonial Boy,
He always used to sing along the tote-road.
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He's after an open door to get out-doors.
Let's trap him with an open door up attic.”
Tofile agreed to that, and sure enough,
Almost the moment he was given an opening,
The steps began to climb the attic stairs.
I heard them. Toffile didn't seem to hear them.
“Quick!” I slammed to the door and held the knob.
“Tofile, get nails.” I made him nail the door shut,
And push the headboard of the bed against it.

Then we asked was there anything
Up attic that we'd ever want again.
The attic was less to us than the cellar.
If the bones liked the attic, let them like it,
Let them stay in the attic. When they sometimes
Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed
Behind the door and headboard of the bed,
Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers,
With sounds like the dry rattling of a shutter,
That's what I sit up in the dark to say—
To no one any more since Toffile died.
Let them stay in the attic since they went there.
I promised Toffile to be cruel to them
For helping them be cruel once to him.

*The Son*

We think they had a grave down in the cellar.

*The Mother*

We know they had a grave down in the cellar.

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The Son
We never could find out whose bones they were.

The Mother
Yes, we could too, son. Tell the truth for once.
They were a man’s his father killed for me.
I mean a man he killed instead of me.
The least I could do was help dig their grave.
We were about it one night in the cellar.
Son knows the story: but ’twas not for him
To tell the truth, suppose the time had come.
Son looks surprised to see me end a lie
We’d kept up all these years between ourselves
So as to have it ready for outsiders.
But tonight I don’t care enough to lie—
I don’t remember why I ever cared.
Toffile, if he were here, I don’t believe
Could tell you why he ever cared himself. . . .

She hadn’t found the finger-bone she wanted
Among the buttons poured out in her lap.

I verified the name next morning: Toffile.
The rural letter-box said Toffile Barre.

Robert Frost
SONGS OF NIGHT

ODE TO MYSELF TRYING TO SLEEP

Draw in the threads of thought—
Each delicate filament,
Reaching into too many places,
Finding forgotten faces . . .
Draw in the long twisting thoughts you have sent.

Strange, that you lie here wondering
About things that don’t matter;
Strange, that you lie here pondering . . .
And outside, the raindrops patter,
A fog is on the town,
And over the river
The drenched lights cross and quiver,
And the far harsh rumble of trams goes up and down.

Once, like a wind, beauty swept through you;
Once, like a small song that sings and sings,
Happiness crept through you;
Once, love seemed the reason for things;
And once you thought
Peace had come upon you . . .

And then all came to naught.

Draw in the threads of thought—
Each delicate filament,
Quivering and bright;
Draw in the long twisting thoughts you have sent.
Cast all the tangled old dreaming and groping
To the still, deep,
Strange heart of Night
(Gentle forever to all grieving and hoping)—
And sleep.

IN DARKNESS

Deep in the heart of darkness I am lying,
   Alone and still;
And all the winds of darkness and of silence
   Work their will,
Blowing about me through the awful spaces
   Of night and death;
Nor all immensity can touch or thrill me
   To thought or breath.

Deep in the heart of darkness I am dreaming,
   Quiet, alone,
Careless alike of tender words or cruel—
   Even your own.

BY A WINDOW

The owl and the bat
   Are alone in the night—

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What are they at
  By the dead moon's light?
Hush! How the wings of the black bat whir!
(Oh hush, for the sleepers moan and stir!)

The moon is bleak,
  Like a monk in a cowl . . .
What do they seek,
  The bat and the owl?
What danger brews in the night, what sin?
(But hush, for the sleepers dream within.)

SONG FOR A MAY NIGHT

*Heigho!*
*Many mysterious things I know!*

I know why the moon is like a moth—
  Do you?
I know why stars are many, and suns
  Are few.
I know a place where a star fell down,
And made a hole in the middle of town,
And all the people jumped in. And so—
  Heigho!

*Other mysterious things I know!*

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COLOR OF WATER

You will be the color of water;
   Your voice will be like the wind;
You will go where the dust goes;
   None will know you have sinned.

None will know you are quiet,
   Or fluent, or bound, or free;
None will care you are nothing;
   You will be nothing to me.

Except a scarlet remembrance . . .
   As if, in a dream of pride,
A poppy had flaunted her petals
   One day to the sun, and died.

LONELY SKY AND SEA

O lonely, lonely sky and sea—
   Where time is a wind that plays between,
Blowing the colored centuries by,
   Tiny tragedies, quaint and mean—

Why are you waiting?  What have you heard?
   What majestic thing have you known,
That you watch each other, listening,
   So long, so long alone?
COMRADES

Time sweeps through me like a wind;
   Space engulfs me like a sea.
Time and Space are at me always—
   They will not let me be.

I am weary, weary with years,
   Troubled by immensity.
With eternities around me,
   How can I be free?

Marjorie Meeker

FIRST SNOW

The night was hiding a secret
When it stole
Through the red gates of sunset,
Coming so silently.
We heard it whispering
To the bare trees.

And while we wondered,
The white souls of the autumn leaves
Came softly back,
Drifting, drifting.

Esther Louise Ruble
SONGS OF THE PLAINS

I

There's no hiding here in the glare of the desert—
    If your coat is sham the sun shines through.
Here with the lonely things and the silence
    There is no crowd for saving you.

When hearts love here the love lasts longer,
    And hate leaves here a heavy scar.
But we, with the desert's beauty of distance,
    Are always dreaming of places far!

If you have come to start a kingdom—
    Our eyes have looked on Rome and Tyre!
But if you come with dreams for baggage,
    Sit with us by the cedar fire!

II

The sultry sudden darkness,
    Like some black mantle thrown
From shoulders of a giant
    On children left alone,
Falls over us; and, stilled with fear,
    In dark we see, in silence hear!

Then rain!—a sudden pounding
    Of unformed maddened things,
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Pounding, splashing—stubborn
    As vultures’ heavy wings
That pound the air, too sure to hate,
In hunger, and move low, and wait!

III

Four old trees stand tall on a hill.
Wind swirls around them, never still;
And their heads together bow and sway
As if in talk of a game they play.
Sometimes they laugh and sometimes sigh;
And there beneath a low gray sky
I’ve seen them drop their leaves when thins
The gold and crimson, as near dawn
Wise gamblers drop their cards upon
The table, saying kindly, “Why
Quarrel with a game that no one wins!”

IV

The wood was so old that I thought
    I’d hear it saying its prayers
In the aisles like cloisters wrought;
    But I came on it, unawares,
Chuckling—like old men mellow grown—
Talking of youth on a hill alone!

[188]
Glenn Ward Dresbach

V

The birds love you too,
Calling, "Sweet, sweet, sweet!"
In the windy lane
Where the tree-tops meet.

But I love you best,
Since my lips let pass
No song lest I miss
Your steps on the grass.

VI

I'll go where willows quicken
Their dances in the glow
Of morning, and the wild brooks
Make music down below;
For I am weary seeking
The things I may not know.

And I shall feel the silver
Of willow leaves, and hold
A drop of water winking
With rainbows yet unsold.
What more may all the world find
Now all its dreams are old!

Glenn Ward Dresbach

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TWO POEMS

I SHALL REMEMBER

Open to me the door of heaven
   For an hour, an hour!
Let me pace the floor of heaven,
   Let me pluck one flower!

Forever and forever heaven
   Will live upon my lips.
I shall remember. Never heaven
   Shall fail my seeking ships.

I shall be shod and swathed with heaven—
   Ah, the blue filmy veil—
Because for an hour I bathed in heaven
   Whose winds hurt and heal.

I shall remember. Songs of heaven,
   I shall sing them still;
Like the silver throngs of heaven
   I shall have heaven's will.

So open to me the door of heaven
   For an hour, an hour!
Let me breathe the air of heaven,
   Let me pluck one flower!
SHY PERFECT FLOWER

Shy perfect pearl-white flower, blooming alone
In northern woods where snow has sown
Its myriad seed—shy perfect flower,
Fragrant, alone—
Your dark leaves cluster close to hide you the more.

I part them and remember bright poppies on the plain.
They run in the wind, a ragged gypsy train;
They fling themselves at the feet of the golden grain—
When it is slain they too are slain.
Their life is a cry! Their life is a sudden scarlet stain!
Their dream-dark seeds have fearful power.

And you, shy perfect pearl-white flower?

TO SAPPHO

Torn fragments of your woven words I read;
And less their throbbing cry has power to stir
My passion than to soothe me to strange peace,
Remembering the long silence fallen on you.

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IRISH SONG

Where the highway steps along
(In Donegal, in Donegal!)
I gave my feet the choice o' way, wherever they would roam.
They might have marched to Londonderry, Belfast, Dublin . . .
The foolish, eager feet o' me, they marched straight home!

The little gown o' blue you wore
(In Donegal, in Donegal!)
Cried out to me, Come in! Come in! Your apron it said, Stay!
The tying o' the plaid shawl across the warm heart o' you
Tied in-along the heart o' me—I couldn't get away.

I took off my wander-shoes,
(In Donegal, in Donegal!)
The highway stepped along alone, until it slipped from view.
I laid aside my dusty dreams, hung up my ragged lifetime,
And rested feet and heart o' me before the sight o' you!

Helen Coale Crew

[192]
ON THE WING

A wind that blows from the sea, and smells
Of spring and fall together,
Runs racing up the yellow fields
Into the autumn weather.

And I run too, for I am young
And breathless with all living—
The trees are shouting as we pass,
The asters singing in the grass.

In half an hundred years from now,
When all my songs are sung,
I'll not be old and crossly sage,
I'll love the bright hill of my age
Under its winter sun,
And wave the gayest hand I know
To everything that's young.

Dorothy Keeley
I ASK FOR A FRIEND

I ask a girl, for a friend—a playmate
Full of May-blown dreams; and lilac in her hair;
With boyish ankles, intimately strange
And hands forever busy with applause;
And mothering, lash-screened, virgin eyes;
And a slim-breasted body made of joy.

Her coming would mean spring to my heart;
We’d give our souls a holiday, cut loose,
Arrange a rendezvous with Love somewhere—
And forget to keep it, being good friends.

I ask a girl, for a friend—a playmate
Full of May-blown dreams; and lilac in her hair.

SONNET

When Love unveiled her body to my sight
And in my heart a strange unquiet grew,
As soft winds stir the bosom of the night
And, after, spill their tears as drops of dew—
When first Love laid aside her woven dress
Of silken-tissued dreams and scented stuff,
And fastened my young eyes with loveliness
Until I thought one world was scarce enough
To hold such utter happiness and pain—

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I begged the god of love to strike me blind,  
And seal Love's image up within my brain,  
Queen of my thoughts the kingdom of my Mind!  
But when I took Love's body to my breast,  
Her lips were bitter, and her face a jest.

THE FICKLE LOVER

I have made Life my mistress; built temples  
Of song to her in my heart; paraded  
Before her enemy, Death. And smiling,  
Have kissed Life before Death's envious eyes;  
Proud in my lust, gay in my strength, love-wise.

But often in my dreams I've wished to touch  
The cool sophisticated lips of Death.

COLLAPSE

As an old tree bent by ages of winds,  
So I am tired;  
As an oak-leaf blown out upon the sea,  
I am lonely;  
As a storm-conceived adventurous wave  
Divides before its thousand lonely deaths  
On alien shores,  
My life shall end.

Ernest Walsh  

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TABLEAUX

SCHERZO

My soul is a dancer—
A dancer under shimmering willows in the sunlight.

The wind draws a bow across his violin.
He plays a scherzo—
Rippling notes on strings of silver.

Play faster, wind!
My feet are more swift than the leaves of the willow—
Shimmering, shimmering—
Amber shadows in the sunlight.
My feet are more swift than the laughter of waters.
Play faster, wind!

TRYST

I will wear my gown of dusk-blue silk,
And in my hair
A crescent moon, curved like a petal.

From the rim of the shadowy pool
I will pluck an iris—
Dusk-blue, shading to purple,
Faint-scented as the breath of sandalwood.

Softly
I will come through the drooping willows.

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The leaves will catch at my gown,
Dusk-blue
In the purple shadows.
The grasses will whisper, sighing,
As if they knew.

Down at the wall
I will wait alone in the darkness;
And close my eyes,
Dreaming that I hear your voice.

INCENSE SMOKE

One stick I lit in the bronzen image.
The smoke curls upward—lazily—between his lips;
Ivory, and the frail blue of shadows.

The image is speaking—
Words of lazy dream-blue smoke
Carved like ivory:
"Do you remember?—
The priests wore dragons, great jeweled dragons on their robes.
They sang dreamily
To the god of the dim temple—
Chanting, chanting
Through the twisted smoke of incense.
But the god did not stir.
His eyes were like opals, veiled with lost mystery!"

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The smoke curls upward—drowsily—
Between his lips;
Mist-gray, and the amber of shadows.

The image is speaking,
Words of dim gray-gold smoke
Graven like amber:
"Do you remember
The offering you burned alone at dawn
To one who did not answer?
Across the ashes
You saw the sea-mist rising—rising—
Like the smoke of incense,
And cried out with the pain in your heart."

The smoke curls upward—dreamily—
Between his lips;
Ivory, and the lost blue of shadows.

NIGHT IN THE CITY

I hear them pass by the wall of my garden—
The swift whisper of silk,
And laughter—
Tinkling like the wind-bells on the shadowy terrace,
Tinkling and calling.

Their lanterns form a necklace
Of gems,
Low-strung across the dusk.
Their laughter dies away past the wall of my garden.

In the willow
The echo lingers—
The echo of laughter, failing
Into sudden weariness.

THE UNKNOWN

I am the stir of garments that you heard
   Pass by you in the wood.
I am the lips that smile, but speak no word
   For evil or for good.

I am the voice that whispered in the long
   Sweet twilights of the spring.
I am the haunting music of the song
   I would not let you sing.

I am the finger beckoning in the street;
   The strife, and the reward;
The quivering joy that stabbed you with its sweet
   Sharper than any sword.

I am the dream that shines—a light apart,
   When other lights are spent.
I am the pain that grips and breaks your heart
   To save it from content!

Ellen Margaret Janson
WILD ORCHARD

It is a broken country,
the rugged land is
green from end to end;
the autumn has not come.

Embanked above the orchard
the hillside is a wall
of motionless green trees,
the grass is green and red.

Five days the bare sky
has stood there day and night.
No bird, no sound.
Between the trees
stillness
and the early morning light.
The apple trees
are laden down with fruit.

Among blue leaves
the apples green and red
upon one tree stand out
most enshrined.

Still, ripe, heavy,
spherical and close,
they mark the hillside.
It is a formal grandeur,
a stateliness,
a signal of finality
and perfect ease.
Among the savage
aristocracy of rocks
one, risen as a tree,
has turned
from his repose.

THE LONELY STREET

School is over. It is too hot
to walk at ease. At ease
in light frocks they walk the streets
to while the time away.
They have grown tall. They hold
pink flames in their right hands.
In white from head to foot,
with sidelong, idle look—
in yellow, floating stuff,
black sash and stockings—
touching their avid mouths
with pink sugar on a stick—
like a carnation each holds in her hand—
they mount the lonely street.
SPOUTS

In this world of
as fine a pair of breasts
as ever I saw,
the fountain in
Madison Square
spouts up of water
a white tree,
that dies and lives
as the rocking water
in the basin
turns from the stone rim
back upon the jet
and rising there
reflectively drops down again.

THE WIDOW'S LAMENT IN SPRINGTIME

Sorrow is my own yard
where the new grass
flames as it has flamed
often before, but not
with the cold fire
that closes round me this year.
Thirty-five years
I lived with my husband.
The plum tree is white today
with masses of flowers.
Masses of flowers
load the cherry branches
and color some bushes
yellow and some red,
but the grief in my heart
is stronger than they,
for though they were my joy
formerly, today I notice them
and turn away forgetting.
Today my son told me
that in the meadows,
at the edge of the heavy woods
in the distance, he saw
trees of white flowers.
I feel that I would like
to go there
and fall into those flowers
and sink into the marsh near them.

William Carlos Williams
THE HOPE OF PEACE

ALL the movements of the day—all the isms and schools and drives—fade into insignificance compared with the movement to get rid of war. This movement is not out of place in these pages—in fact, it is immediately the poet's business.

I am tempted to repeat now an editorial from POETRY for September, 1914. In the first white heat of those terrible first battles, I wrote this page on The Poetry of War:

Poets have made more wars than kings, and war will not cease until they remove its glamour from the imaginations of men.

What is the fundamental, the essential and psychological cause of war? The feeling in men's hearts that it is beautiful. And who have created this feeling? Partly, it is true, kings and their "armies with banners"; but, far more, poets with their war-songs and epics, sculptors with their statues—the assembled arts which have taken their orders from kings, their inspiration from battles. Kings and artists have united to give to war its glamour, to transmute into sounds and colors and forms of beauty its savagery and horror, to give heroic appeal to its unreason, a heroic excuse to its rage and lust.

All this is of the past. The race is beginning to suspect those old ideals, to give valor a wider range than war affords, to seek danger not at the cannon's mouth but in less noisy labors and adventures. When Nicholas of Russia and William of Germany, in solemn state the other day, invoked the blessing of God upon their armies, the emotion that went round the world was not the old thrill, but a new sardonic laughter.

As Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away, so some poet of the new era may strip the glamour from war. Tolstoi's War and Peace and many lesser books are chapters of the new revelation, and modern science,
modern invention, have aided the race in its half-conscious effort to unveil the bitter hideousness of the war-god's visage. But the final word has not been said; the feeling that war is beautiful still lingers in men's hearts, a feeling founded on world-old savageries—love of power, of torture, of murder, love of big stakes in a big game. This feeling must be destroyed, as it was created, through the imagination. It is work for a poet.

There will be a new poetry of war.

The time for that poetry is now. It must be written in peace, for when war begins there is nothing to do but fight. War is no more inevitable between nations than between individuals: as duelling was outlawed long ago in all civilized states, and its elaborate and long-accepted code of honor relegated to the scrap-heap, so shall war be outlawed by the assembled nations of the world, and its elaborate and long-accepted code of international law become a dusty byword of history. War is an absurd anachronism in this closely connected talking and trading world; and modern science has made it an anachronism poisonous and murderous beyond the maddest dreams of the darkest devils of hell. It must end if the white race is to preserve its numbers, its supremacy, its creative energy and power, and the proud fabrics of its civilization.

We face a war to the death on war, and none can afford to be a slacker in it. In this ultimate war the deadliest weapon is the germ of thought in human brains. Only the poet can spawn that germ, and send it flying forth by invisible millions to mature in the minds of men. Cervantes wrote Don Quixote, and suddenly a rotten
thing, long ready for death, was dead. Let some poet—or perhaps a number of poets in a number of arts—stab with laughter or scorch with tears the rotten hulk of war, and suddenly the world will know that war is dead.

H. M.

MUST ART BE INTERESTING?

Implicitly all interesting things have beauty, and the most interested person is no doubt the most esthetic. Such a thesis is not hard to support on the ground that interest can relate only to things of immediate worth and beauty. But to travel from this rather nervous doctrine of values to the position that beauty is determined by the interest it arouses is another and more complex matter. Though Ford Madox Hueffer in his recent Thus to Revisit reiterates charmingly, and with convincing disregard for the logical responsibilities of his theme, that art must be interesting, the shadow of an unsolved problem rather obscures the result. He rests his proposition, it is true, on human impulse, not on philosophical consideration; but the question is not easily confined. In that speculative periphery of art where beauty dissolves into metaphysics no problem is more persistent.

As a weapon against the absolutism in art which makes no compromise with the public taste the book will be effective. It undermines this stern and puritan dogma with the suggestion that final values in art as well as in other fields of human experience lie after all in human
nature itself. It abandons the rigorous heaven reserved by the absolutists for the saved few, and returns frankly to popular interest for its standard. To their ascetic practice in casting off mundane and popular interests it can oppose the Protagorean formula, “Man is the measure of all things.” But in liberating art from these moralisms Mr. Hueffer imposes another moralism in his repeated dictum, “Art must be interesting.” Why after all must these highly complex things, art and interest, always be associated? That interesting things, as a matter of descriptive fact, are in a measure beautiful does not imply that art, as a matter of moral or artistic imperative, must be interesting. Mr. Hueffer rather increases than diminishes the speculative difficulties and enticements of the problem.

Overburdened beauty carries many theories on its back. All of them, from absolutist to pragmatist, aim in some way to find a functional value of beauty in the social system. The mere act of erecting a rational theory about it indicates an effort to organize beauty into a system of human relationships. There remains to remark, no doubt, that beauty is not a theory, that it is not subject to theorizing, that it needs and possesses no justification in the social order. But that too in its way is incorrect. In this field rich with questions Mr. Hueffer’s interesting book quite appropriately asks what it cannot answer.

Baker Brownell

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A SYMPOSIUM ON MARIANNE MOORE


Such contrary opinions of this provocative little pamphlet have reached us that perhaps the most suggestive review will be a more or less questioning rehearsal of them. Miss Moore's steely and recondite art has long been a rallying-point for the radicals. Although her first appearance was in POETRY—in May, 1915, most of the entries in these twenty-four closely printed pages date from Others and The Egoist, a few from The Dial and Contact. Rumor has hinted that the selection and publication were made by certain friends of the author without her knowledge.

If one were to accept the challenge of the title, and of the geometrical verse-designs which frame these cryptic observations, one might be led straight to the ancient and rather futile inquiry, What is poetry? Poetry is evidently a matter of individual definition. H. D., surely a critic of authority, calls Miss Moore a poet, and a number of young radicals are eager to pronounce her "a very great poet," as Yvor Winters did in a recent letter. "With the exception of Wallace Stevens," he wrote, "she is about the only person since Rimbaud who has had any very profound or intricate knowledge and command of sound; and I am not sure but I think her about the best poet in this country except for Mr. Stevens."

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A Symposium on Marianne Moore

A more moderate admirer, Miss Winifred Bryher, sends us the following estimate from England:

This volume is the study of a Marco Polo detained at home. It is the fretting of a wish against wish until the self is drawn, not into a world of air and adventure, but into a narrower self, patient, dutiful and precise. *Those Various Scalpels* is sharper than a diamond. It is as brilliant a poem as any written of late years, and yet it is but a play with the outside of substances and the inside of thoughts too tired to feel emotion. And *Dock Rats again*, or *England*, are wrought as finely as the old Egyptians wrought figures from an inch-high piece of emerald; but they lack the one experience of life for which life was created.

The temperament behind the words is not a passive one, however much environment may have forced meditation upon it as a form of “protective coloration.” The spirit is robust, that of a man with facts and countries to discover and not that of a woman sewing at tapestries. But something has come between the free spirit and its desire—a psychological uneasiness that is expressed in these few perfect but static studies of a highly evolved intellect.

Technically it is a triumphant book. There are scenes which are a joy to remember; the shifting color of

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wade} \\
\text{through black jade} \\
\text{of the crow-blue mussel shells—}
\end{align*}
\]

And the vivid beauty of *The Talisman*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Under a splintered mast,} \\
\text{torn from ship and cast} \\
\text{near her hull,} \\
\text{a stumbling shepherd found} \\
\text{embedded in the ground,} \\
\text{a sea-gull} \\
\text{of lapis lazuli,} \\
\text{a scarab of the sea,} \\
\text{with wings spread—}
\end{align*}
\]

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curling its coral feet,
parting its beak to greet
men long dead.

Miss Moore has preferred, to date, to express simply the pictorial aspect of the universe, and she has fulfilled perfectly each self-imposed task. Her Poems are an important addition to American literature, to the entire literature of the modern world. Only, Marco Polo, your sword is ready and your kingdoms wait. May it soon please you to leave the fireside and ride forth.

But Miss Moore's admirers don't have it all their own way. Here is the point of view of one of POETRY'S associate editors, Marion Strobel:

Even a gymnast should have grace. If we find ourselves one of an audience in a side-show we prefer to see the well-muscled lady in tights stand on her head smilingly, with a certain nonchalance, rather than grit her teeth, perspire, and make us conscious of her neck muscles. Still, we would rather not see her at all.

Just so we would rather not follow the contortions of Miss Moore's well-developed mind—she makes us so conscious of her knowledge! And because we are conscious that she has brains, that she is exceedingly well-informed, we are the more irritated that she has not learned to write with simplicity.

The subject-matter of her poems is inevitably dry; the manner of expression pedantic. She shouts at our stupidity: "Literature is a phase of life;" "Words are constructive when they are true—the opaque allusion, the simulated flight upward, accomplishes nothing." And we yawn back at Miss Moore's omniscience.

And another poet-critic, Pearl Andelson, says:

Marianne Moore has much the Emily Dickinson type of mind, but where Emily Dickinson's not infrequent obscurities arise out of an authentic mysticism, Marianne Moore's are more likely the result of a relentless discipline in the subtler "ologies" and "osophies." She is brilliant at times to the point of gaudiness, although one feels that in
her brilliance she is most herself. As to form, the fact that she wavers between prose and poetry is not disguised by the breath-taking line-formation. Indeed, I should say the incongruous effect was heightened, rather than diminished, by occasional rhyming. The same, for the most part, may be said of content as of form. Such poems as Picking and Choosing and Poetry are hybrids of a flagrantly prose origin.

Well, let us turn to the book—without prejudice one way or the other. In the first place, the lady is delightfully independent; she says in Black Earth:

Openly, yes,
with the naturalness
of the hippopotamus or the alligator
when it climbs out on the bank to experience the
sun, I do these
things which I do, which please
no one but myself. Now I breathe and now I am submerged; the blemishes stand up and shout when the object
in view was a
renaissance; shall I say
the contrary? The sediment of the river which encrusts my joints makes me very gray, but I am used
to it, it may
remain there; do away
with it and I am myself done away with, for the
patina of circumstance can but enrich what was
there to begin
with. This elephant skin
which I inhabit, fibred over like the shell of
the cocoanot, this piece of black glass through which no light
can filter—cut
into checkers by rut
upon rut of unpreventable experience—it is a manual for the peanut-tongued and the
hairy-toed. Black
but beautiful, my back
is full of the history of power, Of power? What
is powerful and what is not? My soul shall never
be cut into
by a wooden spear.

And so on for about forty more lines, which develop and elaborate the elephantine symbol, and then drop it, as it were, in mid-career, with a quizzical trunk-flourish. As *Black Earth* is admirably representative of its author's thought and style, it may serve as the text for a few inquiries.

Meditative self-confession is no novelty in English poetry—we have countless examples in as many different patterns. Hamlet's soliloquies, Gray's *Elegy*, Pope's *Essay on Man*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Whitman's *Song of Myself*, many sonnets by Milton, Wordsworth, Keats and other supreme sonneteers—these are but a few of the numerous high precedents in English poetry for more or less imaginative and more or less metrical meditation. And one may not deny imaginative power to the mind which can create and round out and energize so effectively the grotesque image which appears when she holds up the mirror to her soul. Neither may one refuse any poet the right to attempt new metrical patterns; since only through such attempts does any achievement become possible—any enrichment of the English prosodic scheme.

So it remains to attempt to estimate the validity of Miss Moore's processes and the degree of her achievement.
A Symposium on Marianne Moore

Unquestionably there is a poet within the hard, deliberately patterned crust of such soliloquies as Black Earth, Those Various Scalpels, Pedantic Literalist, Reinforcements—almost any of these titles—though a poet too sternly controlled by a stiffly geometrical intellectuality. Miss Moore is in terror of her Pegasus; she knows of what sentimental excesses that unruly steed is capable, and so her ironic mind harnesses down his wings and her iron hand holds a stiff rein. This mood yields prose oftener than poetry, but it wrings out now and then the reluctant beauty of a grotesque, or even, more rarely, such a lyric as Talisman.

No amount of line-patterning can make anything but statement and argument out of many of the entries in this book—for example, Picking and Choosing, which begins:

Literature is a phase of life: if
one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if
one approaches it familiarly,
what one says of it is worthless. Words are constructive
when they are true; the opaque illusion—the simulated flight
upward—accomplishes nothing. Why cloud the fact
that Shaw is self-conscious in the field of sentiment but is otherwise re-
warding? that James is all that has been
said of him but is not profound? It is not Hardy
the distinguished novelist and Hardy the poet, but one man

“interpreting life through the medium of the
emotions.”

If the mood instinctively flouts the muse, what of the method? If the mood may rarely yield more than the
hard reluctant beauty of a grotesque, is the method inevitable and right, fitting words musically, magically to the motive, as in all the masterpieces of the art? Well, let me confess that I do not find the divine shapeliness and sound-richness which Mr. Winters referred to in his letter. What I do find in certain poems is a brilliant array of subtly discordant harmonies not unlike those of certain ultra-modern composers, set forth in stanza-forms purely empirical even when emphasized by rhyme, forms which impose themselves arbitrarily upon word-structure and sentence-structure instead of accepting happily the limitations of the art’s materials, as all art must. When Miss Moore uses the first syllable of *accident* as a whole line to rhyme with *lack*, or the article *a* as a line to rhyme with the end of *Persia*; when she ends a stanza in a split infinitive, or in the middle of the swift word *very*—indeed, anywhere in the middle of words or sentences, she is forcing her pattern upon materials which naturally reject it, she is giving a wry twist even though her aim is a grotesque; and when her aim is more serious, such verbal whimsicalities strike at once the intensely false note of affectation. And as she takes her own way in these details of style, so she gives little heed to the more general laws of shapeliness; each poem begins as it ends and ends as it begins—a coruscating succession of ideas, with little curve of growth or climax.

What I do find throughout this book is wit—wit fundamental and instinctive which expresses itself not
only in words, phrases, rhymes, rhythms, but in ideas, emotions. The grim and haughty humor of this lady strikes deep, so deep as to absorb her dreams and possess her soul. She feels immense incongruities, and the incongruity of her little ego among them moves her art not to grandeur but to scorn. As a satirist she is at times almost sublime—what contrary devil balks her even at those moments, tempting her art to its most inscrutable perversities?

Youth is sometimes penetrating in self-diagnosis. I am tempted to recall the first poem Miss Moore ever published—*That Harp You Play So Well*, from the 1915 group in *Poetry*:

```
O David, if I had
Your power, I should be glad—
   In harping, with the sling,
   In patient reasoning!

Blake, Homer, Job, and you,
Have made old wine-skins new.
   Your energies have wrought
   Stout continents of thought.

But, David, if the heart
Be brass, what boots the art
   Of exorcising wrong,
   Of harping to a song?

The sceptre and the ring
And every royal thing
   Will fail. Grief’s lustiness
   Must cure the harp’s distress.
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“If the heart be brass . . . every royal thing will fail.”

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It is not this reviewer who says that, or invokes for this poet "grief's lustiness." May even grief soften a heart of brass? And is a deep resistless humor like Miss Moore's the most subtly corrosive destroyer of greatness?

*H. M.*

**A MYSTIC WARRIOR**

*The Mystic Warrior,* by James Oppenheim.  A.A. Knopf.

We might count as art every cross-country flyer cutting its shriek into a black sky or a blue sky; every sky-scraper flinging windows, light, smoke into an incredulous sky; every unimpeachable bath-room trinity; the giant torsos of boilers and bellies of gas-tanks; the bird-like or fish-like aeroplane; the architecture of the farm—silo, granary and barn; or, for the matter of that, the fields of grain themselves, the vain prodigal orchards. It is in the air to do this. Out of such industrial shapes men are making violent tragic-comic drama, ruled as in art by the mathematics of the elements. So the analogy is close and tempting, and we can point that way to America as rich in self-expression. Or we may follow another trend of fashion—an import out of French dadaism or a mood synchronous with it—and abandon the word art altogether as an obsolete and paupered notion. A composer of genius was recently heard to bandy the idea of an anti-art society, where he said, lightly but seriously, any artist of consequence belonged. Ben Hecht in his first work of size follows his apparently biographic hero to say it is not
“art” he wants, “art is something he can spit out in conversation.” In a foreword to an exhibition of his photographs Alfred Stieglitz formally junks the word along with a number of abstractions. Yet it was a word concrete enough to artists, not so long dead either—Cézanne, Degas, Rodin, Whistler—to whom the living still pay homage.

People may be wiped from the face of the earth, but art is.

And there are still those who echo this as a hard truth, in whose eyes even the machine has been unable to break the essential sequence of things. They have need of this word to name the one human reality running so close to all reality as to far outstrip that vanity, self-expression; as to make shapes more intentional, more delicate, more potent than any American industry has yet made. In the pages of The Mystic Warrior, an analysis of himself, James Oppenheim writes himself down as one of these. His sense of the relentless absolutes of art, his denial of himself as an absolute, instil this poem with a deep candor, a kind of darkened tranquillity—virtues rare enough today to mean in themselves distinction:

The artist, finally the artist?

America shuns him, cutting herself off from her own greatness:
But he comes nevertheless ... he is Walt riding on top a bus, and Poe dreaming of stars in a cottage with his wife dying,
And Emerson, absent-minded, minded of the Oversoul, in Concord woods,
And Hawthorne moody in sad Puritanism,

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And Mark Twain smoking cigars in bed, sweating and groaning over Huckleberry Finn,
And giant-like tearful Dreiser, and Sandburg sitting in a newspaper office,
And Vachel Lindsay jazzing in Paradise (or is it Springfield, Illinois?)
And Masters among all souls in strange Spoon River.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

So I speak for the artist ... 
But also I speak for the multitude like myself, with equal struggles and the same yearnings,
The same sorrows, joys and lamenting,
But no gift: inarticulate, frustrated, America's victims.

There is the argument, in the unfolding of which perhaps Oppenheim does not quite go the length of candor. For his indecisions and his failures he can't resist blaming America more than the mere fact that the inevitable image, word, phrase come seldom to him. You enjoy the drift of the book, but you have to ignore more than one lapse of taste—that unerring instinct for the word and the place. Perhaps too breathless an awe has sometimes defeated him. There is a hint of this in the picture of a meeting with "our most powerful novelist"—Theodore Dreiser, one is led to suppose:

So we walk, we talk.
And here is the Hudson, the North River, with shouting gold of sunset and smokes of the tugboats,
Shadows of cliffs, like the spacious threshold of a spiritual universe;
And I grow tense with the wonder of it and feel the artist's despair of setting it down in words ... 

So I turn to him: "Just look," I say, "could you describe that?"
He speaks carelessly:
"Oh, yes—that or anything."

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Yet this reverence for great vision, great craft, has had its reward, the reward of concentration—workmanship. If this writer were a house-painter, you might not always like the colors he mixed, but his surfaces, his finish would be scrupulous. So The Mystic Warrior contains pictures,—indelible pictures, snatches of rhythm, voices: pictures of childhood in New York schools and brownstone houses; pictures of a death and a funeral:

I am a tailor: I am cutting and sewing a pair of pants for my little brother:

My little grandmother comes in, walks softly, inaudibly by me . . . .
She carefully pulls down the shades, making the room yellow . . .
I confront her: “Why do you pull down the shades, grandma?”

She says there is too much sunlight . . .
Then she looks at me, hesitates, takes me by the arm,
Whispers in my ears, “James, your father is dead.”

I smell flowers—lilies, roses, violets—I shall never forget that smell . . .
I am taken down in the long parlor . . .
There are people there: uncles and aunts, grandpa, grandma . . .
There are camp-stools, and a black-cloth coffin smothered in flowers . . .

And now my infancy is ended . . .
For this is death; I have come face to face with my enemy, death . . .
Servant-girls soothed me, saying, “He is an angel now.” . . .

Vivid portraits of people; pictures of offices, wharves, homes; pictures of a Jewish bourgeoisie in New York, redolent of the race, recalling the riches Rembrandt made of the same theme in Amsterdam centuries ago; and the breath of countless streets:

Old days on the West Side,
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Old nights.
Summer nights when there was a faint Coney Island stir down electric-lit Eighth Avenue . . .
A moth-stir, flame, shadow, Bagdad.

There is unction in *The Mystic Warrior*, but almost no sham, no bunk. At its best the tenor of it is curiously dark and steady—a suggestion of slow night rain, or a ship at anchor in night waters. The poem succeeds in being a distillation, in contrast to the brew made, it seems, after the recipe: “To hell with work, novelty will provide the kick.” Oppenheim, you feel, has earned the right to say:

In the grey air we walk, in the glister of the dying year;
And my soul goes down to roots, and the roots, like a tree’s, are deep in the earth.

Acknowledging this, you are even willing to ignore the abstract use of the word “soul.”

Dorothy Dudley

MRS. WYLIE’S POEMS

*Nets to Catch the Wind*, by Elinor Wylie. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

A lyric voice slight, but clear and fine, may be heard in this book, the voice of a free and lightly ranging spirit. The sound of it is now gay, now grave, but always it holds a little aloof—one detects that something “austere, immaculate” for which the poet herself holds her Puritan ancestry responsible. In a number of poems her mood is thoughtfully admonitory, as *The Eagle and the Mole*, *Madman’s Song*, or *Say Not of Beauty she is Good*:

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Oh, she is neither good nor bad,
But innocent and wild.
Enshrine her and she dies, who had
The hard heart of a child.

Again, it is meditative or descriptive, or, as in Valentine, self-searching. But always the emotion is shy and delicate, as of a cool small wild-flower growing, by some whim of Nature, not in the woods, but in the protected area of a garden. The flower is very simple and of quiet color, but it has an individual vitality nevertheless.

The Eagle and the Mole, urging toward the high or the profound as against a safe “middle-of-the-road” policy, is perhaps the most temptingly quotable poem in the book. But as it has already gone the rounds, and as POETRY has printed Velvet Shoes and certain others, we prefer to offer The Prinkin’ Leddie as an example of pure and irresistible gayety—a mood extremely rare in modern art:

“The Hielan’ lassies are a’ for spinnin’
The Lowlan’ lassies for prinkin’ and pinnin’;
My daddie w’u’d chide me, an’ so w’u’d my minnie
If I s’u’d bring hame sic a prinkin’ leddie.”

Now haud your tongue, ye haverin’ coward,
For whilst I’m young, I’ll go flounced an’ flowered,
In lutestring striped like the strings o’ a fiddle,
Wi’ gowden girdles aboot my middle.

My silks are stiff wi’ patterns o’ siller,
I’ve an ermine hood like the hat o’ a miller,
I’ve chains o’ coral like rowan berries,
An’ a cramoisie mantle that cam’ frae Paris.
When the skies are low an’ the earth is frozen,  
Ye’ll be gay an’ gled for the leddie ye’ve chosen,  
When ower the snow I go prinkin’ and prancin’  
In my wee red slippers were made for dancin’.  

It’s better a leddie like Solomon’s lily  
Than one that’ll run like a Hielan’ gillie  
A-linkin’ it ower the leas, my laddie,  
In a raggedy kilt an’ a belted plaidie!

An unusually interesting first book.  

H. M.

THOUGHTFUL MEASURES


Carefully studied, delicately wrought, are these poems—this sequence of twenty-nine sonnets followed by as many other poems. If they are in a sense too studied and deliberate, they yet express genuine emotion in grave and thoughtful measures of modern straightness and simplicity—there is no pretense in the feeling, and rarely a trace of rhetoric or palaver in the style. The best of them rise to a quiet beauty and distinction—Lullaby, which was in POETRY last summer, is a fine lyric; and this one, To a Young Girl, is almost as quotable, though the word holocaust is a bit melodramatic:

I had forgotten there were hearts so young  
As yours, tonight,  
Whose voice, now echoing with songs unsung,  
Fills me with strange delight.

I had forgotten there were eyes so swift  
Of April mirth,
Flashing as though with some invisible gift
From Heaven to Earth.

I had forgotten there were lips that pray,
Like a gray-winged dove,
For one more hour of laughter and of play
Before the holocaust of love.

The sonnet sequence hints at the story of a youthful love affair finished by autocratic death. We follow it a little apart, watching “out of mist,” through translucent veils, an experience not unusual, not strongly individualized, but for that very reason of wide appeal. Many a first love-story appears here in thoughtful reminiscence, its joy and sadness real, but softened by time and change. In sonnet XXVII we have the climax of it:

In memory I sit beside your bed
And see again the smile that lit your face;
Nor do the slow forgetful years erase
A syllable of those last words we said.
For, through my tears, seeing your brightness fled
Because of them, I pled with Heaven for grace
To make you smile once more, while with quick pace
I heard night passing that would leave you dead.
Swiftly I took your hand and held it tight,
Then told in words that choked me ever after
Some foolish trifling thing. And though the light
That came with your brave laugh was gone thereafter,
Yet, as a rocket fills the quiet night
With falling stars, I hear again your laughter.

_Cradle Song, Dressing Up, Elegy, and The Candle_ use the familiar four-line measure to present emotions of flower-like grace.

_H. M._
Three magazines which aim at international authority and circulation send us their first numbers from Rome, London and New York. All three appear in a luxury of format and typography more easily attained abroad than here; attainable here, indeed, only at a cost so high as to be almost prohibitive. We have, first, *The Broom*, described as “an international magazine of the arts published by Americans in Italy” (at 18 Trinità dei Monti), and edited by Harold A. Loeb and Alfred Kreymborg, with Giuseppe Prezzolini as associate editor; second, *Fanfare*, “a musical causerie issued on the first and fifteenth of the month,” edited by Leigh Henry and published by Goodwin & Tabb, Ltd., at 34 Percy Street, London; and, third, we have the resuscitated *Little Review*, issued as a seven-dollar-a-year “quarterly of arts and letters,” in an initial autumn number, from 27 West Eighth Street, New York, the “administration” consisting of Margaret Anderson, “jh,” Ezra Pound and Francis Picabia.

In *The Broom* Alfred Kreymborg shows once more his ability as an editor, but the new paper does not “start something,” nor arouse the excitement of anticipation, to the degree that the first number of *Others* did in July, 1915. There is much variety in the contents, which range from
a strictly correct sonnet by Walter de la Mare to phan-
tasmagoric designs in black and white and gray from
paintings in the most approved cubistic manner by
Albert Gleizes and Juan Gris.

We see many familiar names among the fifteen or so
literary contributors: Lew Sarett has a Maple-sugar Song
of the Chippewas; Amy Lowell offers a three-page chant
in praise of Lilacs—

Your great puffs of flowers
Are everywhere in this my New England.

Lola Ridge sings of Hospital Nights; Wallace Gould offers
a prose-poem narrative about Marnia. The only other
verse-entries are some Chinese poems of J. Wing, trans-
lated by E. Powys Mathers, and a twelve-line rhymed
poem, Lake, by Bayard Boyeson, which opens the number.
Other poets appear in prose: James Stephens with a
tragic Dublin story, Hunger, as ruthless and terrible in its
deliberate detail as the title implies; James Oppenheim
with a quite wonderful study of a sanely insane mind;
Haniel Long with a whimsical sketch. Conrad Aiken,
Louis Untermeyer and Emmy Sanders offer certain
critical inquiries concerning poets and their art, and the
invasion of Europe by America. In short, almost every-
one appears except the over-modest Mr. Kreymborg.

The magazine has a beautifully printed page about five
by seven inches, set sumptuously in hand-made large-
paper measuring nearly nine by thirteen.

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Fanfare, which is primarily musical, blows a gay trumpet as it enters:

Fanfare—does not the word suggest something stirring, brilliant, joyous, exciting—something which preludes adventure? . . . We are the heralds of the new era, sounding the fanfare for its union with new beauty. Such union calls for revelry; hence our Fanfare will be merry. . . . We set forth boldly, our trumpets bright to reflect sunlight, our Fanfare ringing truly alike for ritual, ceremony, battle, joust, forlorn hope, festival, triumph or masquerade.

This paper, although a musical periodical, believes, like POETRY, in a closer alliance of the arts. Its editor thinks that musicians are too narrowly trained—therefore Fanfare will deal with literature, drama, painting, sculpture, and theatre-craft, as matters a knowledge of which forms a necessary complement to musical culture.

So we have two or three clever drawings and a poem by John Gould Fletcher among the musical entries within the gaily decorative cover of Fanfare's first number.

The Little Review is larger than of yore—an hundred and twelve pages measuring more than seven inches by nine. It aims at the very latest thing, and achieves, as its pièce de résistance, a fifty-page poem by Jean Cocteau, translated by Jean Hugo, The Cape of Good Hope. Having read half of it, and being still in a state of innocence, I commend the rest to those who can watch "the dangerous hallucinations continue."

On the way to Cocteau, we have Ezra Pound on Brancusi, illustrated; some Fumigations by Picabia, a phi-
losophy of *Psycho-democracy* set forth by Mina Loy, poems in French by Paul Morand and in German by Ivan Goll. Also there are some rather outspoken tales, and Ezra Pound tells us all of our sins in a *Historical Survey*.

It is said that Mr. Pound readopted *The Little Review* because of its editor’s brave fight against the suppression of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Well, it was a brave fight—any fight against the censor’s gag-laden fist takes bravery. The trouble is, *The Little Review* never knows when to stop. Just now it seems to be headed straight toward Dada; but we could forgive even that if it would drop Else von Freytag-Loringhoven on the way.

**VARIOUS PRIZES**

*The Dial’s* first award of its annual prize of two thousand dollars, for one of its contributors, was announced December first. It goes to Sherwood Anderson, of Chicago, the distinguished author of a number of novels and short stories, and of *Mid-American Chants*, poems in free verse, of which a group first appeared in *Poetry* for September, 1917.

This is the most generous literary prize as yet awarded in this country; an admirable example which should have a train of followers. Although Mr. Anderson’s contributions to *The Dial* have been in prose, his being a poet as well gives *Poetry* the opportunity to congratulate him,
and also the staff of the magazine which honors him.

The Poetry Society of America announces the award of two prizes, each of five hundred dollars:

First, the prize offered for the best book of verse by an American poet, published in the United States during the year 1920, is divided equally between Heavens and Earth, by Stephen Vincent Benét, and Smoke and Steel, by Carl Sandburg. The judges were Richard Le Gallienne, William Lyon Phelps and Harriet Monroe.

Second, the prize offered in the William Lindsey Contest for poetic drama has been awarded to Harry Lee for his four-act play, Il Poverello. One hundred and forty-five plays were submitted, and the judges were Stuart Walker, George Arliss, George P. Baker, Jane Dransfield and Jessie B. Rittenhouse.

The Friday Club of Chicago, at a recent meeting of its board of directors, voted fifty dollars to POETRY as a prize for a young poet for the current year.

This gift is acknowledged with special pleasure as it is the first offer of the kind which POETRY has received from any women’s club, or indeed from any society. A number of clubs, in Chicago and elsewhere, have given annual prizes to painters, sculptors, and perhaps musicians; we hope that the Friday Club’s example will remind them that prizes to poets, being excessively rare, should have the preference from clubs largely devoted, as most of them are, to the study of literature.
My Dear Poetry: Interest in American letters seems to be increasing in France. As one evidence, note that the program required for the English-teaching certificate contains Frost’s *North of Boston*. This is due to M. Charles Cestre, the well-known professor of American literature at the Sorbonne. I consider it a bold step to admit in University studies a quite modern poet whose genius has not yet been fully acknowledged by our critics.

French verse is still a matter of discussion. Yet Paul Valéry seems to attract partisans from sundry corners:

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La lune mince verse une lueur sacrée,
Toute une jupe d’un tissu d’argent léger
Sur les bases de marbre où vient l’ombre songer,
Que suit d’un char de perles une gaze nacrée.
```

A scintillating symphony of vowels, and a modern rendering of an old romantic theme. Valéry and a few other poets have united to form a “New Pléiade.” The original French Pléiade, you remember, was formed at a moment when the French language needed clarification and enriching. What seems to be the aim of the actual Pléiade? The names of the members will speak for themselves: Countess Mathieu de Noailles, Pierre Camo, Derennes, Gasquet, de Magallon, Mazade, Valéry—all artists of classical or semi-classical verse. It is a protest against the extremist and cryptic schools of art. The
Countess is a great favorite among women, tender youths, priests (if I dare trust a friend's testimony), and bourgeois readers in whose ears still lingers the flowing cadence of our traditional verse. Camo writes finely-chiselled sonnets and odes in which the modern notes blend exquisitely with fading reminiscences. Gasquet was a fiery artist of the South, whose experiments in polyphonic stanzas, together with alexandrines, have just been cut short by death. Our poetical tradition has definitely acquired a pliancy which not even the attempts at classic tragedy of the official Comédie Française are able to endanger. Even Max Jacob, the sweet child of humor, who keeps apart from any coterie with his bons mots and new faith—even Max Jacob writes exquisitely modulated alexandrines. You see that our extremists, Dada excepted (but who knows what they mean?—not even Ezra Pound), display a certain coquetry towards our well ordered muse:

Le ciel a pour la mer des regards qui bénissent,
Le soleil sur la mer est un bateau qui glisse,
Chaque lame a son or, chaque écume a sa nuit . . .

What do you think of this gold-and-black up-to-date fabric?—

Every wave has its gold; every foam has its night.

More robust and more thoughtful has become the muse of Vildrac, and of Romains. The Chants du Désespéré, by Charles Vildrac, ring with the sorrow of the poet's bruised dreams. Vildrac bends over the corpse of his friend, a
victim of the war; he turns his clear eyes on his suffering fellow-men; he sees more ugliness than before.

Jules Romains (Le Voyage des Amants) seems to remain more true to his former philosophy. A smiling fancy, direct sensations of Paris and the world, with sometimes a cosmic vista:

Les jours grandissent,
Chaque jour est un coup plus dur
Porté plus profond dans la nuit;
Et la matière des ténèbres
Tantôt molle, tantôt cassante,
Se pulvérise ou s’aplatit.

The art of the New Pléiade and of the Unanimists make this a great epoch for French poetry. Alas! that it should not also be glorious for the French drama! But here we have to deplore that our official theatres leave to private and too little moneyed initiative the production of new, vigorous and audacious plays. The Comédie Française practically gave nothing worth mentioning apart from the classical répertoire. La Mort Enchainée, by Maurice Magre, has won a prize of a few thousand francs for the best new play, and it is grievously accurate that this heavy and obscure mythological drama was merely one of the passable novelties of the Comédie. As for the Odéon, we feel sure that the new play by Paul Fort is going to make up for the stuff that has been produced there in the course of the few past months. But of course we have our secondary stages: the Vieux Colombier, the Théâtre des Arts; and we have the Group of the Six.
I shall have occasion to write you about this young group of Six Musicians, and about Jean Cocteau as a poet. Let me say now that Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, played at the finest and most comfortable theatre in Paris, the Champs Elysées, before a smart audience and a good number of buoyantly hostile traditionalists, has not proved a failure. It is a farce mimed by dancers for actors, while a phonograph explains, in the words of Cocteau, the progress of the plot. A nervous cerebral music, with here and there patches of sunlight, has been composed by the Six. It is a healthy combination of sound, color, and gesture; with no human voice, which may be deplored, but at least with nothing of the thundering declamation of too many comedians.

Jean Catel

NOTES

Mr. Robert Frost has recently accepted an invitation from the University of Michigan; and he is now an informal member of its faculty, resident during the college year at Ann Arbor. His latest book was Mountain Interval, published by Henry Holt & Co., in 1916.

Dr. William Carlos Williams, of Rutherford, N. J., will put out very soon a new book of poems through the Four Seas Co., which has previously published Al Que Quiere and Kora in Hell. Dr. Williams and Robert McAlmon are editors of Contact, a magazine of which four numbers have appeared during the past year.

Miss Grace Fallow Norton, of New York, who is now sojourning in France, is the author of The Sister of the Wind and other books of verse (Houghton Mifflin Co.).

Mr. Glenn Ward Dresbach, who has recently removed from New Mexico to El Paso, Texas, is the author of several books of verse, the latest being Morning, Noon and Night (Four Seas Co.). A new one, In Colors of the West, will appear next spring.
Marjorie Meeker, who recently married Mr. Shirley Wing, lived formerly in Columbus, O., but is now travelling abroad. She has not yet published a volume.

The other poets in this number are recent accessions to POETRY’s list:

Helen Coale Crew (Mrs. Henry Crew), of Evanston, Ill., has published verse and prose in various magazines.

Miss Julia R. Reynolds is a young poet of Sumter, S. C.; Miss Ellen Margaret Janson of Seattle, Wash.; and Miss Dorothy Keeley of Chicago. Miss Esther Louise Ruble was brought up in Kansas, and is now a student at the University of Chicago.

Mr. Ernest Walsh, who was in the aviation service during and after the War and suffered a fall, is now in the Army Hospital at Camp Kearny, Cal., where there is a group of young men who are much interested in poetry.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

The Lifted Cup, by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Houghton Mifflin Co.
The Fugitive, by Rabindranath Tagore. Macmillan Co.
A Penny Whistle Together with The Babette Ballads, by Bert Leston Taylor. Alfred A. Knopf.
Quiet Waters, by Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff. Moffat, Yard & Co.
Shrines and Shadows, by John Rollin Stuart. Four Seas Co.
Nets to Catch the Wind, by Elinor Wylie. Harcourt, Brace & Co.
Cross-currents, by Margaret Widdemer. Harcourt, Brace & Co.
The Pier-glass, by Robert Knopf. Alfred A. Knopf.

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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*


*Pieces of Eight: A Sequence of Twenty-four War-sonnets*, by John Armstrong Chaloner. Privately printed, Roanoke Rapids, N. C.

*Willow Pollen*, by Jeannette Marks. Four Seas Co.

*We, the Musk Chasers*, by Loureine Aber. Ralph Fletcher Seymour.


*Melodies and Mountaineers*, by Isabella McLennan McMeekin. Stratford Co.

*The Return and Other Poems*, by Margaret L. Woods. John Lane Co.

*The Open Sea*, by Edgar Lee Masters. Macmillan Co.


*Bethlehem*, by Elizabeth Sewell Hill. Methodist Book Concern, Cincinnati.

*DREAMS OUT OF DARKNESS*, by Jean Starr Untermeyer. B. W. Huebsch.

*Children of God and Winged Things*, by Anne Moore. Four Seas Co.

*Early and Late*, by Katharine Warren. Duffield & Co.

PLAYS:


ANTHOLOGIES AND TRANSLATIONS:


*Widsith; Beowulf; Finnsburgh; Waldere; Deor*: translated by Charles Scott Moncrieff; introd. by Viscount Northcliffe. E. P. Dutton & Co.

*Selected Poems and Ballads of Paul Fort*, translated from the French by John Strong Newberry. Duffield & Co.

PROSE:


Are You a Connoisseur of Art?
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The New York Sunday Tribune of Jan. 9th, 1921, said editorially, in quoting seven poems from our January number:
"The varied interest and beauty presented are typical of POETRY's quality. Thanks to a rare coincidence of poise and generous imagination, of sense and sensitiveness, it ranks as easily the best vehicle of poetry in the English language."

In the London Times of Nov. 25th, 1920, we read:
"We need not linger over the many English and French contributors to this periodical... We do have to note that it has published, as it honestly claims, much of the best experimental poetry written by Americans in the past eight years... They have succeeded in their primary design—to create a poetry which should be American in thought, feeling, subject, and form. That is, after all, a distinct achievement."

The Chicago Evening Post, in commenting on POETRY’S eighth birthday, said:
"No editorship is infallible, but it is rather interesting and enlightening to look over the old numbers of POETRY and to realize that the first important chance for publication in America was given to many poets, almost unknown, who have since obtained fame... We wonder how many more may yet be helped. POETRY is, so far as we know, unique in the length of its life, recognized position and rigorously artistic standard."

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