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OTHERS

A Magazine of the New Verse

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OTHERS For May-June, 1916

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Bulletin — Owing to Mr. Marshall's retirement from the publication of *Others*, the May and June issues were delayed, and are therefore presented herewith as a double number. It is being hoped, kind Sir and Madame, that this extreme vicissitude, or what under ordinary conditions is branded as reprehensible tardiness, will not discourage you from a continued encouragement of the brave ways and inclinations of a periodical which has had only you to look to for its moral and financial endowment. The hint is, unloosen the purse strings of your faith and extract your subscription renewal—*Others* is in need of birthday gifts. A child, one year old, should not be held entirely responsible.

Beginning with its birthday issue—July, 1916—still another innovation will be tested. Various writers are being invited to edit *Others*, each for a period of one month. Williams Carlos Williams will have charge of the July issue, which he announces as *A Competitive Number*; Maxwell Bodenheim of the August, which he announces as *A Chicago Number*, and Helen Hoyt of the September, which she announces as *A Woman's Number*. Incidentally, the present incumbent will endeavor to enjoy a much needed rest.

A. K.

THE MEAT PRESS

I have a longing
To strip raw live flesh
From my bones
And squeeze it in the meat press.
Blood will drip,
Enough to write a few lyrics
Red and sacramental.

RUTS

Ruts, nothing but ruts,
Made by great wheels,
The wagon,
Creation.
I myself have fallen into the rut of sex,
Deep it is, a trench
Where I sit, not lacking company,
Playing with mud,
Making mud pies
And setting them to bake in the sun.
I cook innumerable meals
Of mud, all mud.
(Do you wonder I look lean and starved?)
Here is soup

Put down on the menu as cream of sentimentality
(Mud and water, slush).

Here is a grand hunk of meat, frankly flesh,
Smothered in modest white sauce,
Mud too, caked, baked.

Here a dream of dessert,
An aery trifle of the ideal
(Mud mixed with air and water).

Each course is served with wine of the senses,
An ancient vintage
(Water this, colored with mud,
Red mud).

There are many shades of color
In mud

And dishes can be cooked to suit all appetites,
Mud, all mud

Found in the rut,
As good stuff as any for a make-believe.

But do you wonder that I am reduced in weight
And troubled with inordinate longings?

Do you wonder that reality looks green to me
And fresh and succulent as grass?

LEGEND

When I think of life now
It is in terms of faery.

I am living the old legend
Of the sprite
With a body of fire and light
And no soul,
Who fled to earth
Longing to gain a soul
Through human love and sorrow.
I know myself that sprite
As I know the country that is tucked away
Between the mists of dawn and day
As I am aware
Of the faery lover I had there,
And when I go to walk
With meek hair smoothed
And modest as a mortal bride should be,
A shadow waits for me,
My phantom lover waits invisibly cloaked
At every corner, on every street,
He stands whistling my song,
Calling my name,
And I will not hear,
My ears are sharpened to a sweeter sound.
I listen, I follow my own soul
As it goes up the way ahead of me
Blowing on ghostly pipes
Of immortality.

INITIATION

You suffered, Body,
You are marked for life.
When I look on you now
I have the impulse to kneel
As before one who has undergone
Trial by fire
And is become an initiate
Into the lesser mystery
Of pain.

MORTALITY

The milk of desire is dried in me.
When passion wails with querulous hunger
I may not bare my breast to give him suck.
Instead,
With patient eyes
Upon the clock of duty
I feed him broth
Or prepared milk,
Artificially heated
To a certain tepid temperature.
He lingers in frail life.
I still his cries.

I soothe his pain
And hope for miracles
Not daring to see or mourn
The wasted limbs,
The uneasy breath,
The brow already dark
With mystery
And death.

THE CRYSTAL

A man wants me:
Because the curves of my neck sing to him
And the shape of my body tortures his dreams
A man wants me.
He looks into the crystal
And sees visions. . . .
Two lovers in the garden of Eternity
Plucking the rose. . . .
A House built upon a rock
With an open door
And eager children flitting up to it. . . .
These are his happy visions.
Once I looked into the crystal,
I will not look again,
The picture moves across the curtains of my eyelids
still,

I close them and remember
Barbaric figures,
Brute man hunting his mate
Whom having captured
He proceeds to woo
With the conventional club of the period.
The uncouth struggle over, she
Rising enraptured from the dust
Kneels
And with bruises burning sweet as kisses
In a fury of worship
Surrenders herself.

THE QUESTION

You answer the questions my body put
With utter understanding.
Now I begin to be aware
Of that which is not flesh.
Some day
It will blurt out its first question—
What answer then from you?

THE MICROSCOPE

Only to look—
To take at random slide after slide of life,
Put it under the lens,
Observe the blood of nation's heart,
The bloom on the wings of emotion,
The clear still wriggling of obscenity,
Or section by section, the changing cells
Of one's own soul—
Curious!

I

I thought love would come gloriously, with the clash
of tambourine and the swirl of silver bugles,
Lighting the night with his blazonry;
And I found him in two sad eyes so tired they could
not look on mine.

II

I shall light a candle in my heart,
Else, entering, he would lose his way in the shadows.

III

Do not chafe at your bonds, dear.
It is only my heart that holds you;
That is easily broken.

IV

I would have borne long the torture of the flesh for
you—
Would have given my body like grass,
But unending torment of the spirit I cannot give.
My pain passed
With the blossoming of the first blue morning glories.

V

I was sent from a far country that I might bear one
message—
You will neither hear it nor let me return.

VI

In our town
There are painted wooden houses and one dusty
park and I.
We grow more faded each year,
More hopeless,
More alike—
The houses, the park, and I.

VII

Has no one a gift to bring to you,
My heart,
So tired, so lonely? Why,
I shall sing to you,
My heart,
I, I!

WEDDED TO A SHREW

Midsummer sultriness,
Distant rumblings
Among low half-hills
Of Reason. . . .

The fine white linen
Of your courage wilts. . . .

Simultaneous with a blinding flash
Comes the downpour—
You cannot escape
Its sharp pelting hail.

“Good day to you!”
A voice behind—
Your neighbor!

Hastily you wrap a
Smooth white cloak
Of blandness about you
To hide the shrinking
Drenched lines
Of your outraged composure.

And Death came,
Stealing in on tip toe
Like a Thief.
And went away, smiling,
Like a Victor.
Waving one long bony arm,
While the other gripped
His Victim close,
Like a miser.
He left the door wide open.
In the doorway stood a woman.
Her eyes were dry.
She stared into the distance,
And could see nothing.
Like the Future.
She turned
And saw the leaden skies.
Here and there a glint of gold,
Like the Past.
And she saw
The wasted years.
Of the Dead.
And of the living dead.
Like in a Dream.
And she dreamed
Of Peace,
And she hoped
For Rest.
And she prayed

For Death.
Like a Vision.
To be met,
With outstretched Arms
Like a Lover.

TO ONE IMPENETRABLE

I. GLASS

I think it was the most beautiful night of my life.

I was jealous of the moon for making you look so strange and lovely that he seemed to be a part of you; or at least to have you in his embrace.

And while you were asleep, I took all of the delicate little glass treasures I had carried in my soul; and I laid them in your arms which were open just right to receive them. And then I waited for your drowsiness to wear away.

When you awoke you looked up wearily from beneath your heavy lashes and with a single languid movement of your arm you threw the cherished ornaments upon the stone floor, where they broke. You had merely lifted your hand to look with complacency at its carefully polished nails; it is a favorite gesture of yours, and one I have often loved to watch. . . .

But my soul is a very patient laborer; and it will begin To-day to make you some new treasures, only a little less delicate and of a somewhat coarser material.

II. BUTTERFLIES

It was at dawn, as I remember. You had gone for a little while over the top of the hill. In your absence I began to call out to you:

“It is such a big World, and I am trying to get my arms around it. If you would only come from the other side and take my hands!”

You did not answer, and moved by a new freak of ambition, I had forgotten all about you in a trice and was laboring hard at some stupendous task.

Then suddenly I know you were sitting on a blade of grass tickling my nose. You fretted me so with your mockery that I struck at you in a fit of anger and you turned to a butterfly.

Since that day I have never been able to do anything but chase after butterflies, which constantly mock me. . . . I suppose in order to make my penance more complete.

III. WHAT YOU SAID TO GOD

One evening God stopped you just as you were entering the door of your bedroom; and would not let you go further until you had spoken with him. Since your secrets are so mysterious and

impenetrable, I believe they are in the keeping of Heaven, you were not at all embarrassed, and this dialogue ensued:

“My daughter, you have come here night after night alone; and yet it is some time since you knew that you loved, is it not?”

“Yes,” you confessed.

“And what has he done to you?”

“He has kissed me.”

“That is well, and has he sought you diligently, my daughter?”

“At all times and everywhere.”

“But—” said God, for he was greatly puzzled.

Then you explained to him with a remark that must have been stranger than his own thoughts because he allowed you to pass immediately and murmured to himself: “Ah, I shall have to punish him. . . . That is clear.”

I have been wondering whether He will wait at your bedroom door until I come to cross its threshold . . . and if He will tell me what it is you said, so I may know why I am punished.

IV. CANDLES

There is a funny little man who tends the candles in your soul; and I bribed him with all manner of gifts to allow me to take his place.

“How absurd,” he would say. “You cannot do my work; you are very conceited to imagine such a thing.” No matter how I smoothed his feathers it was of no use. He obstinately refused.

But the other day he fell asleep, just at the time the candles ought to have been lighted. So I went in, not entirely devoid of fear, and managed to light them all without ever waking him.

Ever since then he has seemed to understand that he is not needed any more, and I think he will probably die or go away.

SOUVENIR OF DOMINICA

And from now on
The perfume of roses
Will evoke memories of Roseau
And its valley dreamy with haze,
And Morne Anglais sulking in a cloud,
And the Pitons insolent on a clear day,
And rainbows and rainbows and rainbows;
But against them all
A shingled house and its mango tree,
A shingled house and its scarlet passion-flowers,
A shingled house and its white-bloomed ixora
Iridescent with humming-birds;
An old gray gabled home,
With Miss Maud playing fairy to the ferns,
And Miss Carrie trying hard to look severe,
And Miss Alice, very stately, pouring tea:
Three dear friendly gentlewomen
Smiling at me from the hearts of roses!

L'ARC DE TRIOMPHE

For all the fire of your heroism,
France of *Le Roi Soleil*,
To-day you loom up for me
Like the calvary of Guimiliau . . .
That strange stone calvary

Gray as the moors of its Brittany,
Gray as the menhirs of Carnac,
Gray as the Druid stones!

Between Mary and Magdalene
Hangs the Terrible Fruit of the Tree:
And the Tree stands among Devils and Saints
And Soldiers:
And these are crumbling.

Flat on the earth
Lie the gray stone slabs of the dead;
But erect and sturdy and solid,
Under the calvary,
Spread three arches
Doved soundly together
In ancient triumphal form.

SCALES

As I was dusting a long unopened book,
Two tiny oval scales
Went fluttering to the floor
Like a small brown moth. . . .
Dead leaves like living wings—
But the might of them!

They have lifted me over the seas,
And from March to September!

They have carried me from wind-buffed Bermuda
To the breathless slopes of Canandaigua,
Violet-green with hop-fields.

Once more I hear the singing of the hobos,
The wandering hop-pickers;
Of the village girls
In checked gingham and poke bonnets;
And the swish and rustle of the vines
As the pole-pullers swing them to the bins.
Once more I smell the bitter-sweet
Of the yellow-green tasselly cones;
And my fingers burn and grow black
From stripping the scales from the stems.

I am walking home,
Plodding along moodily
At the foot of orderly vineyards
Half cleared of grapes. . . .
Concords, Wordens, Niagaras,
Pink Delawares, ruddy Catawbas,
And Agawams like maroon marbles.

Below, meadows purple with alfalfa:
And through a cloud
Of little white butterflies
Floating over one,
I see the slumbering sapphire of the lake—
Which made me dream of Bermuda!

THE SUBWAY*

There was the white face of Fear,
And the solemn face of Duty,
And the face of Self looking in the mirror.
But there were voices calling from vernal hill-tops,
And silver spirits by moon-lit gardens calling,
And voices of no sound from far horizons calling.
But even if there be penitence for living,
And thought and tears for the past,
And even shame and even hunger;
And if there be nothing gained at the last in living,
And much to pay for the madness of briefest bliss,
And if there be nothing in life, and life be nothing,
So that to nail one's self to the cross is nothing lost—
Is Death not even less?

These were the voices whereto we tore our flower
Petal by petal apart and scattered it
And paused and paltered.

But lest the whispers grow louder,
And the eyebrows arch to a fiercer scorn
You fled away to France and left me
With only a poor half uttered farewell,
A scrawl put off to the last, then written
As with shut eyes, swift nervous hands,

* Copyright by Edgar Lee Masters.

As one might wait for the heroic thought
To take his poison—wait in vain, and then
Cowardly gulp it down and reel to death!
I could not hate you for the pain of hate,
And could not love you who had hid yourself,
Belied yourself behind this scrawl.
I could only sit half-numb,
And drift in thought.

And afterwards it wasn't so much to be alone,
Nor to dream of the days that were done,
Save as it deepened the surge in my heart,
Or strengthened the ebb of my soul for thought
Of your soul drawn away from me—
So needlessly drawn it seemed.
And it's the music that deepens and changes,—
For as your soul adds strings to its strings
There are fingers to play—it almost seems
There are fingers about us that watch and wait
For a soul that's adding strings to its harp
To play them when they're strung.
And so it's the music that deepens and changes
That kills you at last I think.

Well, I had a dream one night
That a dead man well could dream.

They had buried me in Rosehill.

And after twenty years from France they brought
you

And put you just across the walk from me,
Where we slept while the crowding city grew
To a vast six millions, and they were building
A sub-way to Lake Forest.

And we were forgotten of every-one,
And almost our family names were lost.
And our love you fled from all forgotten,
And everything we said, or thought, or felt forgotten
With the whispers of boys and girls
In a temple's shadow in Babylon.

Well, to pursue, it's a day in March
When the colors are brilliantly white and blue;
And it's cold except for Poles and Italians
Who dig with spades and cut with picks.
And some of these fellows are digging us up,
We lie in the way of the sub-way, you know.
And they dump our bones in a careless heap,
The ribs of me by the ribs of you,
My skull lies ignorant by your skull.
And behold our poor arms are entwined.
For Death, you know, is a mocker of Life.
And there we lie like stocks and stones,
And where is our love and where is your fear?
And a young Pole pushes our bones together
With a lusty shove of his heavy shoe,
And he says to another: "You saw that girl

I was dancing with last night?
Well, I don't think I'm the only one,
And besides she bothers me most to death.
And as soon as this sub-way job is over,
Which will be in a year, or year and a half,
I'm going to beat it back to Poland."
Then the other beginning to shovel muttered,
"1976."

FIREFLIES

Three nuns
Three nuns pass by
Three upright coffins passing by
Three nuns.

The elephant sways
from side to side
slowly
solemnly
like an old Jew
praying.

The public square
A telescope
The moon
The mountains
of the moon
Jupiter
His several moons
Other glories
of the night sky
Brilliant
Icy
Remote
For a nickel

Trum
tum tum

Trum
tum tum
soldiers, soldiers marching by
Trum
tum tum
Trum
tum tum
soldiers, soldiers going to die
Trum
tum tum
Trum
tum tum
soldiers, soldiers marching by
Trum
tum tum
Trum
tum tum.

Among the shadows
under the table
the tip
of a dainty shoe
the tip
of a shoe less dainty
seeking each other
meeting
mating
amorous birds
among the shadows
under the table.

Considering
the length of Long Island
or the circumference of the earth
or the distance
between Venus and Mars
what's half an inch?
But applied to your nose
my beloved
Ah!

Oo . . . Oo . . .
I'm an ogre
I eat little ones
little women
I eat 'em alive
I eat 'em raw
on the bone
I'm an ogre
Oo . . . Oo . . .

He shines my shoes
Why does he stop
betwen uterus and grave
to shine my shoes?

I couldn't help it
I was born
a legitimate child.
Could I help it?

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

My brain is like a tropical forest, dark and sinister,
In whose branches and hedges thoughts dart and play
like scarlet scarabees ;

Or, sometimes, like a sea of phosphorescent light
In which images sport like flying fish.

A garden, too, wherein walk sadic Christs and Neros
that are Paraclete,

Which on a sudden changes into a seraglio peopled
with scarlet angels

Who choir their prayers of passion to a cataleptic
Sultan.

In fortunate hours it is like a chariot made of sun-
motes

Drawn by two great butterflies caught by Titans of
the Moon,

And it carries me past the sparkling sweat-beads on
the face of the celestial Ethiope

And the sorrows of the multi-billioned creatures who
pullulate in their depths

To the solemn solitudes of the Nirvana of fairies who
drowse forever on the Golden Thigh of Pytha-
goras.

My brain! my brain! 'Tis star-exiled from space
And sent to the Siberia of my skull without reprieve;
A stomach that I shall one day disembowel,
Whose spillings shall become beautiful words and
shall dance and dance away!

DIVINATIONS

I

Blind footprints treading the snow

In crazy hieroglyphs:

History . . .

(For my beloved the snow lies white again!)

II

My beloved call one to another

"There is no yesterday!

"Memory, the fortune-teller of souls,

"Slinks from her broken tent

"Fearing the storm."

III

My beloved cry

"We move in a joyous Dream

"Parted from all that is!

"O God, Destroyer of paths that returned!"

IV

That you are brother to a slave in the far desert

And not to him laughing beside you in the household;

That you are son to him who kneels on the hills of
prayer

And not to him whose hand you fondle;

That you are without language for speech or custom
for action,

By My name

Be joyful!

In this new Season

Wherever the seeds of your endeavor strike,

There is perception.

V

Know you not, beloved,

I give you My sight

That you may behold all ends as beginning;

My heart

That you shall adore things eternal;

And My memory,

To know yourselves?

VI

Vainly in passionate arms you hold,

Or snare in whisper's echo

The strangers
That move in a World a world apart,
By paths that join you never.

VII

Over the gate of Death I carved in flame
“Not adoring My beauty again
“With these eyes;
“With this heart falling in love
“No more.”

VIII

None are the hieroglyphics within My court
You shall not read, beloved,
Save those yourselves devised,
Yourselves admiring!

IX

Not in your eyes that look to hill and cloud,
Nor in your hand plucking the yellow blossom
Does Spring return,
But in My radiant Will
That burns upon the winter of your soul!
Love, passion, hate, knowledge and doubt and faith

Fuse in the virgin earth of My desire:
My Spring renews its season in your blood.

X

My beloved,
I stand about you like a bright Horizon
Burning with many suns;
As flowers firmly rooted in the warm earth of Spring
You live in the midst of Me.

A DAY AND ITS JOURNEY

The dawn came in
Fever-swift and hot. . . .
And I ran from its touch and clasp. . . .
And all my roads wound upward
To the hills,
And there they ceased. . . .
The hills received me,
And in unharried valleys
My spent and blowing soul
Was stilled and calmed and recreated. . . .
And the lowlands,
With the netted roads
And clotted houses
Were phantoms of a dream.

Cool and finger-soft
The night crept in,
Slipping on from peak to peak. . . .
And I found my roads again,
Winding roads that downward wound
To the lowlands
Where they ceased
And were unraveled,
Into sundry quiet streets. . . .
And lights were glowing,
Amid the ample trees
Like little errant stars;

And all the houses,
White and trim,
Were dimly dancing in the dusk
Around the luminous square;
For all the world they seemed
As many maidens
Waiting
Each her lover and his coming. . . .
I was home again.

MERETRIX: IRONIC

Things mused upon are, in the mind, like music,
They flow, they have a rhythm, they close and open,
And sweetly return upon themselves in rhyme.
Against the darkness they are woven,
They are lost for a little, and laugh again,
They fall or climb.

Here, it rains. The small clear bubbles
Pelt and scatter along the shimmering flagstones,
Leap and sing.
Streaks of silver slant from the eaves,
The sparrow puffs his feathers beneath broad leaves
And preens a darkened wing.

Yet round a windy corner of the mind,
A block away, or at the selfsame place,—
We meet you face to face.
You cough with the dust, we hear you say once more
There in the shadow of a deserted door,
You are cold, you have no money, and you are
hungry.
You open your purse to show us that it is empty.
You are crying, and that is strange, for you are a
whore.

. . . Bubbles of soft rain scurrying over a pavement,—

Slanting from dark eaves—
Where did I see a sparrow beneath broad leaves? . . .
. . . Rain, rain, rain. All night the rain.
The roofs are wet, the eaves drip.
The pelted leaves bend down and rise again.
The bubbles chirp and skip.

This is spring. The snowdrops start to grow,
The rain will wash them clean.
This is spring, the warm drops wound the snow,
The black earth aches with green. . . .

And now that it is morning, we will go.
What do we care for you—you, only a whore?
Starve if you like! You'll have to end it sometime.
There will be plenty more.
Sell your hangings, pawn your dress, your ear-rings.
What do we care? You knew we wouldn't pay.
That's right, cry! It'll make you feel much better,—
Meanwhile we go our way.

The lamps are turned out on the music racks,
The concert ends, the people rise,
The applause behind us roars like rain on a roof,
The great doors close. We shrink beneath blue skies.
Was this a music? Or did I hear a story?
Yet I remember well that hair, those eyes. . . .

And much besides, that, nimble even as music,
Sings, flashes, is gone. . . .

For a million years the gods have been telling me
secrets.

I do not remember one.

Well, take us home with you; and when we have
loved you,

(Stroked your drowsy hair, your subtle flesh,
And held your golden throat in the palms of hands)

When we have loved you, and rise

Once more into mortal evening out of your eyes,

We will both give you money; and you may go

To order peacocks' tongues, or a little snow.

. . . . There is a seeth of foam far over our hands
On the pale surface. . . .

We glide above our shadows along the sands. . . .

If you are really so tired, take my arm.

Is this your door? . . . Give me the key.

Why don't you sell these hangings if you are poor?

You deserve to be.

. . . . Something about your skin is like soft rain—
Cool and clear . . . it reminds me of many things.

Your eyes, they are like blue wells of pain—

I remember a sparrow preening his rainy wings. . . .

He sat under broad leaves, puffing his feathers and
winking. . . .

What are you thinking?

Now that you're here—there's no use in your going . . .

Wait till the morning. When we have loved we'll sleep.

Sleep is better than wine; and hunger will keep.

