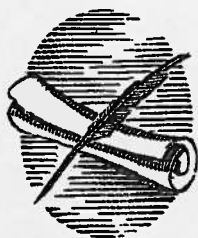


POETRY

AND

OTHERS



CHAPTER III

POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October 1942. To hundreds of poets and would-be poets, to many friends in all parts of the world, 232 East Erie Street in Chicago still extends a cordial welcome. But Harriet Monroe is gone.

Friends miss the sight of her small figure out in a back alley, brewing coffee over an open fire for her tea guests. They miss her presence on

festive nights when poets read verses, talk late, and eat handsomely. They miss the fear of being rushed across dangerous boulevards by the tugging hand of Harriet, who always crossed with head bent low, refusing to glance either way.

It was in June 1911 that aristocratic Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor agreed with his friend, Harriet Monroe, that the moment was ripe for the establishment of *Poetry*.¹ A little magazine had been for years a passionate ambition, but Miss Monroe had bided her time until she could see her way clear to financing such a magazine for an extended period.² The seeds of a new poetry must blow with some not far distant wind, she knew. And she realized that these seeds must be allowed to settle, sprout, and mature. She knew the danger of early death for this new poetry when it arrived, knew it all too well. There were no magazines in America willing to print much serious new verse.³

Let us glance at the so-called quality magazines for the months immediately previous to *Poetry*'s appearance. What monthly diet was served by *The Atlantic*, by *Scribner's*, or by *Harper's*, the periodicals which most persons thought of as "good" magazines? They carried

from two to five verse tidbits a month, generally of a highly vapid character, sentimentally designed by such hacksters as Margaret Prescott Montague, Fannie Stearns Davis, Florence Converse, and Margaret Sherwood. Almost completely blind to new talent, *The Atlantic* exhibited during 1912 only one piece of verse by a poet (Amy Lowell) new to the American literary scene. Miss Lowell's fragment must have been a disturbing curiosity to readers who had come to expect quatrains such as "Vision," printed in the August 1912 issue:

As each slipped from the place
Where all had walked with me,
I, on each passing face,
Saw immortality.⁴

Harper's was publishing the same brand of verse. The month *Poetry* made its first appearance, *Harper's* carried a half-dozen lines by Anne Bunner, lines typical of the magazine's poetic tone.

"O WISE AND STRONG"

O Wise and strong beyond all need of me!
Why should I dream, now you have flown so high,
And I, earth-bound, could never touch the sky—
Why should I dream you needed me? And yet
I never, looking in your eyes, forget
The little lonely child you used to be.⁵

John Hall Wheelock was the only American of ability among the *Harper's* contributors, and the only representative of the younger writers. One might expect a better record from *Scribner's*, and, indeed, we do find Margaret Widdemer once, Arthur Davison Ficke twice, Sara Teasdale twice, and John Hall Wheelock once. Yet this, too, is a remarkably bare poetic cupboard. It is small wonder that Harriet Monroe was fearful for the fate of the new poetry.

But even after Chatfield-Taylor enthusiastically agreed that the time was ripe and suggested a way of attacking the financial problem, Miss Monroe was cautious. She did not immediately rush a magazine to press. That was not her way. Though she was intensely eager for the appearance of *Poetry*, her sanity kept her desire on leash. She was checked by the clear knowledge that such a periodical, if it were to burn

⁴ Margaret Sherwood, "Vision," *The Atlantic Monthly*, cx, 198 (August 1912).

⁵ Anne Bunner, "O Wise and Strong," *Harper's*, cxxv, 674 (October 1912).

¹ Harriet Monroe, "These Five Years," *Poetry*, 34 (October 1917).

² Harry Hansen, *Midwest Portraits*, New York, 1923, pp. 257-58.

³ *Ibid.*

with more than an ephemeral flame, must be well prepared for.⁶ She wanted a periodical that would print the best the English world had to offer, superior verse not only of 1911 or 1912, but for many years to come. Such a project had to be planned, well thought out. Chatfield-Taylor had suggested the possibility of one hundred Chicagoans, each subscribing fifty dollars for a five-year term.⁷ Coming of a pioneer Chicago family, intimate with the educated and moneyed strata of Chicago society, Miss Monroe might easily have mustered sufficient financial resources to give her magazine a trial; she could have done it in a fairly short time; and indeed she did, once she put her mind to this portion of her problem. But there were other details that prevented the appearance of *Poetry* for over seventeen months. There were vital problems of economy, of selling her idea to poets, of encouraging young unknowns to see the vision of a new art closely integrated with modern life, presenting that life in a simple, direct fashion, stripped of all petrified traditions.⁸ There was nothing hastily conceived in *Poetry* when it finally made its appearance in October 1912.

Poetry was vital from its inception. Its value to America and Britain during the past quarter of a century can scarcely be overestimated, for it courageously stimulated American verse to a height which had been alien atmosphere for many a year. In *Poetry*'s case mere figures are indeed meaningless. To say that it has promoted the reputation of 95 per cent of the post-1912 poets; to mention its distinguished criticism of verse; to talk about the numerous yearly prizes it has given and encouraged other magazines to give, is almost futile. One must browse slowly through its volumes and discover their full flavor for himself.

The first issue of a magazine is likely to be rather unworkmanlike, but *Poetry* never assumed the necessity of an initial foundering and managed to avoid it. The first 32-page sheaf carried Ezra Pound's high-spirited lines to Whistler, a finely nuanced Mexican sequence by Grace Hazard Conkling, an unpublished poem of William Vaughn Moody, two pieces by Arthur Davison Ficke, and the first published poems of Helen Dudley and Emilia Stuart Lorimer. A presentable first issue, especially when we consider that Harriet Monroe, in order to protect the name of her magazine from a Boston group, had to bring *Poetry* out a month or two in advance of her original plan.⁹ In November,

⁶ Monroe, "These Five Years," pp. 36-39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39.

⁹ Hansen, *Midwest Portraits*, p. 259.

John Reed made his first poetic appearance with "Sangar"; and Richard Aldington and H.D. were introduced to American readers. A month later Rabindranath Tagore translated his own work for the first time into English. In January 1913 came Vachel Lindsay, booming forth his "General William Booth Enters into Heaven." February brought George Sterling. July was to see F. S. Flint and Amy Lowell for the first time in *Poetry*. From October 1913 through March 1914, one finds John Gould Fletcher, Padraic Colum, D. H. Lawrence (January 1914), and Robert Frost (February 1914) in either their first or an early American appearance. Carl Sandburg made his bow with "Chicago," printed in March. With August came Maxwell Bodenheim's first; a month later Rupert Brooke was introduced to this country and Eunice Tietjens made her entrance into *Poetry*; in November of the same year appeared Wallace Stevens. Edgar Lee Masters, having published much of his *Spoon River Anthology* in *Reedy's Mirror*, appeared in *Poetry* for February 1915. Soon thereafter appeared one of T. S. Eliot's first published poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In May came Marianne Moore and Floyd Dell. In 1917 we find *Poetry* bringing James Joyce to this country. Edna St. Vincent Millay was printed in August, and Sherwood Anderson in September. Thus runs the parade of names—Malcolm Cowley and Evelyn Scott in November 1919; Grace Stone Coates and Elinor Wylie in April 1921, Elizabeth Roberts and Glenway Wescott, a few months later—and we have glanced only hastily at the first ten years.

The fifteen years that followed 1920 were equally brilliant; we find much of the early work of such artists as, to name only a few, Yvor Winters, H. L. Davis, Hart Crane, Horace Gregory, George Dillon, Archibald MacLeish, Robert Penn Warren, W. H. Auden, Louise Bogan, Ernest Hemingway, Stephen Spender, Allen Tate, Countée Cullen, Hildegard Flanner, Marion Strobel, Joseph Gordon Macleod, William Empson, Paul Engle, C. A. Millsbaugh, Robert Fitzgerald, Marya Zaturenska, Jesse Stuart, Norman Macleod, and R. P. Blackmur. And as one reads these poets, all of them heralded to fame by *Poetry*, many of them first printed by *Poetry*, one is surprised to find that any single magazine could so consistently uncover and recognize the talent of its age. Its alertness to new writers, to new trends, has been little short of phenomenal.

While *Poetry* was doing its work, the quality periodicals were resting in impervious smugness. Perhaps it would be unfair to expect them to brave the dangers of presenting new talent, but we might reasonably

assume that they would print talent after it was discovered. It was amazing to watch *The Atlantic* sail serenely through the poetic revival, content until well past 1922 with its writers of 1913—Fannie Stearns Davis, Margaret Prescott Montague, and Margaret Cable Brewster. True, *The Atlantic* did briefly notice Robert Frost in 1915, two years after *Poetry* printed him. A few times it published short Robinson poems; once it noticed Alice Meynell; yet the record through 1930 fails to show a Sandburg poem, or anything by Lindsay, Eliot, Aldington, Pound, H.D., or any of the other newer poets with the exceptions of John Crowe Ransom, S. Foster Damon, and Archibald MacLeish, all published in the late twenties. Nor were Harper's and Scribner's more alert. They were represented by such names as Charles Hansen Towne, Effie Smith, Hortense Flexner, George Woodberry, and Amelia Josephine Burr, though between 1913 and 1918 the editors saw fit to administer small doses of such established English and American writers as John Masefield, Sara Teasdale, Thomas Hardy, and Bliss Carman. Among the works by younger artists in Harper's was a poem by Amy Lowell, one by William Rose Benét, one by Louis Untermeyer. We find Robinson appearing rather frequently in Scribner's, however, and three times we discover Arthur Davison Ficke there; John Hall Wheelock was published twice in these five years, Amy Lowell twice, William Rose Benét once. Never do we find a trace, between 1913-18, of the score of other poets who were eventually to assume an important place in American poetry.

Harriet Monroe was born in 1860 of a well known Chicago family, educated at the fashionable Visitation Academy, Georgetown, District of Columbia. Her educational and family environment did much to shear the rougher edges from a somewhat egotistical temperament. There were moments, especially in her later life, when she tended to ride hastily over opposing opinion, when her self-absorption drew her farther and farther from personal relationships. But these blemishes must not blind us to the more dominant aspect of her personality. No one can question her directness and sincerity, her discriminating and sensitive taste. Until her death she maintained a zestful, intelligent interest in the world about her, with a hope for the future which included willingness to innovate.

Living her entire life in Chicago, she may have been stimulated by the youthful buoyancy of the city. During her mature years Chicago's population jumped from half a million to over three millions. Every day brought change. In these years of great hope and struggle, of brim-

ming energy, Chicago was already rapidly becoming the "player with railroads," the "hog butcher for the world," dreaming of an art institute, of great universities, of music; even of becoming the world's literary capital. True, the new city had much rampageous crudeness, but Harriet Monroe's selective mind could estimate these elements of her environment. It was the energy, the ambition, which must have profoundly influenced her and added to the determination that was such a prominent part of her character. Possibly it was the Chicago exuberance of those years which was partly responsible for her frequent journeys to Egypt or to China, for the spirit which brought about her death in 1936. At the age of seventy-six she decided to explore the Peru Inca country and the high altitude brought on heart failure.¹⁰

This was the woman who founded *Poetry*, who did so much to encourage the revolution in American verse, and who still dominates the little office at 232 East Erie Street. For not the least of her accomplishments was a selection of able associates, persons such as George Dillon, Morton Zabel, and Geraldine Udell, whose literary taste and business ability bid fair to steer the magazine through a second quarter of a century as inspiring as that just past.

There was little of the dilettante in Miss Monroe's personality. Her judgment was thoroughly grounded in a liberal, humanized education.¹¹ She was distinctly not one to be swept from her feet by literary innovation, nor on the other hand was she one to look at experimenters with suspicious pedantry or condescension. Objectivists, proletarians, and Victorians might hurl their cries of opprobrium at her, and she would weather their attacks, confident of her judgment. Indubitably there were few persons in the America of 1912 better qualified to lead the fight for a new poetry. And it was a fight—nerve-wracking, often bitterly discouraging.

From November 1912, when *Poetry* offered Richard Aldington's "Choricos," incidentally mentioning imagism, until well towards the close of 1920, the magazine fought bitterly for the principles of imagism. Between 1912 and 1915 the new movement was the object of much unfavorable comment, comment which broke into a fury of

¹⁰ This portrait of Harriet Monroe is based on statements to Charles Allen by George Dillon, Morton Zabel, Geraldine Udell, Paul Engle, and on Harry Hansen's comments in *Midwest Portraits*, Horace Gregory's "The Unheard of Adventure," *American Scholar*, vi, 195-200 (Spring 1937), and S. Ichiye Hayakawa's "Harriet Monroe as Critic," *Studies in English Literature*, xiv, 1-7 (1934).

¹¹ Statement to Charles Allen by Geraldine Udell, business manager of *Poetry* and a close friend of Harriet Monroe, September 1937.

invective upon the publication of the first *Imagist Anthology* in 1915. William Ellery Leonard's denunciation, which he managed to organize under four headings, is representative of these fumings:

1. The Imagists can't see straight.
2. The Imagists can't feel straight.
3. The Imagists can't think straight.
4. The Imagists can't talk straight.¹²

Today, looking back on the war years, it is difficult to realize how necessary it was to defend the modest and at least 2,500-year-old statements which the imagists propounded.¹³ That literary people shouted in clamorous denunciation against such age-old principles as: "To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not merely the decorative word, to present an image, to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred or indefinite,"¹⁴ can be accounted for only by the fact that the nation's verse had been for twenty-five years in a state of cant and doldrum.

From the imagist manifestoes and from the early imagist verse of Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, John Gould Fletcher, Hilda Doolittle, and William Carlos Williams, we are forced to conclude that imagism represented little that was startling. The imagists simply wished to write a poetry sheared of unessential analysis, rumination, and ornament—to base their verse as firmly as possible on clear, precise images. Often their work was slight, mere exercising in descriptions, descriptions too often divorced from human experience. Imagism was, therefore, chiefly valuable as a reassertion of several poetic first principles that had been for some time neglected. The movement was a healthy emphasis, but left us few noteworthy poems.

Out of the imagist movement grew a more profound imagism. Today, we still find the precise image, but the image is put to a use that transcends the function of a simple description. Recent poets have discovered that the use of a series of rapid, often dissociated, images may suggest a final meaning, a meaning which cannot be directly expressed in an image of its own. The surrealist poets are the obvious practitioners of this new imagism, though we need not search far to find it used consciously and with discrimination by others.

In mentioning this defense of imagism, we cannot neglect the simul-

¹² Quoted by Glenn Hughes, *Imagism and the Imagists*, Palo Alto, Calif., 1931, p. 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

taneous contest which *Poetry*, *The Glebe*, *The Little Review*, and a few less well known magazines, conducted for the *vers libre* exponents. Miss Monroe led the defense, despite the fact that Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review* was more fiery in her advocacy of the poet's right to work outside established forms and traditional metres. *Poetry* was more important than either *The Glebe* or *The Little Review*, however, primarily because Miss Monroe had a greater influence in combating such opinions as that of T. S. Eliot: "*Vers libre* has not even the excuse of a polemic; it is a battle-cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art,"¹⁵ and the less intelligent harangue of *The Dial's* editor against Miss Monroe's defense of free verse. He damned *Poetry* as a "futile little periodical" for printing Sandburg's "Chicago," and went on to say, still referring to Sandburg, "We have always sympathized with Ruskin for the splenetic words about Whistler that were the occasion of the famous suit for libel, and we think that such an effusion as this [Sandburg's] is nothing less than an impudent affront to the poetry-loving public."¹⁶

But after such men as Lindsay and Sandburg had crusaded up and down the land, and *vers libre* had become smart, rather than dangerous, and after the *lo's* and *behold's*, the *thee's* and *thou's* had been routed, and after verse had been stripped of "eloquence, grandiloquence, poetic diction—of all the frills and furbelows which had overdressed, over-ornamented its beauty"¹⁷—after this, there were few persons to deny *Poetry's* accomplishments. Harriet Monroe had conducted a high-spirited, dramatic campaign.

Certainly these first ten years were charged with electricity. Chicago was then a literary center. Those were days when Harry Hansen, Sherwood Anderson, Lindsay, Margaret Anderson, Sandburg, Floyd Dell, Masters, Ben Hecht, and many another gathered at Schlogel's restaurant on Wells Street to discuss *The Little Review*, *Poetry*, new ideas, or technical innovation.¹⁸ Here was a group with a mutually stimulating purpose.

When the fight for free verse and imagism was finally won, most of this literary colony began to drift eastward, first to New York, later and inevitably to Paris¹⁹; almost everybody left except Harriet Monroe. If it is the role of the little magazine to initiate, to act as the advance

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁶ Quoted by Monroe, "The Enemies We Have Made," *Poetry*, iv, 63 (May 1914).

¹⁷ Monroe, "Looking Backward," *Poetry*, xxxiii, 34 (October 1928).

¹⁸ Hansen, *Midwest Portraits*, pp. 3-13.

¹⁹ Albert Parry, *Garrets and Pretenders*, New York, 1933, p. 211.

guard for a new movement, then it may be argued that Poetry had served its function, that the natural cycle of the magazine had been completed when the Chicago group moved East.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see Poetry beginning to share the spotlight with others. Several reputable little magazines, such as *The Fugitive*, began to print good verse, and even the larger quality journals were becoming more friendly towards the new spirit. 232 East Erie Street could no longer monopolize the public imagination, even though the magazine did continue to discover new poets, even though it maintained its leadership in the magazine parade.

Nor was it surprising, since Miss Monroe had a definite preference for simple, direct poetry, that there should come, in time, poets with different views, writers who might be printed with a brave eclecticism, but who could never be taken wholly to heart.²⁰ The newer poets, when they came in the middle twenties, had to find other organs than Poetry for the large part of their work. Harriet Monroe, in many quarters, came gradually to be looked upon not as a rebel, but as a conservative.²¹ Objectivists, proletarians, aesthetes, members of every group, began to pout because they could not monopolize the sixty-odd pages of each number. This ill feeling was only partially allayed by Miss Monroe's turning over complete issues to one or another of such groups. The objectivists put forth their poets and critics in February 1931; the Southern writers were allowed an issue under the editorship of Allen Tate in May 1932; proletarians were given a number in 1936. The experimentalists, particularly, publishing a great percentage of their work in such little magazines as *The Little Review* and *transition*, claimed that Poetry was not cordial enough towards their writings. Such persons as Ezra Pound and Hart Crane grumbled much, loudly denouncing Poetry's skepticism about many of their endeavors.

On the other hand, there were those who raged because the experimentalists were noticed at all. The editor explained why she believed much of their work was valuable, and insisted on the necessity of printing the best of any group—even though it might be tangential to what she considered the main stream.²² She recalled the motive of the magazine as announced in the second issue:

"The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine—may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his

²⁰ Monroe, "Looking Backward," p. 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

ample genius! To this end the editors hope to keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school. They desire to print the best English verse which is being written today, regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art it is written. Nor will the magazine promise to limit its editorial comments to one set of opinions. Without muzzles and braces this is manifestly impossible unless all the critical articles are written by one person."²³

The years following Harriet Monroe's death in 1936 have given us some very good issues of Poetry. Morton Zabel, George Dillon, and Peter De Vries have cordially left the magazine's door open to new talent. We can mention only a few of the new names that have appeared between 1936 and the present. Karl Shapiro appears to be one of the most promising of this younger group that includes Delmore Schwartz, Dylan Thomas, Richard Eberhart, Ruth Lechlitner, C. A. Millsbaugh, Weldon Kees, Paul Goodman, Oscar Williams, Charles Henri Ford, and John Malcolm Brinnin. The publication of the older, more established poets, though not exactly infrequent, is held at a minimum, and those of the older persons who are printed are the ones, such as John Wheelwright, Robert Penn Warren, Louise Bogan, and R. P. Blackmur, who are not as well known as their merit deserves. Poetry is still an advance guard fighter.

To discuss the ideals Poetry fought for—the contest for the poet's right to proper remuneration,²⁴ the defense of *The Masses* and other periodicals when they were victimized by war hysteria,²⁵ the help it extended to many little magazines²⁶—would require more space than there is room for here. Besides, the story has been told in Miss Monroe's *A Poet's Life*. Yet mention of what was perhaps its most difficult and long-standing battle must be made—the perpetual problem of every little magazine—the struggle for finances.

Poetry spent between nine and ten thousand dollars annually during its opening years, always paying for contributions (about \$10 per page), always making a prompt monthly appearance. Later, when it increased its leaves from around thirty to over sixty, its expense account rose to nearly \$13,000 yearly.²⁷ Only a little over a third of this necessary money was contributed by guarantors. The rest had to flow from sub-

²³ *Ibid.*, from November 1912, p. 64.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ix, 161 (December 1916).

²⁶ Poetry has at various times reviewed the contents of little magazines and given them publicity through articles.

²⁷ Statement of Morton Zabel to Charles Allen, September 1937.

scriptions, from a modicum of advertising, and from gifts. Miss Monroe had supposed that there were 2,500 libraries able to afford her magazine, had thought there were several thousand cultured Americans who would willingly spend \$1.50 a year for an alert poetry magazine. She was seriously disappointed. Try as she would, she could never build up a subscription list of much over 3,000 and usually it was smaller; there was a paid circulation of only 1,400 after the first six years. But through grim determination, the budget always balanced at year's end. There were times toward the close of almost every twelve-month when a cloud of discouragement would descend on the two-room office; it was never definitely certain until the last moment that the magazine could be continued.²⁸ Especially during the depression of the thirties, doom appeared imminent. An announcement that the magazine would cease publication brought protests, and a few checks from self-sacrificing friends.²⁹ In 1936 a Carnegie fund donated an emergency grant of \$5,000. This money was made to last until 1940. Again, in 1943, *Poetry* was seriously threatened. This financial problem, always a dread specter, must be constantly fought. The struggle entails bitter sacrifices on the part of the staff. Everything possible to make the magazine self-supporting has been tried³⁰—everything except a lowering of its standards.

Poets of greatness or near greatness are found every year, but never the great audience that Whitman's line on *Poetry*'s cover has always urged. The magazine deserves a great audience, for it carries on today with the same high spirit and intelligence that has made its past record so brilliant.

III

Among the men active in literary protest, a few may be called the patron saints of the modern little magazine movement. They supported with money, encouragement, and contributions dozens of little magazines, and were associated in some capacity or other with nearly every advance guard movement of the past forty years. Of them, Alfred Kreymborg was the first to enter a little magazine in the battle for a new literature. Two years after the establishment of the first influential little magazine of this century, *The Masses*, and one year after Harriet

²⁸ Monroe, *Poetry*, XL, 31 (April 1932).

²⁹ Monroe, *Poetry*, XL, 272 (August 1932).

³⁰ Statement of Geraldine Udell to Charles Allen, September 1937.

Monroe founded *Poetry*, Alfred Kreymborg armed for fight his monthly *Glebe*. The year of *Glebe*'s beginning was 1913, the year of its end 1914. But this latter year saw the birth of *Others*, the second of Kreymborg's experimental magazines of poetry. Later, in 1921, with the help of Harold Loeb, Kreymborg launched the elaborately dressed and mildly exciting *Broom*; later still, in 1927, he helped establish, with Paul Rosenfeld, Lewis Mumford, and Van Wyck Brooks, a little magazine activity called *The American Caravan*, an annual volume of new, and supposedly experimental, literature.

Kreymborg was the fifth child of a poor but valiant New York East Side family. He found time for school, books, music, and chess. As a shy young man, working for a music company, he wrote stories, novels, and poetry. But he was unable to sell or give away most of his work. At the time, as we have shown, the quality magazines were not publishing much poetry, and when they did print verse they did not wish to present an unknown or unorthodox writer. Experimental writing or fresh ideas could not be tolerated, Kreymborg believed. Gradually he saw the need of a magazine devoted to the work of such young writers as himself.³¹

In 1908 Kreymborg thought of publishing an *American Quarterly*. He collected manuscripts, subscriptions, and money towards the ideal before he worked himself into a nervous prostration and was forced to give up his project.³² Not until five years later, when he found himself summering with the painters Samuel Halpert and Man Ray, both of whom lived in a shack near the village of Grantwood, New Jersey, did Kreymborg reopen discussion of the need for a little magazine. Ray worked in a Manhattan print shop where he managed to talk his employer into donating an old press for the prospective magazine. The press obtained, manuscripts and reproductions were hurriedly gathered. Ezra Pound heard of the proposed *Glebe* and immediately forwarded a packet from London which included poems by Pound, James Joyce, Allen Upward, Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford), H.D., Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, Skipworth Cannell, Amy Lowell, and William Carlos Williams.³³

One morning the press arrived, stood waiting to be unloaded from a truck. During the unloading the machinery slipped from its moorings, plunged to the ground, and was damaged beyond repair.³⁴

Undaunted, Kreymborg left for New York to seek financial aid. He

³¹ Alfred Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, New York, 1925, pp. 122-31.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 129-39.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

thought it possible that support for a projected magazine might be gained in Greenwich Village. Aid was quickly found—from Albert and Charles Boni, then proprietors of the Washington Square Bookshop. The Bonis agreed to finance *Glebe*, and Kreymborg was to be sole editor. One suspects, however, that the first issue, which was filled with the work of a young Californian, George Cronyn, was the doing of the Bonis.³⁵

When the Bonis' money had been eagerly accepted, it was understood that Kreymborg was to be unhampered in his editorial inclinations. But the controlling pocketbook gradually usurped power. The Boni brothers favored Europeans; Kreymborg desired the experimental, little known Americans.³⁶ The editor resigned and *Glebe* foundered. The Bonis retired temporarily from publishing. There had been ten issues of the magazine, extending over a period from July 1913 to 1914.

Glebe was one of the first periodicals to sponsor experimental writing, and a great percentage of its contents was imagistic. The magazine was the first to present the imagist, William Carlos Williams. Of course, not *Glebe*, but *Poetry*, was the first to introduce imagism; nor was *Glebe*, with its scant 300 circulation,³⁷ as influential as the Chicago periodical.

In February 1915 a group of young writers gathered one evening at the Greenwich Village apartment of Allan Norton and his wife. Norton was the editor of the brisk, short-lived little magazine, *Rogue*, and was giving a party for some of his contributors: Donald Evans, Wallace Stevens, Carl Van Vechten, Mina Loy, Kreymborg, and Walter Conrad Arensberg. Kreymborg for the first time met Arensberg.³⁸ A few days later the two dined in Arensberg's studio on West 67th Street; dinner was followed by a long walk which lasted until three in the morning. There was inspired talk.³⁹ That two such men as Kreymborg, the romantic experimentalist, and the scholar neoclassicist Arensberg should have so much in common was a little surprising. But the paradox explains itself in their common admiration for Ezra Pound, who in the early 1900's could well provoke any amount of conversation. The two men went to bed exhausted, and four or five hours later awakened to resume their talking. Before the day was finished, a little magazine

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

³⁷ Statement, Alfred Kreymborg to Charles Allen, August 1939.

³⁸ Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, pp. 218-19.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

had been decided upon—to be dedicated to experimental poetry. Kreymborg was to edit, Arensberg to finance.⁴⁰

To work for new artists, artists who wished to write outside of conventional forms—that was the ideal. Imagism for Kreymborg had become conventional; he was ready to experiment with new structures and free verse rhythms, and he knew that there were other new experimenters, such as Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, and Carlos Williams. Others would publish their work in the hope that these relatively unknown poets might become more widely accepted. That was the only motive.⁴¹

Arensberg and Kreymborg had no thought of making money. They believed the magazine might somehow be distributed, but they made no promotion plans. They would simply publish and let the sparks fly where they might; perhaps two or three hundred copies might be disposed of, they thought. For most of the magazine's life 300 was the extent of the circulation, though at times it climbed towards the thousand mark.⁴²

The first issue, in July 1915, was well printed on substantial 7-by-10-inch paper, encased in a simple gold coverpiece. It contained ten poems within the sixteen pages, by Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, Orrick Johns, and several less well known persons.

Others caused a disturbance from the very beginning. No faint praise was offered; there was either loud acclaim or bitter denunciation, mostly the latter. "The little yellow dog," it was called by those newspaper observers who were disturbed by the verse of Mina Loy and Orrick Johns.⁴³

The intimate personal aspect of the magazine is worth a glance. Artists just beginning to be recognized are rarely content to isolate themselves. They must get together, talk it all over, read each other's writings. Kreymborg and his wife, Christine, had retired to Grantwood, New Jersey, after the first issue of the magazine. It was a tedious ride to Grantwood, but every Sunday the *Others* contributors eagerly gathered to talk shop. They would slip in with a sheaf of manuscript in one hand, sometimes a bundle of food in the other. Momentarily the atmosphere would be a little strained.⁴⁴ Kreymborg tells us in his autobiography, *Troubadour*: "Like most every other cultural activity of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

⁴² Statement, Kreymborg to Allen, August 1939.

⁴³ Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, p. 235.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 238-45.

the new soil, the intercourse of these people was a novel experience. They had to approach it warily and grow up to the art of conversation with a painstaking, self-conscious tempo similar to their development as artists. It was not a lack of self-confidence which dictated so shy a contact, but a joyous bewilderment in the discovery that other men and women were working in a field they themselves felt they had chosen in solitude."⁴⁵ The mutual stimulation, the chance to meet the fellows of one's craft, was an invaluable incentive to further accomplishment.

These meetings became more frequent in the fall of 1915 when the Kreymborgs moved back into the city. At any hour of the day or night a poet might come up for a chat. The editorial room was the kitchen, and the icebox was its center.⁴⁶

Among the persons who made the Kreymborg apartment a meeting place were Maxwell Bodenheim, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens. All of them published much of their early work in *Others*, and were, along with Kreymborg, Orrick Johns, and Skipworth Cannell, the magazine's most frequent contributors. Of these seven persons Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens are the most exciting poets. Stevens, endowed with an urbane and quixotic imagination, follows a range from sparkling, witty humor to bland seriousness. He is an impeccable fashioner of melody, color, tone, and pattern, musing whimsically and sometimes wryly, never with passion or torture, about the spectacle of the world, a spectacle which he accepts and bows to with a grave or witty irony of ceremonious elegance.

In those first years before she began writing her acid, almost prosy dissertations, Marianne Moore's work was faster reading than it is today. Yet even as early as 1915 one finds the bizarre image, the juxtaposition of the abstract with the concrete, the wit, irony, and satire, the profusion of rare and esoteric knowledge, and a sharp-cracking cacophony. One must also admire her technical accomplishment; particularly her delicate sense of free verse rhythm, rhythm of such subtle tension that the mind must concentrate carefully to keep afloat and moving with the current.

William Carlos Williams was still pretty much of an imagist in his *Others* days. His driving compulsion was to see the object, to see it with fiery intensity, to see it to the core. To make fierce "contact" with the objective, seeable world became such an ingrained necessity for Wil-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

liams that he finally, in 1920, was driven to launch a little magazine to advertise his vision. That magazine he called *Contact*.

Kreymborg naturally appeared several times. Whimsical, given to charming fantasy, striving for the taut, simplified rhythm, he attained many a grave flippancy in his sanguine, well pruned lyrics.

Orrick Johns wrote several of his verses, most of them lighthearted and simple in context and form, but possessing a freshness of wording that gave them a right to be admitted to the experimental *Others*. Maxwell Bodenheim often herded through the pages of the magazine his luxuriant, baroque images. Both Bodenheim and Johns tried their hands at one-act poetic dramas.

These were the artists who made the periodical important. Kenneth Burke was the only person to publish his first work in *Others*,⁴⁷ but Bodenheim, Johns, Stevens, Williams, and Moore printed most of their early poems in the magazine. None are great artists in the high meaning of the word, though two of them, Moore and Stevens, are among the finest voices that have sung in America during the past fifty years.

When one considers the poets included in *Others*, and the wide variety of their work, he immediately realizes that the *Others* experimentalism ranged over a wide country. The periodical attempted to push beyond the frontiers of imagism, though some of the poems, especially those of Williams, might well be labeled imagistic. One cannot be certain what exactly the magazine was seeking. Kreymborg might suggest that he was looking for new experimentation with word values and rhythms and structures, as opposed to the narrower concentration on the image. More probably, Kreymborg might say that he was simply looking for new experimental writing.

At the end of the first year, the editor was faced with the problem of financing the magazine himself, no easy task. Arensberg, the classicist, and Kreymborg, the romanticist, could not well agree. During the two preceding years, the editor had worked as a letter writer for a New York financier, four hours a day with an hour off for lunch. A forty-dollar-a-week salary made at this work had previously sufficed, but now, with *Others* needing money, forty dollars was very pitiful indeed, and yet there could be no question of discontinuing the magazine.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Burke reports, in a letter to Frederick J. Hoffman, December 28, 1943, that though he did publish his first writing in *Others*, many of his early pieces went to *Sansculotte*, a little magazine published on the Ohio State University campus, in 1917.

⁴⁸ Kreymborg, *Troubadour*, pp. 254-56.

Days of worry—and then the miraculous once again. Alfred Knopf had been watching *Others* with an eager, sympathetic eye. He suddenly proposed that his publishing house bring out a yearly anthology of the magazine's poetry under Kreymborg's editorship. That would help. There were two *Others* anthologies by Knopf, in 1916 and 1917, and one by Nicholas L. Brown in 1918. Almost simultaneously John Marshall, a partner in the Little Bookshop Around the Corner, asked that he be allowed to finance the magazine. Kreymborg readily agreed, and Marshall assumed responsibility for the "material interests" of *Others*.⁴⁹ Those early months of 1916 were indeed "prodigious" days.

The editor could relax only for a moment. He went to Chicago, expecting that the magazine's finances would be well taken care of in New York. But soon after arriving in Chicago he received a letter from Marshall stating that he was resigning as patron of the magazine.⁵⁰ Once again collapse threatened. Until May 1916 the periodical had made monthly appearances; thereafter it was not so regular. There were only three more issues in 1916, two in 1917, one in 1918, and three in 1919. Doubtless *Others* would have died after 1916 had it not been for the zeal of the magazine's poets who managed to scrape together enough money to bring out some of the numbers.

After a time the contributors were forced to do most of the editing, too, for Kreymborg gradually came to believe that the magazine's usefulness had been outlived. He sponsored it only halfheartedly during the last two years and was willing to allow Williams, Saphier, Bodenheimer, Helen Hoyt, Johns, Lola Ridge (who did most of the work), and Kreymborg's second wife, Dorothy, to serve as editors pro tem. or in associate capacities.⁵¹ They apparently decided to revive poetic drama, since many of the magazine's pages were filled with one-act plays by Williams, Johns, Djuna Barnes, Bodenheimer, and Saphier.

Despite Kreymborg's lack of enthusiasm, and a general scarcity of funds, it was difficult to make an end of *Others*. Kreymborg tells the amusing story in his *Troubadour*, of how "toward the tail-end when Krimmie [Kreymborg] was positive the venture had outlived its usefulness, Lola [Ridge] managed to keep it going a while. Williams, who had soured on the movement to a degree that caused him to pounce on an issue he edited with a grieving, ranting, coroner's inquest he called *Belly Music*, assured his readers, '*Others* is dead,' and promised to bury it with the present issue. The post-mortem on the part of Lola, with her happy mania for appearing among moribund things and re-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-31.

viving them, puzzled the subscribers. Here was still another number on top of one they had been asked to accept as an obituary. How many times was the thing to die and bob up again?"⁵²

But even after the magazine once and for all ceased publication, its spirit continued. The *Others* group had been brought together and it would not disperse. The writers insisted on gathering in Lola Ridge's apartment to read their new work to each other. It was during one of these meetings that Scofield Thayer, who had recently become co-publisher and co-editor of *The Dial*, met many of the people whose work he was soon to begin printing. *The Dial's* poetic tone was really a continuation of the *Others* spirit, even before Marianne Moore became *The Dial* editor in 1925.⁵³

Glebe and *Others* were two of the first magazines to throw themselves deliberately and with vigor into the fight for experimental poetry. Neither magazine paid for contributions, neither was widely circulated, yet both attracted favorable attention in the right places. To gain a selected but intelligent hearing for their all but unknown contributors was the purpose each magazine set out to accomplish. The significance of *Glebe* and *Others* is no greater or less than the estimate that one places upon the desirability of securing the reputations of such poets as Williams, Moore, and Stevens.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 332.