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HISTORY OF POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE AND ITS
CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN POETRY

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Science

By

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KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to present a history of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse and to show its contribution to modern poetry.

The volumes of the magazine, the writings of the founder, Harriet Monroe, and criticisms from contemporary literary critics were read and used as sources for the history of Poetry and its contribution.

From the study it was found that the poets of the last two decades of the nineteenth century had followed too closely the patterns used by the past generations to present the new life which was at hand. As a consequence poetry had reached a low ebb and was being little read by the public. At the turn of the century a new group of poets emerged who were aware of this new life and were ready to voice its realities, but they lacked an organ through which to be heard.

In 1912 that organ was provided through the efforts of Harriet Monroe in her founding of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. To establish the magazine required the soliciting of endowments to provide a financial basis, securing of works of known and unknown poets, and selecting the best poems to present to the public.

The "open door" was found to be the policy of Poetry throughout its twenty-nine years of existence. No school

or "ism" has been given preference. Whatever its subject, its origin, its form, a poem to be printed had to reveal fresh and genuine beauty, a fresh outlook, and a fresh personality. Through Poetry such movements as imagism, free verse, and realism were furthered.

Not only has Poetry lent encouragement to poets and new techniques and created an audience for poets, but it has given many of the outstanding modern song writers their first hearing.

CHAPTER I

THE STATUS OF POETRY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In the field of poetry it is a convention to describe the closing decades of the nineteenth century as a "moment of pause." An apparent decline in the quantity and quality of poetry was evident.¹ Most of the poets of the national period, which began in the 1840's, were still alive, but their best work had been done. The enthusiasm for the New England poets, for Poe, and for Whitman had spent its force. The inner impulses of the poets appeared to be at low ebb, for little verse of distinction was produced. As a result the period was termed ^{one of} the most unpoetic in American literary history.²

Poetry was pushed aside as the means of expression for man's thoughts. The spirit of the age was voiced more and more by prose, especially in the novel and short story, aided by the rise of journalism. America was showered with periodical pamphlets, and this type of reading seemed to be the choice of the public.³ Writers claimed that poetry could not be sold, for America preferred the newspaper.

¹Fred Lewis Pattee, The New American Literature (New York, 1930), p. 3.

²Norman Foerster, American Prose and Poetry (Boston, 1925), p. 1040.

³Pattee, The New American Literature, pp. 194-195.

The language of journalism, according to the public's viewpoint, presented in a better way the picture of life as it existed.⁴

American poetry had long been overspread with the shadows of English form and thought. The stage of being little more than an echoing and reechoing of earlier voices had been reached. Poetry showed the effect of too much reliance upon models. Poets had been content to limit their utterances to the emotions which were conventionally associated with the experiences of love, death, and nature, and the great classical romantic stories.⁵ For the most part, they wrote of remote emotions and argued in meter about established ideas. The romantic tradition had gone to seed. The adventurous, enterprising, and expansive newness in America was not being expressed.⁶ There were, indeed, poets who had gained a reputation, but to the public they were survivors of more energetic days. They helped little in the progress of the nation, and as a consequence their poems were soon forgotten.⁷ Elizabeth Drew says in her book, Directions in Modern Poetry,

⁴Marguerite Wilkinson, New Voices (New York, 1921), p. 2.

⁵Fred B. Millet, Contemporary American Authors (New York, 1940), pp. 128-129.

⁶Carl Van Doren and Mark Van Doren, American and British Literature Since 1890 (New York, 1939), p. 3.

⁷Ibid.

....there was an absence of fresh vision, an unresponsiveness to contemporary pressure, which held poetic expression at a pastime level, pleasant, harmless, and unimportant.⁸

Shortly after the turn of the century and to some extent before, there came a great change within the boundaries of poetry. A spirit of restlessness and adventure appeared in the realms of poetry, influenced by the new and fearless realism of the times. All phases of life seemed keyed to the industrial note.⁹ Poets soon became awakened by the strong democratic sense of America, and a new school of poets apparently arrived spontaneously overnight. They were keenly aware of the situation and their responsibility in the setting of their time. They saw an energetic life about them and wanted to express it.¹⁰ The tone of their poetic utterances was much in contrast to that of the poets of America for more than a generation. To them America was no longer a place of dreaming but one of actuality.¹¹

American society had been transformed from an agricultural to an industrial order by the results of the Industrial Revolution. A new passion for social justice and

⁸Nora B. Cunningham, "What the Modern Poets Are Saying and Seeking," Kansas City Star, June 29, 1940.

⁹Fred Lewis Pattee, Century Readings in American Literature (New York, 1932), XXXIV, p. 1092.

¹⁰Millet, op. cit., p. 129.

¹¹Van Doren and Van Doren, op. cit., p. 14.

an air of unrest waited to be expressed.¹² The newer poets were not willing to accept the outworn themes and English examples for the expressions which were to herald new feelings and new ideals.¹³ They chose to emancipate sentimentalism and dreaming. Their desire was to voice America as she lived and felt.¹⁴

Poetry was to be no longer a pattern of the past. It challenged opinions; it tried new forms and methods; it drew near to the facts of life instead of trying to escape from them into a world of fancy.¹⁵ Bliss Carman and Richard Hovey in their Songs from Vagabondia expressed adventures in action and held conventions in abeyance. Stephen Crane with his "War is Kind" voiced his hatred of sentiment. He gave his naturalistic vision of life in free verse. In William Vaughn Moody's poems there is an independent criticism of life and a zest for experience.¹⁶

These poets and their followers had seen men building cities as high as mountains; they had witnessed steam-driven ships plow the sea; they had heard men roar through air on wings faster than wind. They had found heroes on the farms, in the lumber mills, in mines, and in the sweat-shops. They knew the experiences of men working without

¹²Millet, op. cit., p. 129.

¹³Pattee, Century Readings in American Literature, p. 963.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1092.

¹⁵van Doren and Van Doren, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁶Foerster, op. cit., pp. 1049-1050.

joy and without hope. They wanted to make songs of these new voyagers, these builders of a nation, and the experiences and sacrifices which were a part of the life of men and women in the new era of American history. These new singers were inquisitive of life and wanted to speak the truth of their findings.¹⁷

The flaccid poetizing of previous decades had culminated, and America was again to witness a poetic revival. The spirit of Whitman, who had shocked the world in his day by discarding patterns and acting upon his own principles, seemed to be the guiding star.¹⁸

The effect of the machine age was noticeable in the utterances of the new poets. They were not frightened or disgusted with their times; they were fascinated. Apparent delight came from picturing the ugly and hopeless areas of life.¹⁹ They talked of trains, harbors, prairies, brick-yards, and the materials of every day life. Clear-cut pictures of men and women, of nature and significant human interests, were their subjects. There was little story-telling but intense interpretations.²⁰ The use of such terms as "heavenly blue," "golden hope," and "girlish grace"

¹⁷Joseph Auslander, The Winged Horse (Garden City, New York, 1927), pp. 389-390.

¹⁸Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, The New Poetry (New York, 1939), pp. 29-40.

¹⁹Foerster, op. cit., p. 1054.

²⁰John Calvin Metcalf, American Literature (Richmond, Virginia, 1925), p. 538.

was disappearing. The poetry reflected insight, power, and frankness.²¹

Among the poets there arose a divergence of views and practices. The rebels wanted to cast aside the diction, the allusions, moralizing, and examples of the past and to create a new vocabulary and new poetic figures. Their rallying cry was "Away with the outworn. Give us freedom from these bonds." To the conservatives a poetic word or phrase brought forth the largest number of pleasurable or painful images.²²

Though a robust and diversified group of poets sprang up, they lacked any considerable audience. They were powerless, for their songs were unheard.²³ The sensational newspaper appealed to the uneducated, and Whitman was still being scrutinized by the "cultured." Poetry was used for little more than a filler in magazines. The spaces in which it was printed could easily be avoided by the reader who had no taste for it. Magazines were bought for stories, pictures, and journalism, not for verses.²⁴ Nevertheless

²¹Foerster, op. cit., p. 1055.

²²Millet, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

²³Van Doren and Van Doren, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁴Harriet Monroe, "The Motive of the Magazine," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I (October, 1912), 26.

some books of verse were published and the cause was not lost.²⁵

That cause was furthered in 1912 by the founding of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse in Chicago by Harriet Monroe. Numerous other magazines in other parts of the country followed. They gave a hearing to poets who might otherwise have been neglected; they stimulated critical discussions; and they helped to fix public attention upon poetry as an art.²⁶

The founding of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse ushered in a new era in verse. The magazine opened its pages freely to poets that were known and unknown and encouraged whatever bore the stamp of novel power. It was to be the organ of poets and poetry. During the two decades that followed Poetry's initial issue, the verse which makes up contemporary verse anthologies was written.²⁷

The existence of Poetry in itself is unusual. It has been issued regularly ever since it was launched, but that is the least fraction of its claim to consideration. It has seen artistic history made and helped make it. It has lent encouragement to a wealth of new expression that had been stifled for years. It has made America poetry conscious.²⁸

²⁵Van Doren and Van Doren, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷"Harriet Monroe," The Publishers' Weekly, CXXX (October 3, 1936), 1421.

²⁸"Poetry and Miss Monroe," The Saturday Review of Literature, IX (July 30, 1932), 13.

The index of Poetry reads like a Who's Who in American Poetry. One need only to look through the back issues of the magazine, especially the earlier volumes, to find the names of well-known poets whose first hearing was in Poetry.²⁹ It is no exaggeration to say that Harriet Monroe and her magazine changed the attitude of America toward poets and poetry. Whether or not Poetry continues publication, it has performed a great service, for it has broken down the conventions which were barriers to the expression of a new life and opened the eyes of an indifferent public.³⁰

²⁹Eda Lou Walton, "Harriet Monroe's Seventy Years," The Nation, CXLVI (March 12, 1938), 305.

³⁰"American Poets Lose Their Patron," Christian Century, LIII (October 7, 1936), 1308.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDING OF POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

"To have great poets there must be great audiences, too," wrote Walt Whitman. Using this as her watchword twenty-nine years ago, Harriet Monroe braved the struggle of establishing a voice for poets and their utterances. As a reward for her effort, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse survived beyond the first hour and has extended its influence into the second generation.¹

This guiding genius of Poetry, Harriet Monroe, was born in the city of Chicago in 1860, daughter of pioneer stock.² She saw the city grow from a frontier town, whose charter was less than thirty years old, to a world metropolis. She was in close contact with the social and artistic history of America during the years of its richest development.³

Miss Monroe's childhood was passed on the outskirts of Chicago, studying at the public grammar school. At the age of seventeen her parents sent her to the famous

¹Mary N. S. Whitely, "Shall We Let It Die," Saturday Review of Literature, IX (July 30, 1932), 19.

²Dilly Tante, Living Authors (New York, 1931), pp. 274-275.

³Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Epilogue," in Harriet Monroe's A Poet's Life (New York, 1938), pp. 472-473.

old Academy of Visitation at Georgetown, D. C.⁴ It is to this old Academy of Visitation that Harriet Monroe gave credit for the development of her poetic talent and interest, as well as something she felt the need of-- a questing freedom of mind and spirit. Verse writing was a regular exercise in the convent's upper English classes, as necessary an accomplishment for a lady as playing the piano, speaking French, or painting.⁵ A quality which Miss Monroe had as an editor might have originated at this convent--an eagerness for new and beautiful writing and a hatred for restrictions and deadening conventions. The instructors at the Academy encouraged free expression.⁶

In 1891, Miss Monroe was awarded the honor of writing a poem for the Dedication of Buildings of the Chicago Exposition. "The Columbian Ode" was her response. On the appointed day, October 21, 1892, celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of the Discovery of America, "The Columbian Ode" was partly read and partly sung to an audience of 120,000 persons.⁷ With the success of this ode, Miss Monroe determined upon a definite career of verse.⁸

⁴Tante, loc. cit.

⁵Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life (New York, 1938), pp. 49-50.

⁶Harry Hansen, Midwest Portraits (New York, 1925), pp. 255-261.

⁷Tante, loc. cit.

⁸Editorial, Kansas City Star, September 26, 1936.

For twenty years, holding poetry as her cardinal interest, Harriet Monroe sustained a livelihood by lectures and newspaper work. For a time she worked in New York as a correspondent for the Chicago Tribune.⁹ While going about her duty of reporting plays, pictures, and music, she met many new acquaintances in the literary and artistic world. During her stay in New York, she published Letters On Music, Art, and Drama, and by private subscription published her first book, Valeria and Other Poems. Returning to Chicago, she became an art critic on the Tribune staff, a position she held until 1913.¹⁰

As time passed, Miss Monroe became more and more convinced that in the great democracy of her day no interest was too small to have an organ for voicing. Every sport, every little industry, and every scientific step had its own place and advocate that it might find friends.¹¹ Painting, sculpture, and music were housed in palaces in the large cities of the world, and every week or two a new periodical was born to speak for one or the other of them. Poetry was left to itself and was blamed for its inefficiency.¹²

⁹"Harriet Monroe," Publishers' Weekly, CXXX (October 3, 1936), 1421.

¹⁰Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 89-91.

¹¹Editorial, "The Motive of the Magazine," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I, No. 1 (October, 1917), 34.

¹²Ibid.

It was in 1911 at the American Legation in Peking that Miss Monroe could no longer restrain her ambition to do something for poetry. In China she realized that poetry was a highly recognized art but that in the United States it was unappreciated.¹³ She became more and more indignant over the slight attention and meager compensation granted to poets. She became determined to do something in behalf of poetry. After several fiery talks with friends over the poetry situation, she definitely decided that poets needed a magazine, an organ of their own.¹⁴

But how could she publish a magazine of verse? It would take money to forward such a project. Miss Monroe felt that any person of means would scoff at such an idea.¹⁵ Action was the password for which she most cared; so summoning her courage, she presented her scheme to Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, a novelist, lover of arts, man of culture, wealth, and social prominence. He agreed that poetry was in a desperate state and that a small monthly magazine of poems, reviews, and editorials was an excellent idea.¹⁶

How should it be supported? After much consideration it was agreed that if it were possible to get one hundred

¹³Tante, loc. cit.

¹⁴Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 242.

¹⁵Editorial, "These Five Years," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XI, No. 1 (October, 1917), 34.

¹⁶Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 243.

persons in Chicago to subscribe fifty dollars a year for five years to try the hazardous experiment, the project could be carried out. Five thousand dollars a year would pay the printing and the office expenses, and the money from the subscriptions would be used to pay the poets for their contributions. A system of annual prizes was to be organized, also. To do all this, Miss Monroe had to go to offices in person and make a plea for funds. This she gladly did.¹⁷

The endowment list was headed by Mr. Taylor, and thus the campaign began. Most of Miss Monroe's spare time from September to June, 1912, was devoted to the task of seeking guarantors. She never resented refusals from people she could not persuade to help, for she felt they had a right to their interests as well as she.¹⁸ As she went about her search, she found much genuine interest lying dormant. Many interesting episodes of conversation came with her interviews, and often inspiring ideas were suggested; for example, Gilbert Porter, a prominent lawyer, remarked, "Of course put me down. I don't know of any better way to pay my debt to Shelley."¹⁹

Among the earliest names were many personal friends of Miss Monroe: Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, widow of the

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 245-246.

¹⁹Edward Alden Jewell, "Would Subsidize Poets," New York Tribune, April 2, 1916.

poet; Charles L. Hutchinson, President of the Chicago Art Institute; Charles Deering of the Harvester Company; Howard Shaw, a distinguished architect; and H. H. Kohlstaat, owner and editor of the Herald. Of course, the first thirty names were the easiest to obtain, but the campaign gathered prestige and momentum as it progressed.²⁰ When seventy names had been added to the list, the project had plausibility, and Miss Monroe drew up a circular, headed by the title Poetry, which presented facts and arguments for the magazine.²¹ The circular brought a great many avowed lovers of poetry and business men with cultural inclinations to subscribe to the fund.²² Such influential citizens as Charles Dawes, an American financier; E. P. Ripley of the Santa Fe Railroad; Frederick Sargent, builder of power plants; Samuel Insull, autocrat of utilities; and Cyrus McCormick of the great Harvester Company signed up with encouraging remarks.²³

Many times the venture seemed futile, and the discouragements were numerous. There can be no estimate of how much heroism it took, how much courage had to be summoned, how much enthusiasm had to be aroused to provide

²⁰ Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 245-246.

²¹ Ibid., p. 248.

²² Jewell, loc. cit.

²³ Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 246.

publication for the unheard voices of poetry.²⁴ By early June the task was completed. Miss Monroe had accomplished a piece of strategic salesmanship. There were more than one hundred pledges, and a few outright donations had been made.²⁵

When the guarantors' list was sufficient, then came the thought of soliciting poets. A feeling of bewilderment again prevailed. Would the magazine receive enough poems of value to fill a twenty-four page sheaf? Miss Monroe's hopes were to publish the best works being written in English verse.²⁶

In order to feel qualified to judge poetry of merit, Miss Monroe spent hours reading and studying poetry, especially that of the past five years, and its criticism. She felt that not only did the public need stimulation, but the poets also needed to be uprooted from their complacency of doing the same thing in the same old academic way.²⁷ Miss Monroe's abilities were by no means ordinary, and she was prepared to meet any emergency except to relinquish the prospect of giving the poet an audience. She had undoubted powers of selection.²⁸

²⁴Editorial, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, L, No. 1 (April, 1937), 30-33.

²⁵Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 251-252.

²⁶Ibid., p. 251.

²⁷Ibid., p. 283.

²⁸Horace Gregory, "The Unheard of Adventure," The American Scholar, VI, No. 2 (Spring, 1937), 195.

To the poets both in England and America whom she had found interesting, she sent a "poets' circular" explaining the financial basis on which the magazine was to be founded and a manifesto stating the aims of Poetry from the poet's standpoint. The magazine offered to the poet several opportunities. First, it gave a chance to the poet to be heard against a poetic background, without the limitations imposed by popular magazines. There was the hope of developing a public primarily interested in poetry as an art. Secondly, it was the hope of the magazine to print poems of greater length and of more intimate and serious character than other magazines could afford to use. Thirdly, besides prizes for the best poetry, there was to be payment to contributors--the rate of payment to depend on the subscription list.²⁹ Miss Monroe believed that if a poem was worth publishing, it deserved the right to earn its way and to be paid for.³⁰

The poets were assured of the "open door policy" of the magazine. No single class or school would be given preference, for it was the desire of the magazine to print the best English verse being written, regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art. One set of editorial opinions only could not exist.³¹ It was to be understood

²⁹ Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 251-252.

³⁰ Gregory, loc. cit.

³¹ Editorial, "The Open Door," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I, No. 2 (November, 1912), 93.

that Poetry did not want rehashed classics, but it did want new poetry.³²

Answers expressing sympathetic interest and inclosing or promising poems came from many poets. Madison Cawein who was then near the head of the American procession, wrote "This country has long been in crying need of such a magazine;" Amy Lowell called the proposed magazine "a most excellent undertaking;" Floyd Dell termed the magazine "an exciting event."³³ The most dynamic and stimulating correspondent was Ezra Pound, an American poet recognized abroad but not at home.³⁴ He had a great passion for poetry, and he offered his services as a European correspondent without pay. Through him Miss Monroe was able to get some poems of the finest European poets. Through her own efforts and that of her colleagues, she got the work of all that group of poets who burst on America in the second decade of the twentieth century.³⁵

Correspondence with poets was not all the excitement of the summer of 1912. An advisory staff and a magazine staff had to be chosen. Henry B. Fuller, a novelist, Edith Wyatt, poet and novelist, and Mr. Chatfield-Taylor

³²Editorial, "A Plea for the New Art," The Nation, XCVI (May 1, 1913), 441.

³³Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 253-254.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 258-259.

³⁵Mary M. Colum, "The Stuffy Side of Experience," The Forum, XCIX (May, 1938), 280.

the first adviser, consented to serve as an advisory committee.³⁶ As her editorial staff Miss Monroe had the skill to pick young associates with whom she argued and to whom she listened. Alice Corbin Henderson, a fine poet and intellectual critic, joined the staff as associate editor.³⁷

Plans were laid to present the first issue of Poetry in November or December. Some weeks before installation into an office, there arose a scare in the form of a circular of a prospective Boston magazine which threatened to use the title, "Poetry." This magazine was to appear in October. There was only one thing to do. Poetry: A Magazine of Verse had to ante-date the Boston magazine. With the aid of friends and long nights of labor, Miss Monroe and her staff chose type and paper, designed the cover, proof read and paged the proof, and succeeded in printing and putting out Number 1 of Volume I, the October issue of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse before the Bostonians began their magazine, which later appeared under the title Poetry Journal.³⁸

The new magazine, Poetry, met an enthusiastic welcome. The first issue gave hints of new forces at work; the editorials were challenging to both poets and public. Throughout the season of 1912-13 the first issues

³⁶ Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 283.

³⁷ Mildred Boie, "A Wider Audience for Poetry," North American Review, CCXLV, No. 2 (Summer, 1938), 408.

³⁸ Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 284-286.

reverberated far and wide. When the first annual report was sent to the guarantors, Miss Monroe was able to pass on encouraging correspondence and remarks from far and near.³⁹ The flame had begun to spread and the dream to be a servant of poetry was fulfilled for "the godmother of poets," Harriet Monroe.⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., pp. 292-311.

⁴⁰W. C. Williams, "Harriet Monroe," New Republic, CXLIV (April 27, 1938), 375-376.

CHAPTER III

POETRY'S TWENTY-NINE YEARS

"With malice toward none, with charity for all" was the motto Harriet Monroe kept in mind as she guided Poetry: A Magazine of Verse through its years of service. No matter what school, "ism," group, or individual submitted poetry, this motto was applicable.¹ The editor's words in the first issue voice best her aim:

The test, limited by ever-fallible human judgment, is to be quality alone, all forms whether narrative, dramatic, or lyric will be acceptable. We hope to offer to our subscribers a place of refuge; a green isle in the sea where Beauty may plant her gardens, and Truth, austere revealer of joy and sorrow, of hidden delights and despair, may follow her brave quest unafraid.²

The objectives of the magazine from the first were to enlarge the bounds of poetry, to give invention and originality emphasis, and to be a medium for the voice which presents truthful pictures of human life.³ Miss Monroe appreciated traditional verse, but she was ready

¹Whitely, op. cit.

²Harriet Monroe, "The Motive of the Magazine," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I (October, 1912), 28.

³Robert Morris Lovett, "Harriet Monroe," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, LII (April, 1938), 30-33.

to accept experiments.

The first expression of a new school at work appeared with the first issue of Poetry. The poem, "To Whistler," by Ezra Pound printed in the October issue gave a hint of the new force at work, and with the printing of Richard Aldington's "Choricos" in November, Imagism was born.⁴ This new school was a source of contention from the first. The conservatives rose up in arms at the metrics and material used by the new school.⁵

Verse written by the imagists was composed chiefly in vers libre. They demanded absolute choice of subject matter, and they endeavored to express their ideas through clear, precise images.⁶ Ezra Pound, leader and trainer of the new group, stated the principles of the imagistic creed in March, 1913, issue of Poetry. The aim of the imagists was to use the language of common speech and to employ the exact word. Each word was to reveal something. There was not to be a retelling in mediocre verse what had already been said in prose. No ornament was to be used unless it was a good ornament. New rhythms were to be created from new moods. Images were to be presented, not vague generalities.⁷ Pound's belief concerning poetic

⁴Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 289-292.

⁵Ibid., p. 296.

⁶Harriet Monroe, Poets and Their Art (New York, 1932), pp. 320-321.

⁷Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I (March, 1913) 200-201.

technique and style is expressed in the following excerpt from a letter written to Miss Monroe:

Every literaryism, every book word, fritters away a scrap of the reader's patience, a scrap of his sense of your sincerity. When one really feels and thinks, one stammers with simple speech. It is only in the flurry, the shallow frothy excitement of writing, or the inebriety of a metre, that one falls into the easy, easy--oh, how easy!--speech of books and poems that one has read.⁸

Within a year after Imagism was introduced, every literary editor was arguing for or against the new ideas. When Hilda Doolittle, known as "H. D. Imagiste," appeared in the fourth number of Poetry she startled the conservatives into a rebellion or, as in the case of Amy Lowell, to a new awakening. Other imagists kept coming during the first year and a half of Poetry's life.⁹ A lively battle was carried on by the magazine staff defending these new voices, for columnists, editorial writers, and poets all became enraged.¹⁰ It is hard to realize how savage was the attack on Poetry. It was mocked in every way. Pieces from the Congressional Record were chopped up in bits and printed as imagist poems. Poems were printed backward, even upside down in mockery.¹¹ Though the magazine was

⁸ Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 267-268.

⁹ Ibid., p. 296.

¹⁰ Eda Lou Walton, "Harriet Monroe's Seventy Years," The Nation, CXLVI (March 12, 1938), 305.

¹¹ Eunice Tietjens, The World at My Shoulder (New York, 1938), p. 32.

attacked from every side, the editor made sane replies. She lectured, she scolded, yet she defended the new motive.¹² Miss Monroe felt that every newspaper comment and criticism helped to do the task that she wanted done, to awaken the public to the fact that poetry was not a dead art but a living one.¹³ In the end of the battle for Imagism, she won out. The imagistic movement flourished and had its day. It blazed the way for a myriad of young poets; it cleared poetry of a musty artificiality and shallow sentiment; and it legitimized free verse. If the imagistic fashion has passed, it is because the imagists were accepted, not excluded.¹⁴

No sooner had the storm of protest against Imagism subsided than Poetry found itself confronted by a new wave of criticism. This agitation arose when Poetry printed selections from Carl Sandburg's Chicago Poems. The critics did not like his slangy diction and disuse of rhyme and metrics, for the poems of Sandburg were written in free verse.¹⁵

Free verse is so-called because it is free of rhyme, free of regular meter, and free of the usual limitations of stanza form.¹⁶ It gives to the poet a variety of

¹²Walton, loc. cit.

¹³Harriet Monroe, "Give Him Room," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, II (May, 1915), 83.

¹⁴Tietjens, The World at My Shoulder, pp. 32-33.

¹⁵Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 311-314.

¹⁶Louis Untermeyer, Doorways to Poetry (New York, 1938), pp. 416-420.

rhythmical effects. The movement in free verse is based upon broad and irregular rather than on regular patterns. Such a verse scheme allows the poet greater latitude in creating subtle effects. Though definite meter is not used in writing free verse, other devices of poetry, like assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and balance are used.¹⁷ In Sandburg's poem, "Lost," is found a good illustration of free verse:

Desolate and lone
 All night long on the lake
 Where fog trails and mist creeps
 The whistle of a boat
 Calls and cries unendingly.
 Like some lost child
 In tears and trouble
 Hunting the harbor's breast
 And the harbor's eyes.¹⁸

Free verse had many enemies and many defenders. Its defenders insisted that in ridding verse of narrow boundaries the lines became more like actual speech; its critics maintained that in freeing it of boundaries, it freed itself of beauty. The latter termed it "shredded prose."¹⁹ They claimed that free verse rejected poetry's most powerful asset: its strong and rhythmical pull. The

¹⁷Mason Long, Poetry and Its Forms (New York, 1938), p. 288.

¹⁸Carl Sandburg, "Lost," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, III (March, 1914), 195.

¹⁹Untermeyer, Doorways to Poetry, pp. 416-420.

defenders replied that free verse made up for the lack of rhythm by use of balance such as is found in poetic passages of the Bible.

The sun shall be no more thy light by day . 20
Neither shall the moon give light unto thee.

It would be impossible to name all the poets since 1900 who have used free verse with distinction. Sandburg has used it entirely in his writing. Edgar Lee Masters after reading Sandburg turned to free verse in his Spoon River Anthology. Maxwell Bodenheim did his best work in it. It was invoked by Wallace Stevens for his plays and lyrics.²¹

The jeers against Poetry and free verse were louder than ever when Sandburg was awarded the Levinson prize of \$200 in 1914 for one of the Chicago Poems beginning

Hog Butcher of the World
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat--

"From pork to poetry" was one of the satirical remarks made.²² The Dial, a literary weekly, called Poetry futile for the award decision. Through all the noise, it became evident that a new poet had arrived.²³

²⁰Ibid., p. 418.

²¹Monroe, Poets and Their Art, p. 322.

²²Dorothy Emerson, "Poetry: A Magazine of Verse," Scholastic, XXXIII (January 21, 1939), 27E.

²³Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 312.

In spite of all the consternation and arguments that Poetry had in its first years, Miss Monroe felt that some achievement could be seen. One event was a triumph in the field of poetry. When William Butler Yeats came to Chicago in 1914, Poetry honored Mr. Yeats at a banquet. No doubt to this Irish poet it was merely one of those many social functions, but for Poetry it was an occasion of joyous reward. The extravagant hopes of the magazine were being fulfilled when the public would gather to honor and to listen to a poet.²⁴

Something worse than criticism and prejudice made the struggle hard for Poetry in its next four years. The war clouds had broken over Europe. European poets were thinking in terms of war. Their songs were inciting men to valor. In America war was submerging all other interests.²⁵ Even though Poetry disapproved of war, it sponsored a prize of one hundred dollars for the best poem on war or peace. The response was immediate and imposing. Seven hundred and thirty-eight poems were submitted. There were in this assemblage widely varying ideas. The predominant theme which seemed to be expressed was that war was not the means by which to justify the ways of man to God, nor

²⁴Ibid., pp. 332-359.

²⁵Ibid., p. 340.

of man to man.²⁶ Louise Driscoll was awarded the prize for her poem, "The Metal Checks," from which the following fragment is taken:

That was a man a month ago;
 He could see, and feel and know.
 Then, into his throat there sped
 A bit of lead.
 Blood was salt in his mouth; he fell
 And lay amid the battle wreck
 Nothing was left but this metal check
 And a wife and a child, perhaps.²⁷

Other poems in the war issue of November, 1914, were "If War Is Right" by Parke Farley, "The Hero" by John McCarthy, "The Bombardment" by Amy Lowell, and the "Chant of the Shroud Maker" by Marion Ramie.

Throughout the issues of 1915 to 1918 are found war poems. The editorials which Miss Monroe wrote encouraged the poets to defeat war with their art. In the July, 1917, issue of Poetry, she urges the poets not to be slow in speaking.

The poet who waits to mature his thoughts may prove as impotent as the laggard in battle. He should take a gambler's chance of immortality to-day--to-morrow may be too late.²⁸

Seldom an issue went to press without an "In Memoriam" for some poet whose life had been lost in the strife.

²⁶ Monroe, A Poet's Life, pp. 342-343.

²⁷ Louise Driscoll, "The Metal Checks," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, V (November, 1914), 51.

²⁸ Harriet Monroe, "Will Art Happen," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, X (July, 1917), 203.

When the United States became entangled in the conflict of 1917, the poets endeavored to express the fever in men's blood. The first poems were not so good, for the realities of war were too stupendous for poets or men who had not experienced the brutality of war to realize. As the strife became greater, the utterances were better expressed.²⁹ Rudolph Altrocchi wrote in his "Summons to Youth:"

Exultant youths who would bewail or vaunt,
The odds of love, no longer waste your breath;
A greater feat now summons you than love,
Or life itself--it's war, and war is death.³⁰

The call to courage was followed by the call to battle. Edgar Lee Masters expressed the powerful resonant summons in his "Draw the Sword, O Republic."

By the power that drives the soul to Freedom,
And by the power that makes us love our fellows,
And by the power that comforts us in Death,--
Dying for great races to come--
Draw the sword, O Republic!
Draw the Sword!³¹

As the war went on and on until it covered Europe with carnage, it seemed to Miss Monroe that it was almost

²⁹Marguerite Wilkinson, New Voices (New York, 1919), p. 251.

³⁰Rudolph Altrocchi, "Summons to Youth," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, X (July, 1917), 191.

³¹Edgar Lee Masters, "Draw the Sword, O Republic," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, IX (January, 1917), 202.

useless to continue the private warfare for poets. Nevertheless, she stuck to her job, encouraging poets to write utterances to uphold the war-worn spirit of man.³² To Miss Monroe the poet's place in the world was greater than ever, as she said in "The War and the Artist:"

Never was the artist more necessary than now-- his freedom of spirit, his self-assertion, his creative fire--to hold up his little torch between the old and new....Poets are needed now to make an end of war by removing its vail of glamor.³³

The realism which had been found in poetry since the so-called "poetic revival" of 1912 rose to a greater height during the war and after the war. Realists who came to the front after 1912 chose as proper themes for poetry the common, the familiar, and the everyday life. They spoke of life as lived by ordinary people.³⁴ These realists were fascinated to find in life virility and sincerity, even when it was coarse and harsh. No subject was unfit for poetry if the subject was considered in poetic style.³⁵ The poets who wrote were keenly aware of the currents of the age--scientific knowledge, psychological methods, and social problems. They did not hesitate to

³²Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 354.

³³Harriet Monroe, "The War and the Artist," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XI (March, 1918), 321.

³⁴Halford E. Luccock, Contemporary American Literature (Chicago, 1934), p. 117.

³⁵Rosa M. R. Mikels and Grace Shoup, Poetry of Today (New York, 1927), pp. 9-10.

probe into emotions and mental conditions. Each poet had his own individual interpretation. To Edwin Arlington Robinson, realism meant a deep analysis of character. Edgar Lee Masters gave his interpretation in laying bare the unhappiness of a small town. Vachael Lindsey presented realism by catching the rhythms of the day in his verses. The strength of a great city was sung by Carl Sandburg.³⁶ An example of realism is found in these lines from "Chicago."

Come and show me another with lifted head
singing so proud to be alive and coarse and
strong and cunning.³⁷

In the writing of all these poets there was an absence of sentiment and optimism.³⁸

With the war came a new theme, more tragic than any before, the agony and havoc of a disrupted world. The pictures of pain and horror were too vivid in men's minds to use flowery terms to express them.³⁹ This war was more grim and terrible than any before. It destroyed the dull sense of security and startled the world out of pleasant thoughts to face a scene of tragedy. The poet who truly represented the age sang a song of war different from the

³⁶A. Irving Schweikert, and others, Adventures in American Literature, (New York, 1937), p. 1172.

³⁷Carl Sandburg, "Chicago," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, V (March, 1914), 191.

³⁸Lucecock, loc. cit.

³⁹Morton Dauwen Zabel, "The Last Fifteen Years: 1922-1936," in Harriet Monroe's A Poet's Life, pp. 429-430.

past. He expressed that bitter brooding in the depths of every heroic modern heart, the feeling that in war there are no longer men; there are only sports of chance, pullers of triggers, bewildered fulfillers of instructions. The poetry written about the World War put out of date the romance and glory of battle, that ancient glamour which had been celebrated in song since Homer.⁴⁰ Harold Unger in his "We Who Have Lost" painted a picture of brutal horror:

They were pursuing us along the road,
My arm was gone, and I was weak from loss of blood.
Presently a steel splinter ripped my belly;
I fell into the slimy ditch, and struggled, struggled!⁴¹

The vast unreasonableness of war was expressed through stark irony and the savage simplicity of the common soldier's action.⁴² Isaac Rosenberg spoke thus in his "Break of Day in the Trenches,"

Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life
Bonds to the whims of murder
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth
The torn fields of France.⁴³

⁴⁰Monroe, "A Decade of Gibson," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, IX (November, 1916), 93.

⁴¹Harold Unger, "We Who Have Lost," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XII (May, 1918), 73.

⁴²Eunice Tietjens, "Sassoon on the War," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XIV (July, 1919), 216-217.

⁴³Isaac Rosenberg, "Break of Day in the Trenches," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, IX (December, 1916), 129.

Poets went to the roots of war and to the sea of human pain. There was no refusal to face facts--no denial that war was a degenerating thing in every way and blighted all that it touched. Eunice Tietjens, associate editor of Poetry during the war, in writing of "Sassoon on the War" chose a portion of his poem, "Counter-Attack," to show his grim realism:

The place was rotten with dead; green clumsy legs
 High-booted, sprawled and grovelled along the saps
 And trunks, face downward in the sucking mud
 Wallowed like trodden sand-bags loosely filled;
 And naked sodden buttocks, mats of hair,
 Bulged, clotted head slept in the plastering slime--
 And then the rain began--the jolly old rain.⁴⁴

At last the war was over, the war which had interrupted those wars of life and art, and Poetry realized that it was yet alive in spite of the threats of extinction which had assailed it.⁴⁵ In the monthly issues of the twenties and thirties, the roster of talents grew and the magazine's representativeness reflected the changing attitudes around it. The lyric tradition continued to be represented, the prophecies of despair were voiced, experiments in sound and rhythms were pushed to further lengths, and a spirit of social criticism predicted a

⁴⁴Eunice Tietjens, "Sassoon on the War," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XIV (July, 1919), 217.

⁴⁵Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 361.

revolutionary viewpoint in poetry.⁴⁶

During the years from 1929 to 1932 Poetry passed through its worst financial struggle because of the world-wide economic depression. Support both from subscribers and guarantors fell away; and once in the winter of 1932, it seemed to be imperative to cease publication altogether. The point of danger was cleared at the last moment by the intervention of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, in a series of three generous grants, which enabled the magazine to continue publication and to pass its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1937.⁴⁷

To arrive at that age may mean little enough for many institutions, but for a magazine of poetry it meant much: an endurance unrivalled in the records of literature, supreme tenacity of aims, a resistance to change, chance, and discouragement almost bordering on the unbelievable.⁴⁸ Poetry had printed odes, sonnets, blank verse dramas and songs, rhymed pentameter narratives, imagistic voices, futuristic fugues, fantasies in vers libre, rhapsodies in polyphonic prose--any dash for freedom which seemed to have hope and life in it. Editorials of praise, criticism,

⁴⁶Zabel, "The Last Fifteen Years: 1922-1936," pp. 430-431.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 443.

defense, and explanation have graced its pages.⁴⁹

In the summer of 1936, an unexpected opportunity fell to the editor of Poetry. The international literary society, P. E. N., was to hold its annual conference in Buenos Aires. Miss Monroe was honored by being chosen to represent the Chicago chapter of the society.⁵⁰ She first viewed with doubt the long journey, which proved to be her last, to Buenos Aires in August, 1936. After the conference had ended, Miss Monroe and a friend decided to visit the Inca ruins beyond Arequipa. For over forty years Miss Monroe had been a hardy mountaineer, but the abrupt climb of the railway proved to be an unexpected tax on her physical resources. She was stricken by a cerebral hemorrhage.⁵¹

On September 26, cablegrams flashed the message of her death to relatives and friends in Chicago.⁵² The editor of Poetry, a character of courage and audacity who had lived for the sake of her principles, had passed on, but her spirit still echoes in the pages of Poetry to the present time.⁵³ Edgar Lee Masters wrote

⁴⁹ Harriet Monroe, "Give Him Room," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, VI (May, 1915), 83.

⁵⁰ Editorial, "Harriet Monroe," Publishers' Weekly, CXXX (October 3, 1936), 1421.

⁵¹ Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Epilogue," pp. 459-468.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Burton Roscoe, "Flint and Fire," Saturday Review of Literature, XVII (March 19, 1938), 11.

these lines of Harriet Monroe's unchallenged success:

Her dauntless spirit and her gift of verse
 Deserve a Nebo from which her soul may see
 The Earth she loved. This immortality. ⁵⁴
 With song's remembrance be forever hers.

Between 1920 and 1936 Poetry had a number of associate editors whose work was closely identified with the last sixteen years of Harriet Monroe's life. Alice Corbin Henderson, the first associate editor, had retired in 1916 because of ill health. She was followed by Eunice Tietjens, who had served as office girl up to this time. Miss Tietjens was followed by Helen Hoyt in 1918, who in turn was succeeded by Marion Strobel in 1920 who retired in 1925. Then George Dillon, a student at the University of Chicago, carried on the task from 1925 to 1927, giving over to Jessica Nelson from 1927 to 1929, and then to Morton Dauwen Zabel from 1929 to the death of Miss Monroe.⁵⁵

At Miss Monroe's death Mr. Zabel became acting editor for a year, to be replaced by George Dillon, who still retains the editorship.⁵⁶ Mr. Dillon is the author of Boy in the Wind and "The Flowering Stone." He was awarded the Pulitzer prize for poetry in 1932.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Edgar Lee Masters, "Harriet Monroe," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XLIX (December, 1936), 153.

⁵⁵Zabel, "The Last Fifteen Years: 1922-1936," pp. 436-437.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Who's Who in America, 1940-1941, (Chicago, 1940), p. 775.

The same principles as practiced by the first editor of Poetry have carried the magazine forward to its twenty-ninth year. Each year's issues is a chapter in modern literature, reflecting the temper and ideals of the national life.

CHAPTER IV

POETRY'S CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN POETRY

When Harriet Monroe resolved to become a liaison officer between the poets and the public, she achieved an importance to American and English literature which can scarcely be overestimated.¹ Through her magazine, Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, real and contemporary poetry has been given to the world, and an authentic organ for poets has been provided. Poetry is not only a magazine but an official organ of the art, poetry.²

Poetry was conceived in a time of change and stress as a medium of expression for poets, waiting to be heard.³ The hour for utterance was at hand and a new generation was ready to speak. Miss Monroe realized this, and Poetry was one of the first publications in which the new school of thought was revealed. The magazine was a rallying ground for the reawakening of an art long rejected by the American public.⁴

¹Robert Morris Lovett, "Harriet Monroe," Poetry, A Magazine of Verse, LII (April, 1938), 35.

²Mary N. S. Whitely, "Shall We Let It Die," Saturday Review of Literature, IX (July 30, 1932), 19.

³Jessica Nelson, "A Forward Look," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, LI (October, 1913), 36.

⁴Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Epilogue," p. 473.

From the beginning, the magazine was a success. No issue from the time of its first publication has ever failed to appear and to bring to the eyes of the public some poems by a poet heretofore unknown. The latest number is as fresh as the first, filled with new names and new poems.⁵

From time to time, an entire issue of Poetry has been given over to one locality as in the "English Number," the "Southern Number," or the "Federal Poets Number." The poets in these numbers can be said to represent neither school nor "ism" but are voices of one locale. At other times an entire number has been devoted to one type of poetry, such as the lyric or sonnet.⁶

The publication of poetry is not the only function which Poetry has performed. Beginning with its earliest issues, it has published what has been termed "the finest criticisms and reviews of poetry and books about the art." This contribution to the field of poetry has grown steadily in importance every year. The criticisms have been presented by poets whose works and viewpoints have been among the major influences of critical thought of the twentieth century. Such poets as Ezra Pound,

⁵"Poetry and Miss Monroe," Saturday Review of Literature, IX (July 30, 1932), 13.

⁶Whitely, op. cit.

Edgar Lee Masters, Amy Lowell, Mary Austin, Allen Tate, and Padraic Colum have served as critics.⁷ Not only has Poetry offered this service, but it has given quarterly reviews of literary magazines showing their aim and something of their quality.⁸

Poetry has done an unquestionable service, not only in printing the poet's utterances but in never failing to keep its promise to pay for printable contributions.⁹ Poetry has not only helped the poet to thrive by seeing his efforts in print, but by giving a remittance for these efforts.¹⁰ The number of prizes, awarded for the best poems annually, has grown steadily throughout the years.

During the twenty-nine years that the magazine has functioned, a large number of poets have had their first printing in Poetry. Miss Monroe, of course, did not touch the lives of all these poets directly, but she was able to give printed encouragement and to create for them an audience.¹¹ It would be impossible to name here all the poets who first appeared in Poetry or were influenced by

⁷Kenneth C. Kaufman, "27 Years of Service to Poets," Tulsa World, March 5, 1939.

⁸Whitely, op. cit.

⁹Mildred Boie, "A Wider Audience for Poetry," North American Review, CCXLV (Summer, 1938), 408.

¹⁰Kaufman, op. cit.

¹¹Editorial, "Harriet Monroe," Publishers' Weekly, CCXXX (October 3, 1936), 1421.

the writings in the magazine. However, among the names are listed poets whose works appear in anthologies now and who are recognized as leaders of the twentieth century, such as Vachael Lindsay, Hilda Doolittle, Carl Sandburg, John Gould Fletcher, Hilda Conkling, Joyce Kilmer, Sara Teasdale, Richard Aldington, and Edgar Lee Masters.¹²

Poetry had the honor of presenting for the first time in America the poems of several Americans who were recognized abroad but not at home. The great personality of Ezra Pound was revealed to his own country through the pages of Poetry after being introduced in the first issue of 1912.¹³ Robert Frost was ready to be heard in 1912, but when the publishers in America refused him a hearing, he went to England. In England he fell in with Ezra Pound. Pound, foreign correspondent for Poetry, sent Frost's "The Code," back to America, and its appearance in Poetry heralded the new poet to his country.¹⁴

The first discovery of Miss Monroe for Poetry was Vachael Lindsay, the imaginative evangelist of beauty. It was in the early autumn of 1912 that Miss Monroe read a magazine article in which Lindsay described some of his adventures. She wrote to him requesting some of the rhymes

¹²Mary M. Colum, "The Stuffy Side of Experience," Forum, XCIX (May, 1938), 280.

¹³Whitely, op. cit.

¹⁴Monroe, Poets and Their Art, p. 57.

he had told about. The response was "General William Booth Enters into Heaven," a poem which had sung itself into his mind as he tramped along western trails.¹⁵ This poem was printed for the first time in the January issue of 1913. William Butler Yeats said of "General William Booth Enters into Heaven:"

This poem is stripped bare of ornament; it has earnest simplicity, a strange beauty, and you know Bacon said, "There is no excellent beauty without strangeness."¹⁶

The next step forward for Vachael Lindsay toward a poetic career was his recitation of his poem, "The Congo," still in manuscript form, at the banquet honoring Yeats given by Poetry. The event was a triumph for young Lindsay, for among the guests were influential critics who spoke his praises.¹⁷

Miss Monroe recognized that Lindsay's virtue lay in his discovery of the thumping rhythm in elemental things. She was immediately aware that he took as his subjects the elements of life, especially those that were vigorous, exciting, and animated such as a tribal dance in Central Africa or the entry of a Salvation Army general into

¹⁵Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶ Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 336.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 339.

heaven. He seemed to have been led by certain sacred and impassioned articles of faith; faith in beauty, in goodness, and in the splendor of common things and common experiences.¹⁸

It is evident that Miss Monroe was not wrong in her estimation of Lindsay's abilities, for at his death he was spoken of as a bard if any modern deserves that title. He was classed as a frontiersman in spirit and a historian in verse. Critics compared his genius to one of those rich pockets of ore that are deposited where one stratum ends and another begins.¹⁹ Edgar Lee Masters said of Lindsay:

It is possible to say of every other American poet that he was kindred to some American or English poet, but no one knows the parentage of Lindsay. He sings Americanism. Nothing like him has ever been, he derives from no one. The beauty of his art lies in its freedom, its sincere absorption in the possessing vision of his own genius.²⁰

Again, Carl Van Doren in "Many Minds," voices criticism of Lindsay similar to that of Miss Monroe's which had been stated twelve years before:

He is like no one else. He has pungent phrases, clinging cadences, dramatic energy, lyric seriousness, and tragic intensity. Lindsay knew

¹⁸ Monroe, Poets and Their Art, pp. 23-24.

¹⁹ "Vachael Lindsay," Saturday Review of Literature, VIII (January 9, 1932), 437.

²⁰ Edgar Lee Masters, "Vachael Lindsay," Bookman, LXIV (October, 1926), 156.

that true eloquence comes from the individual, not from the mass; that true poetry²¹ is actually lived, not merely shared or argued.

The January issue of Poetry of 1913 not only saw the introduction of Vachael Lindsay but of Hilda Doolittle, a poet who is unique and aloof in her excellence.²² In 1911, Hilda Doolittle went abroad on what was intended to be merely a summer trip. Like many others she found in Italy and France a stimulation to do the thing which had been uppermost in her mind for years--to write poetry. In London literary companionship served as a stimulus to her desire. She became a member of a band of poets of which Ezra Pound was the leader. He recognized her remarkable talent. Acting as London agent for Poetry, he accepted some of her poems and sent them to Poetry to be printed.²³ This group of Greek-inspired "reflections and translations" was printed in January, 1913, under the pseudonym, "H. D. Imagiste."²⁴

To Miss Monroe these poems were not the work of a juvenile, for they bore the marks of a finished product. By the use of short lines and a staccato movement, H. D.

²¹Carl Van Doren, Many Minds (New York, 1926), pp. 165-166.

²²Whitely, op. cit.

²³Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern Poetry (New York, 1917), pp. 251-252.

²⁴Monroe, A Poet's Life, p. 295.

had created a breathlessness which was peculiarly effective.²⁵ It was in these poems of H. D. that Amy Lowell recognized the type of poetry to which her own utterances belonged.²⁶

Critics recognized at once that Poetry had presented in H. D. a phenomenon, a modern poet who was able to recover and communicate the peculiar sensibilities of an ancient race. She was able to carry English poetry back to the Greeks more instinctively than any other poet. She achieved a rare and finely-wrought beauty.²⁷

The merit that Miss Monroe placed upon H. D.'s poetry was substantiated when F. S. Flint said that the ultimate effect of H. D.'s poetry is mysterious and can only be comprehended by the imagination. Herbert S. Gorman, writing in the New York Times book review section for August 31, 1924, says,

H. D. stands alone among the poets. The most conservative reader never doubts the actual poetry that illuminates all her work. She is the most crystal-like of poets.

Critics are agreed that to H. D. goes the credit of having brought to the twentieth century a vision of beauty which

²⁵ Monroe, Poets and Their Art, p. 98.

²⁶ Alfred Kreyborg, Our Singing Strength (New York, 1929), p. 347.

²⁷ Glenn Hughes, Imagism and the Imagists (Stanford University, California, 1931), pp. 109-124.

has not altered since the days of Homer.²⁸

In 1914 Poetry again gave to the world an unheard poet. In the March issue of 1914, a group of poems by a stranger called Carl Sandburg was printed.²⁹ This group included the now well-known poem, "Hog Butcher for the World." Not only was this Mr. Sandburg's first printing, but by this printing he received a \$200 prize for the best poem presented in the year of 1914.³⁰ Even though Poetry received many criticisms of Carl Sandburg's poetry, it is evident that the magazine did a great service to poetry and to Carl Sandburg, for he is now a well-recognized poet.³¹

The first conviction that Harriet Monroe had upon reading the poems of Carl Sandburg was one of beauty and power. She realized that life to him with all its ugliness was touched with beauty and filled with solemnity. He treated life frankly and believed in it.³²

Miss Monroe recognized Carl Sandburg's vocabulary to be one of his foremost characteristics. He used the common speech of the people, so-called vulgar slang; yet he did it in such a way that its beauty enriched and

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Kreymborg, op. cit., p. 338.

³⁰Edward Cook, Our Poets of Today (New York, 1919), p. 131.

³¹Kreymborg, op. cit., pp. 338-339.

³²Monroe, Poets and Their Art, pp. 30-31.

revived the language. The free verse rhythms which Miss Monroe found in his verses were made his personal property. He apparently had beaten them out with the utmost care. As a result his poems are a true and deep emotion of love for the thing of which he wrote.³³

Alfred Kreyborg says of Carl Sandburg:

In Sandburg we find a poet who combines reality and romance, truth and beauty, speech and song. It may be too early to pronounce him the man Whitman called for. He is the foremost singer the pioneer west has given us. He sums up the past, present, and future of the America he was born in.³⁴

Louis Untermeyer felt that many critics have overlooked the ability that Carl Sandburg has to make language live by making the words sing, dance, bleed, rage, and suffer on the printed page. To Mr. Untermeyer as to Miss Monroe the outstanding quality of Carl Sandburg is the power to blend in his words beauty and brutality. In presenting Carl Sandburg, Poetry presented a poet of realism never to be forgotten.³⁵

At the time Poetry was founded free verse was in its infancy. The older magazines looked with doubt upon anything new, and the new movement seethed for years before

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kreyborg, op. cit., p. 385.

³⁵ Louis Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900, (New York, 1919), p. 70.

periodicals took notice of it. Poetry did not bring about the movement, but it undoubtedly did bring it to light some years earlier than might have been the case.³⁶

Poetry published many free verse forms, and Edgar Lee Masters gives credit to these poems and Poetry for opening for him the way to Spoon River Anthology. It was the reading and rereading of this verse, especially that of Carl Sandburg, that shook Mr. Masters out of his literary rut.³⁷ This free verse gave him a clue to just what he needed; this was freedom from the regular effects of rhyme and metre, brevity, and conciseness. To Mr. Masters free verse was a form which seemed absolutely made for his purpose. He had never lacked substance; hence by fitting this substance to the short, sharp lines of free verse he found a perfect instrument.³⁸

Evidently Edgar Lee Masters was right in his belief that free verse would aid his expression, for John Cowper Powys says,

Had any French or German or even English poet, done for provincial life what Masters has done for such life in America in his Spoon River, his

³⁶Lowell, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

³⁷Louis Untermeyer, New Era in American Poetry (New York, 1919), p. 162.

³⁸op. cit.

would be of unassailable importance. Spoon River Anthology remains in spite of all distractions, the most original work that American genius has produced since the death of Henry James. Masters' renown for Spoon River will never die.³⁹

As has been said, it would be impossible to name and discuss all poets who have been introduced or influenced by Poetry; but in the above four poets the fact has been shown that Poetry has been a great factor in the development of modern poetry. It has helped to lift national verse from the realm of the stereotyped verse and has given it vitality and scope.⁴⁰ It has opened new pathways in poetry by its open-minded policy toward new forms.

Mark Van Voren says, "Poetry is the most original and most important poetry magazine of modern America."⁴¹ The Bookman declares, "Its collected volumes read like a select anthology of our most representative American poets."⁴² Padraic Colum wrote Miss Monroe, "Poetry is far and away better than any magazine of the kind in England and Ireland. In fact, I think Poetry is the best magazine by far in the English language."⁴³

³⁹John Cowper Powys, "Edgar Lee Masters," The Bookman, LXIX (August, 1929), 650-656.

⁴⁰Whitely, op. cit.

⁴¹Pamphlet issued by Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, 1937.

⁴²Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, L (May, 1937), 122.

⁴³Harriet Monroe, "Praise from Mr. Colum," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, VI (May, 1915), 92.

From H. L. Mencken comes this tribute to the magazine:

I have read Poetry since the first number and find it constantly entertaining....No other magazine--and there have been dozens--has even remotely approached it in interest, or for that matter in hospitality.⁴⁴

The magazine has proved a stimulation which has been of a distinct value in awakening interest and giving poets an opportunity to be heard. It is only necessary to recall the status of poetry at the turn of the century to realize the riches in the field of poetry that have been contributed by the little magazine. There is no doubt that Harriet Monroe accomplished a great task in her founding of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.⁴⁵

The truest measurement of Poetry is found in the words of the first editor in an editorial reviewing the first fifteen years of the magazine's life.

One thing we may claim to have demonstrated--the need of such an organ of the art as Poetry has tried to be. This need is proved not only by the hundred poets we have introduced, and by the hundred poems the newspapers quote from us and pass on to their readers, but chiefly, day after day, by the contributions which pour in and the ardent letters which accompany them. The poet needs an organ which he believes in and whose acceptance carries a conviction and

⁴⁴Pamphlet issued by Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, 1937.

⁴⁵Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Volume Fifty," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, L (April, 1937), 30-33.

admits him to a certain comradeship with others who practice or love the art.⁴⁶

What was true of Poetry at the age of fifteen is true now. It is an authentic organ of the living poet. The open-door policy, which Poetry has practiced throughout its existence, has given it a long, honorable, and successful record of presenting the best works of the best poets to a critical poetry-reading public. With such a record who knows how many new poets now being printed in Poetry may be famous in the next ten years? Whatever the outcome, American poetry has a forum, a place of exhibition, in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.

⁴⁶Monroe, "Fifteen Years," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, XXXI (October, 1927), 34.

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