

Verse of the Times (Circa 1919)

It's difficult to understand the radicalism of these poets verse unless you compare it with the popular poetry of the period. And so, a sampling from *Anthology of Newspaper Verse 1919*, purporting to show "those poems which seemed to voice the sentiment of the people." And now, without further ado, the voice of the people.

A LITTLE WHILE.

Hope on, and bid thy soul look up and wait a little while,
Thy share of joy He holds for thee, though now the world looks dark.
He guides thy bark to seas where thou shalt find thy happy isle.
The darkest hour comes just before the dawn then sings the lark!

Boston (Mass.) Record. Marie Tello Phillips.

ALIENS.

Columbia, Columbia, they came across the sea
To till your golden prairies and to dwell in amity.
They planted friendly orchards; and from East to fertile West
Their little ones in gladness knew the shielding of your breast.

*Columbia, Columbia, another brood is here,
Who snatch your love and treasure, and requite you with a sneer,
Like snakes they glide in darkness, foul as ghouls that haunt the dead
And yield no glad allegiance, save to bloody flags of red.*

Awake, arise, Columbia! Their dream is all too long --
Call forth your sons of alien race, their arms are leal and strong.

Fling out the starry flag again, as in our battle day.
While sons who once were aliens sweep the poisoned hordes away!

Luella Stewart.
New York (N. Y.) *Evening Sun*.

THE GARDEN OF THE HEART.

When the springtime is advancing
With its warm and glowing showers,
When you're planting in your garden
Of the various kinds of flowers
You are careful, oh, so careful,
That the seed will surely start,

Just take an extra moment
For the garden of the heart.

Heart-gardens are oft-times barren
Of the sunshine, warmth and cheer;
Just moisten up the calloused places
With a sympathetic tear,
'Twill start the germ of love to growing,
Smother out the hurts that smart,
If you plant a little flower
In the garden of the heart.

South Bend (Ind.) Tribune, Matt. O. Long.

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW.

Oh, where, my heart, is the peace you knew
When winds were fair and skies were blue?
You then were young, and your throb was light,
And the future of love and vision was bright.

Red horror descended and men went mad
Fair fields with millions of slain were clad.
The beauty of centuries all in a breath
Went hurtling away on the pinions of death.

Be strong, my heart! 'tis a world of change,
And struggles of Man have long wide range !
Though the darkness fell, gun again shall rise
And courage re-glisten in human eyes.

Unity (Chicago, HI.) James Hareourt West.

DESTINY.

Each day unwinds the roll of fate,
New pictures shown, by artist time
Who frames them later to relate
Our life in full a tale sublime.

When symbols print through souls of thought
And varied colors blend as one,
Recalling sunny hours forgot,
Through years of toil and duties dark.

As fate unwinds life's web, we weave

The hit and miss together show
Effects whose consequences grieve
To pains that balance all we owe.

An Angel travels with each one
Accounts to keep its time to wait
All claims when earth's demands are done
Unfurlment at the golden gate.

Eager to find our longings met
By charity the queen of love,
Where mysteries our tears have wet,
On earth to bloom our joys above.

Buffalo Express Mary J. Scott.

FINIS.

Let this grand old earth resound with mirth,
For the sword is laid aside :
Strife is done, our victory's won,
Let joy and peace abide;
For God has blessed our efforts
And our eagle's wings are furled
O'er the freedom of all mankind
And a liberated world.

Now the waves of the sea roll proud and free
Far o'er the bounding main,
The ships that bear our heroes dear
Come sailing home again;
And back once more from a distant shore,
Thrice welcome will they be.
For hard they've toiled to make the world
Safe for democracy.

And though there's some who 're left behind,
Their cross and crown are won;
Well bow our heads to Heaven's decree
And say "Thy will be done";
For o'er the paths of toil and pain,
Their willing feet have trod,
They've climbed the height, they're "over the top,"
And safe in the arms of God.

Mobile (Ala.) Register. Agnes Weeks Chambers.

DEEP IN THE HEART.

Deep in the heart O such a sweetness lies,
There is no room for anything of care,
Of bitterness or sorrow or despair,

In just this little bit of paradise.
What dear remembrances are our to prize,
To cherish ever and to hold most fair,
The little things of life we give and share!
Deep in the heart are endless melodies.

Deep in the heart are joy and peace and rest
So rich and sweet no tongue can ever tell
The precious whole or speak it utterly,
With faith to bring us to the harbor blest
Of hopes and dreams and say that all is well
But love, Love only holds the golden key.

Detroit Free Press. Myrtella Southerland.

THE UNMOWN HIGHWAY.

I love the unmown highway where the crimson sumachs blaze,
And the golden-rods run riot in their dear familiar ways;
Where grapevines drape the fences, and the bittersweet is seen
Glossily upon the sapling, while below, -- beneath -- between

Peep the saucy Spanish needles with their countless cups of gold,
Each one filled with as much nectar as any bee should hold:
Oh, the air is full of incense and a chorus sweet and rare
All along the unmown highway with its 'dear sweet wild things there.

There are fragrant apples falling, tiny, hard, and round and green
From the crab-tree that in Maytime was the pinkest, sweetest seen:
And the grapevines purple bunches take us back to spring-time, too,
When its' mignonette sweet blossoms wafted out their fragrance new.

And the tiny wrens and bluebirds, flitting, darting, to and fro,
Sounded timid notes of warning ; did they take me for a foe?
And the thrush, I hear her "tushing" to her eager, hungry brood,
While afar her mate swung, thrilling, his own anthem to the Wood.

In Midsummer the wild roses nestled there in sweet repose,
Shy, sweet, modest, perfect darlings of the dear unkempt hedgerows.

Where the thorn-tree snowed its' blossoms on Sweet Williams down below
And in fall the purple asters sway on all the winds that blow.

Oh, I love an unmown highway with a hedgerow hanging o'er;
There are scarlet leaves in autumn, flowers and fruit have gone before;
There we found the sweet wild berries in the shade of noon-tide heat;
Some may call such road-sides shiftless, but to me they are just sweet!

Home Life, Chicago, Ill. Pearl Haley Patrick.

Even Williams was not immune to this embrace of an older "poetics." His first, self-published book of poetry, contains the following:

"On a Proposed Trip South"

They tell me on the morrow I must leave
This winter eyrie for a southern flight
And truth to tell I tremble with delight
At thought of such unheralded reprieve.

E'er have I known December in a weave
Of blanched crystal, when, thrice one short night
Packed full with magic, and O blissful sight!
N'er May so warmly doth for April grieve.

To in a breath's space wish the winter through
And lo, to see it fading! Where, oh, where
Is caract could endow this princely boon?

Yet I have found it and shall shortly view
The lush high grasses, shortly see in air
Gay birds and hear the bees make heavy droon.

His (and our) friend Ezra Pound did not look kindly on this kind of poetry. The first line of a 1909 letter in response to the book was "I hope to God you have no feelings. If you have, burn this *before* reading." He added "Individual, original it is not. Great art it is not. Poetic it is, but there are innumerable poetic volumes poured out here in Gomorrah [London] Your book would not attract even passing attention here. There are fine lines in it, but nowhere I think do you add anything to the poets you have used as models."

Williams was a quick study. By 1914, his verse looked like this

"To Mark Antony in Heaven"

This quiet morning light
reflected, how many times
from grass and tress and clouds

enters my north room
touching the walls with
grass and clouds and trees.
Anthony,
trees and grass and clouds.
Why did you follow
that beloved body
with your ships at Actium?
I hope it was because
you knew her inch by inch
from slanting feet upward
to the roots of her hair
and down again and that
you saw her
above the battle's fury ---
clouds and trees and grass ---

For then you are
listening in heaven.

This more modern verse was much more appealing to Pound: he published it in his 1914 anthology *Des Imagistes*.

(The comments on Williams' poetry are from Cooper, John Xiros. "William Carlos Williams." *American Poets, 1880-1945: Third Series*. Ed. Peter Quartermain. Detroit: Gale Research, 1987. Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 54. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 16 Mar. 2013.)