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A Study of the Editorial Policy of Poetry Under the Editorship of Harriet Monroe

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A STUDY OF THE EDITORIAL POLICY OF POETRY UNDER THE
EDITORSHIP OF HARRIET MONROE

by

DANIEL J. CAHILL

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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LIFE

Daniel Joseph Cahill was born in Chicago, Illinois, March 3, 1929. He was graduated with honors from St. Philip High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1947, and from Loyola University, June, 1951, with the degree of Bachelor of Science. The author began his graduate studies at Loyola University in June, 1951.
CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEMS AND AIMS OF THE THESIS

It is always with some sense of the transitory and with a feeling of apprehension that a little magazine is founded, for traditionally the advance-guard periodical is short-lived. The evil of an early death is not inherent in the character of the little magazine, however, and it has been avoided by the more wisely directed periodicals. This seemingly characteristic evil might be traced directly to the function of an advance-guard magazine, which, in itself, can best be considered as a weapon of reform. Once its specific reformation has been achieved, the little magazine suffers from the almost always fatal disease of dissolved purpose, and usually succumbs to some form of indirection. The magazine, like a human being without a purpose, flounders; and its chance for concrete achievement becomes greatly lessened. Over the years many little magazines have come into existence and have suffered a short and fitful life because their editors have made the error of formulating a concentrated editorial policy in order that the magazine might combat some force, or lack of force, in the literary world. Poetry was such an advance-guard magazine, but its continuous publication for over forty years has distinguished it from all other periodicals of its class. It has suffered from many of the ills which have beset other little magazines, but
by the adroit direction of its founder-editor, Harriet Monroe, it was able in the years of her editorship, 1912-1936, to surmount its difficulties; and under her perspicacious guidance the magazine forged ahead to become one of the most influential factors in the formation of modern poetry. "The year 1912 has come to be recognized as the year in which a truly organized movement toward a new American poetry began."¹ It is not coincidence that the initial publication of Poetry in 1912 should be the demarcation line between the "old" poetry and the new.

The distinction and importance which Poetry has achieved over the years can best be seen when the magazine is viewed in the light of its history and the general history of the little magazine. The value of the little magazine as an outlet for, and as an influence on, unknown writers and poets can never be accurately assayed. "There have been, conservatively estimated, over six hundred little magazines since 1912."² Many of these periodicals have been abortive in their efforts, and only about a hundred of the estimated six hundred have shared the limelight as influential organs in the American literary renaissance. Of the ten important little magazines devoted largely or exclusively to poetry, only two have survived: Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.

and Voices. Their survival is a testimony to the wise editorial policies which guided them through the various struggles, both artistic and financial, which always beset such adventurous periodicals. Poetry has maintained a high standard of quality for over four decades; this unprecedented achievement attests the unity of purpose and diligent care with which Miss Monroe regulated her magazine.

In attempting to analyze the success of Poetry, the fundamental questions come to center themselves around the editorial policy of the magazine. What tests of quality did Miss Monroe apply in selecting contributions for her periodical? What did she reject, and why? These, and other questions, represent but a few of the various inquiries that are the chief concern of a study of editorial issues. The manifest success of Poetry is indicative of a sound editorial policy. The purpose of this thesis is to study the editorial policy of Poetry and to examine the various changes that were instituted under the editorship of Harriet Monroe.

A study of the editorial policy of Poetry from its inception to the present would be a problem of extremely varied considerations. In order that this study may present a deeper, rather than a wider, analysis of the proposed problems, it has been necessary to confine it to only that period during which Miss Monroe was editor. This period extends from the inception of the magazine

in 1912 to the death of Miss Monroe in 1936. Limiting the scope of the thesis to the above-mentioned period represents not only a convenient point of termination; it also presents a real distinction. As founder-editor, Miss Monroe looked upon *Poetry* in a very personal manner; the magazine was the most important thing in her later life, and after her death *Poetry* did not have the same character. It could not have exactly the same character, for it was no longer under the influence of Miss Monroe's forceful personality. For the present, however, it is only necessary to take cognizance of the fact that once the problem has been delimited, a more concentrated and unified study can be attained. Under the leadership of one person, who was not only the author and executant of policy issues, but the final judge of all poems which were to appear in the magazine, the editorial policy had both its source of strength and unity in the personality of Harriet Monroe. It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that Miss Monroe's death marked the termination of the established policy; for her successor, Morton D. Zabel, continued to edit the magazine in agreement with the editorial principles of its founder.

Because Harriet Monroe never composed any complete statement of her critical principles, it has been necessary to attempt some formulation of them from a number of varied sources, chief of which have been her autobiography and the editorial articles which she wrote for *Poetry*. In general, it might be said that Miss Monroe's critical principles and her editorial policy were two closely allied systems of thought. The distinction between the two is often slight since she regulated the magazine's policy in a very personal manner; as a result, the periodical rarely suffered from the whims of a constantly shift-
The chief method utilized in assessing the editorial policy is a study of the "Editorial Comment" section of the magazine. This section was originally intended as a place where the editor could make the necessary announcements of editorial shifts and changes. It soon became apparent that the title "Editorial Comment" was misleading since everything included under this heading did not always represent editorial opinion; hence, the word "Editorial" was deleted, revived, and finally deleted. The section came to carry the simple title "Comment." But the nature of the article did not change, and its new title permitted a wider variety of subjects to be discussed without confusion as to whether or not they represented official editorial dicta. Essentially, this change did not affect the nature of the article; it still remained the one place where Miss Monroe could make known the editorial policy of the magazine. These pronouncements became sporadic, however, and they were generally designed to clarify the magazine's position on a specific issue. In the period from 1912 to 1936, 294 issues of the magazine were printed, but out of this large number there are only about fifty issues which contain significant announcements pertinent to the editorial policy. As one approach to the problem, a study of the "Editorial Comment" section is sufficiently delimited, yet inclusive enough, to prove itself adaptable for the purposes of the present paper. It also has the additional merit of providing a perspective of the broader issues of the editorial policy. This is an important advantage over other approaches, such as the correspondence between the editor and the contributing poets, which do not deal with the issues as principles, but merely as specific applications
of principles. The primary purpose of this paper is not to examine the application of the editorial principles, but to isolate and clarify these principles, and to substantiate these generalities with their specific applications.

The proposed method of investigation has certain limitations, but they are not insurmountable; and when compared with the deficiencies of other possible approaches to the problem, they are lesser evils. The chief limitations are (1) the sporadic condition of the editorial pronouncements, and (2) the juxtaposition of the editorial principles and the personal prejudices of Harriet Monroe. Miss Monroe was aware of the fact that the personality of an editor must inevitably be reflected in the make-up of a periodical: "Every editor feels, and must of necessity reveal, certain unconscious sympathies and predilections; it is better, then, to reveal them quite frankly, without extenuation or apology." Thus, these prejudices became part of the editorial policy, and it is essential that they be clarified and properly labeled. Certain poets, whose temperament and philosophy did not agree with Miss Monroe's conception of life and its meaning, were not encouraged by the magazine; and in certain instances, the magazine missed the opportunity of being the first periodical to publish poems which were later to receive considerable recognition. The distinction between prejudice and critical principle was not a real one for Miss Monroe. This statement may seem like a

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strong indictment, but in reality Miss Monroe was a woman who was relatively free of biased judgment. When compared with those of other editors, her liberal cast of mind is evident. She was not adamant in her prejudices, and on many occasions she displayed an extraordinary magnanimity of mind.
CHAPTER II

PORTRAIT OF HARRIET MONROE

Harriet Monroe, born December 23, 1860, was the second of four children. Her parents, Henry Stanton Monroe, and Martha Monroe, were people of moderately wealthy means, who had come to Chicago in the early Fifties. Mr. Monroe, the son of a New York lawyer, left his native state early in 1852 to establish a law firm in a new city, one which seemed to him destined for a great future. Mrs. Monroe, an orphan, who came to Chicago to live with two spinster aunts, was a woman of great charm and beauty. She and Mr. Monroe were married in 1855, and two years later she gave birth to their first child, Dora Louise. The second child, Harriet, was born three years later; her birth was followed by that of two other children: a daughter, Lucy, and a son, William Stanton.

Harriet Monroe's early family life was not always one of serenity, and in certain respects it might even be called unhappy. Her father, who was a man of some erudition and social grace, had married a woman who, though

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1 This portrait of Harriet Monroe is based on comments from her autobiography and on Harold Hansen's comments in Midwest Portraits, Horace Gregory's "The Unheard of Adventure" (The American Scholar, VI, Spring, 1937, 195-200) and on statements to the writer from Marion Strobel and Jessica Nelson North.
beautiful, was socially awkward and possessed of little intellectual polish. To Mr. Monroe she must have seemed like Dickens's wife, who managed to knock her shin against every chair, but unlike Mrs. Dickens, Harriet's mother was a woman of much affection, kindness, and love. It was from her mother that Harriet inherited a great sense of affection in her associations with people; she also inherited a good portion of her mother's physical comeliness.

In spirit, Mr. Monroe was the antithesis of his wife. He was fired with a love of learning, and he strongly desired an active social life, which to a man in his profession was almost a requisite. But his wife felt no yearning to expand her personality; she was content to perform the simple duties of a devoted wife and loving mother, and her inability to cope with the tensions which arose from this difference of personalities was understandable in that there was nothing in her experience to prepare her for the situation. It was from her father that Harriet gained so much love for a life of learning and intellectual conflict. As a young girl she idolized him, and the bond of sympathy which grew from their participation in subjects of mutual interest gave strength to her pliable mind. She found the keenest enjoyment in reading books from her father's large library, and like Browning, it might be said that she was educated there. His interests in the arts also extended beyond the literary into the fields of painting and music, and Harriet acquired an extensive knowledge of these two arts which she later found useful as art and music critic for the Chicago Tribune. The entire emphasis of her father's influence was along artistic lines, and it strongly marked her personality. It might also be said that she acquired some of his legalistic
acuity and sharp sagacity in attacking and solving problems.

After the great Chicago fire in 1871, Mr. Monroe suffered financial reverses because of unfortunate business associations, and while the early years of his marriage were satisfying ones, the strain of losing both his social and financial status proved to be disastrous to his marital happiness. In a sense the Monroes were incompatible. The family was the whole of Mrs. Monroe's existence; Mr. Monroe, on the other hand, required a more active life, and in an effort to achieve some form of inner life which would transcend daily cares, he became more and more dependent on the solitude of his library, and by degrees his affection for family life disappeared. This laconic attitude was no asset to his professional career, which soon began to suffer from inattention, and the strain which this condition engendered in his home brought unhappiness. Of her parents, Miss Monroe writes that they "lived more or less at cross purposes, neither understanding nor deferring to the other." The basic personality conflicts which existed between her parents have been stated in a concise and greatly sharpened manner, and it would be

2 A Poet's Life, New York, 1938, 23. This is Miss Monroe's autobiography, which she began several months before her death. It was originally planned to publish the volume on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Poetry, but since the book was unfinished at the time of her death, publication was delayed for a year. It was finally completed by Horton D. Zabel, who succeeded Miss Monroe as editor of Poetry. Mr. Zabel wrote only Chapter 34. Miss Monroe's narrative broke off at the close of Chapter 33, but on the trip she made to South America, where she died, she completed the final chapter (Chapter 35). In the fear that she might not live to complete the autobiography, Miss Monroe felt that a statement of her philosophy of life and religious confitions was of paramount importance; hence she wrote the final chapter before the history of her life had been completed.
a distortion of the true situation to conclude that these tensions were always present. The purpose in even citing them has been to display the effects which they produced on the formation of Miss Monroe's character.

As a child, the tensions of her family environment were reflected in Harriet's response to life. She was a shy and inhibited girl and allowed herself to assume a submissive disposition under the childishly cruel reproaches of her elder sister, who as a young girl was a domineering person. In respect to physical health, Harriet was never robust, and in her youth she suffered from chronic nervousness which undermined her physical constitution at that time. Being frail and sickly, she was always acutely sensitive of her own feelings and a keen observer of the feelings of others.

Miss Monroe's elementary education was acquired in the public grammar school, and at the age of twelve she attended Dearborn Seminary. Five years later, in 1877, she enrolled at Visitation Convent in Georgetown; she was graduated from this school in 1879. Under the direction of the nuns at Visitation, her education comprised the usual studies of Victorian female seminaries, and the environment of the school smoothed down the rough edges of her already temperamental personality. The "fine lady" tradition of Visitation permanently affected her character. "There was little of the dilettante in Miss Monroe's personality. Her judgment was thoroughly grounded in a liberal, humanized education." At Visitation she acquired a sense of independence and self-sufficiency, and the encouragement which the nuns extended

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toward Harriet's literary aspirations gave strength and substance to her ambitions. In the sphere of social activities, Miss Monroe's attendance at Visitation proved advantageous; there she was in close proximity with the daughters of wealthy and influential men, and she formed many lasting friendships with girls of wealthy families. Harriet Monroe was no social climber; these friendships were strictly fortuitous. They helped to bring her out of her protective covering of shy reticence and to make her more socially conscious. Her former acquiescence in social relations and quiet submission to events were now supplanted by a more active and radical outlook, and this new attitude proved not to be the transitory perennial radicalism of youth; it was definitely an enduring cast of mind which followed her into maturity and became part of her habitual response to life.

In matters of religion, the attitude of the Monroe family was one of puzzlement and indifference. Attendance at church or Sunday school had always been an event of minor significance for them. As they had never conformed to any particular creed, they pursued religion with a desultory interest. Of her own religious convictions Miss Monroe writes: "Gradually I had lost entirely all allegiance to the old creeds." Thus, in maturity Harriet Monroe adhered to no form of religious orthodoxy. In summing up her basic philosophy of life, she wrote the following statement several weeks before her death in 1936:

1 A Poet's Life, 34.
No doubt I must confess myself a heathen. If religion means allegiance to any sect or church . . . then I am completely irreligious. . . . But I am a quite untroubled heathen. For me the important issues have concerned this life on earth, not the theoretical next one in some ritualized Heaven or realistic Hell.

The mystery is not the greatness of life, but its littleness. That we, so grandly born, so mightily endowed, should grope with blind eyes and bound limbs in the dust and mire of petty desires and grievances; until we can hardly see the blue of the sky or the glory of the seasons, until we can hardly clasp or neighbor's hand or hear his voice—this is the inexplicable mystery, the blasting unreality, the bitter falsehood that underlies all the dark evils of the world."

Miss Monroe had an extraordinary faith in life, which was concretely expressed in her unbounding optimism about the progress of the world and the perfectibility of human nature. These two concepts played an important part in the founding and management of Poetry, particularly in relation to her motives for the creation of the magazine and in the kind of literature which she hoped the periodical would engender.

The interim between the completion of her formal education in 1879 and the founding of Poetry in 1912 was one of intense activity; writing, traveling, lecturing, teaching, and a host of other activities, both professional and social, occupied Miss Monroe during this period.

After leaving school in 1879, Harriet Monroe returned to the home of her father, where she remained until his death in 1903. It was not the custom for a young woman of her class to be employed at that time, and the idea of a career was not considered respectable. The general attitude of the

5 A Poet's Life, 449, 458.
Nineties was that in the normal course of events a young girl would marry and establish a home of her own; but in the case of Miss Monroe events did not proceed in the planned order. She never married, not because she lacked opportunity, but because she could not imagine herself bound to a station in life which imposed so many restrictions without concomitant rewards. Marriage would hinder her personal freedom and make it impossible to be the sole determiner of what course to follow in life.

In 1887 Harriet and her younger sister Lucy traveled to New York for an extended vacation. While in that city she became acquainted with many of the commanding figures in the journalistic and literary circles. Among the leading journalists of that day were Margaret Sullivan and Eugene Field, and their friendship with Miss Monroe proved advantageous for her. Through Field she was introduced to Edmund G. Stedman, who was then the most important literary figure in New York. As a result of her Sunday evening visits to Stedman's literary parties, Harriet Monroe became acquainted with such men as Robert L. Stevenson, William Dean Howells, and Frank R. Stockton, who were later to help and encourage her in her own literary endeavors.

The evenings at Stedman's house in Bronxville were of a kind that supplied fuel to her later activities... and from Stedman himself Harriet Monroe perhaps caught fire, from his prophetic fervor and belief in the future of American poetry.6

This close contact with people of literary achievement gave impetus to Harriet's "grandiloquent literary aspirations," as she dubbed them in retrospect.

During her stay in New York, Miss Monroe had her first poem published; the poem, "With a Copy of Shelley," appeared in The Century in 1889. In the summer of the same year she also wrote and revised a play, Valerian, a verse tragedy; she continued to work on her poetry, but at this time her interest was temporarily diverted by the glamour of the stage, and she worked on a number of plays which expressed her preoccupation with modern themes. While in New York Miss Monroe was engaged as a correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, for which she wrote a feature column, reviewing plays, exhibitions of painting, and musical events. Her entire stay in New York was socially advantageous; there she widened her circle of friends to include influential people who were later to prove themselves loyal in the receptive spirit which they extended toward Poetry.

After her winter in New York, Miss Monroe returned to Chicago to continue with the Tribune in the capacity of art critic, reviewing the work of such modern painters as H. P. Ryder, Winslow Homer, Abbott Thayer, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Miss Monroe was personally acquainted with many of the men whose work she reviewed.

In 1890 Miss Monroe made her first trip abroad; she visited France, Italy, and England. While in London she stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Harland, friends whom she had met in New York the previous year. Henry Harland later became the founder-editor of the Yellow Book. Through the Harlands Harriet met many of the Yellow Book's famous contributors, among whom were

Henry James and Aubrey Beardsley. She also met some of the celebrated painters of that time, chief among them being James McNeill Whistler.

This European journey took only six weeks. When she returned to Chicago in December, 1890, she resumed her position as art critic for the Tribune. Soon after her return, however, the Tribune asked Miss Monroe to resign from her post because Harriet's younger sister Lucy was writing a similar column for a rival paper, The Herald, and the Tribune's policy would not allow such a situation to continue. It was impossible to secure a similar journalistic position, and for the next twenty years Miss Monroe eked out a meager living by magazine writing, a little teaching, and some lecturing.

Early in 1890 Chicago was selected as the site for the Columbian Exposition; this event marked the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, and the fact that Chicago had been chosen as the city to sponsor this celebration indicated the expansion and growth which had taken place there by the closing decade of the last century. Chicago had achieved recognition as a metropolis of industrial achievement and as a new cultural center. The purpose of the Exposition was to stimulate world interest in Chicago as a progressive business center, but its planners did not allow the commercial aspect to overshadow the advances that Chicago had achieved in the arts; hence, the prepared program was designed to stress Chicago as a nascent cultural center, and the arts of painting, music, sculpture and architecture were to play a prominent role in the Exposition. This Columbian Exposition was an important event in the history of Chicago. When the exposition opened, it was at once evident that here was the greatest, most stupendous world's fair.
Indeed, the event has been duly celebrated in print; over five hundred different brochures and illustrated volumes were published about it.  

Since Miss Monroe was intimately acquainted with many of the men who were responsible for the planning of the Exposition, her interest in the event was personal. The fact that she had held the influential position of art critic for the leading newspaper of the city proved important in that three years later she was still able effectively to voice her dissatisfaction when the announced program failed to consider poetry in its plans. When she discovered this omission, she made a proposal to the Committee on Ceremonies and offered to write a dedication ode for the Exposition. Her offer was received with enthusiasm and she composed "The Columbian Ode," which was later read at the dedication ceremonies of the Exposition. For this poem Miss Monroe received the unheard of sum of a thousand dollars. In addition to the money received for the composition of the ode, Harriet Monroe also won a suit with the New York World, which awarded her the sum of five thousand dollars for the World's unauthorized printing of her poem. An eager reporter for the New York newspaper had purloined a copy of the ode from the office of the officials of the Exposition, and the paper he represented printed the ode as a first-page item the day before its official release. Mr. Monroe brought suit

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9 Ibid.
against the newspaper and finally won a court decision in 1894 that awarded Harriet a settlement of the above-mentioned sum for damages. The Monroe case was important as it was without precedent, and therefore it established its own precedence, defining the rights of authors to control their own unpublished works.10

Between the years 1891 and 1897, Miss Monroe published two books: the first, Valerian and Other Poems,11 was privately printed in 1891; her second work, John Wellborn Root,12 appeared in 1894. Through the publication of her first volume of poetry she achieved local success as a poet, and the appreciative recognition which the book received gave her status as an important local figure. Her second book, a biography of her brother-in-law, who had been consulting architect for the Columbian Exposition, added little to her prestige. In respect to the traditional attitudes and stultifying rigors of their age, both Harriet Monroe and Mr. Root were radicals, and this sympathy of mind which existed between the two was one of the main reasons that prompted Miss Monroe to write his biography.

Harriet Monroe's informal education ... progressed under the influence of her brilliant brother-in-law ... who taught her to value and appreciate the beginnings of an American art that was to reach maturity in the work of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. It is highly probable that his influence created a background for a general appreciation of the arts.13

The book was of little importance in her poetical career, however; even today

10 Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life, 139.
the copy of John Wellborn Root at Newberry Library remains uncut, testifying to the fact that no one has ever read it.

In 1897, when Miss Monroe finally received the New York World's check for the settlement of her suit, she immediately sailed for Europe, where she was once again entertained by some of the most prominent literary figures of that day. While in London she was introduced to and entertained by such notables as Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson, Thomas Hardy, Theodore Watts-Dunton, Fiona McLeod (William Sharp), Robert L. Stevenson, and Colonel Francis Higginson, friend of Emily Dickinson and co-editor of her first-published poems. While among these people Harriet Monroe was quick to perceive the fin de siècle attitudes in the air and their prophetic implications, and when she returned to America in the following year, she was aware that the prelude to a new epoch had begun.

During these years of travel and other intellectual and emotional pursuits, Miss Monroe was never forgetful of her literary aspirations. In her heart of hearts she was a poet, but for a time the beauty and glamor of the stage caused her to deviate from her main objective. Between the years 1895 and 1900 she wrote five plays, none of which was ever produced professionally. Her collection of plays, The Passing Show, was, however, privately published in 1903 but was relatively unimportant to the advancement of her career as a poet. Perhaps the factor that encouraged her most in the writing

of drama was the favorable criticism given to her work by people of reputation in the dramatic world, but the plays were essentially defective in the same way that Henry James's dramatic efforts proved unsatisfactory. Of one of Miss Monroe's first plays, *It Passes By*, William Archer wrote: "No doubt on a second and more careful reading it would become clearer to me, but I certainly received the impression that it was too subtle and Browningesque for the stage."

After a fruitless period of dramatic endeavor, Miss Monroe again turned her attention to poetry, and by 1903 she had written sufficient verse for a book. These poems were not published, however, until 1914; this volume of poems, *You and I*, unlike her previous works, was printed by Macmillan.

After her father's death in 1903, Miss Monroe continued to earn her living as a journalist; she resumed her position with the Chicago Tribune as art critic; she also wrote feature articles for such quality magazines as The Atlantic and the Fortnightly Review at this time, but the pay for this form of journalism was sporadic and meager. Harriet never allowed her insecure income to prevent her from taking an avid interest in life, and her ever-increasing social circle of friends soon came to embrace almost every person whose interest in the arts was distinguished. Henry B. Fuller, author of *The Cliff-dwellers*, and A. P. Ryder, the painter, were among the more important of her friends. The years between 1900 and the founding of Poetry in 1912


were filled with activities which advanced her prestige not only as a poet but as a person of adroitness and social charm. Thus the years advanced; the "middle period" of Miss Monroe's life betrayed no diminution in her interest in life, the arts, and the progress of the world. She was always eager for new experiences, and Ezra Pound's dictum, "Make it new," might be appropriately applied to the eagerness with which she lived.

The first ten years of the new century brought immense progress to Chicago. The changes which had come over the city since its disastrous fire in 1871 had produced an undreamed-of transformation, not only in commerce and industry but in the arts as well. The advances in industrial and commercial interests were swift and drastic, and in architecture the disappearance of the old baroque facades manifested a new spirit of freedom, one founded on utilitarian and organic principles. These nascent intimations of modernity were not exclusively confined to material advances; a renovation was also underway in the arts, and the resuscitation of painting, drama, music, and the other arts from the lethargic limpness into which they had been allowed to descend was now being effected through strong encouragement from various civic groups. The entire range of the arts was improving during these early years, and Miss Monroe was part of this milieu. She, as art critic, was in a position to be intimately acquainted with many artists and art dealers; hence she was aware of the type of art which was being handsomely rewarded by The Art Institute and other organizations.

In 1910 Miss Monroe made her first tour around the world, visiting the Orient for the first time. The impression of deep mystery and strange beauty which the Orient held for Miss Monroe was one of enduring quality.
and the sympathy which she later extended toward the poetry of the East had its foundation in her personal memories of those countries. The tour was significant for these reasons.

Upon returning to Chicago from her world tour early in 1911, she resumed her duties as art critic. Her professional contacts were always of a pleasant, friendly nature, and the discussion of the lamentable state of poetry was often the topic of Miss Monroe's conversation. Her many friends in the world of art were in sympathy with her view that the neglect of poetry was despicable. It was not without some feelings of acrimony that she viewed the Art Institute's practice of giving large monetary rewards to artists for their work while poetry was neither encouraged or even recognized. Why, she asked herself, was so much money being lavished on the plastic arts while poetry, perhaps the greatest of all arts, was being treated with indifference? To all her friends and business associates she repeated the question with challenging insistence. "Why was poetry left out of it—poetry, perhaps the finest of the fine arts, certainly the shyest and most elusive?—poetry which must have listeners, which cannot sing into a void?"17 This very question was later to prove itself to be the germ from which the definite idea of founding a magazine for poets developed. The real plan for the magazine came much later, but it was preceded by a vague feeling of discontent with the status quo of the poet, and with a sense of irritation at the indifference with which poetry's self-styled supporters viewed the situation.

The Art Institute, whose program for the encouragement of painting was supported by a group of Chicago's most powerful and wealthy citizens, afforded the painter the opportunity to display his work and to reap the rewards of recognition and remuneration for his labor. This whole campaign was based on a successful financial plan and on the wise use of propaganda, which served to bring the plight of the struggling artist into the limelight. The poet possessed no comparable outlet for his work. Miss Monroe was quick to perceive this situation, and her dream of a similar campaign for the poet became the most salient topic of conversation for her. She discussed her scheme with anyone who would lend a willing ear, and the encouragement which she received from her friends and business associates gradually brought the idea of a poet's organ to full maturation. In her autobiography, she records her feelings on the situation as follows: "I became convinced that something must be done; and since nobody else was doing anything, it might be 'up to me' to try to stir up the sluggish situation."  

During a conversation with William V. O'Brien, an art dealer, the real solution to the problem emerged. He suggested that what the poets needed was a place of their own where their work could be displayed, much in the fashion that a painting is displayed. Miss Monroe immediately seized upon the idea as the solution to her problem, and "at an age when most people consider the moment for action past, she braved public skepticism, personal reputation, and unknown risks by launching

A choice of several channels for achieving recognition was open to the poet before 1912: he could publish his poems at his own expense—a formidable course for the poor poet; he could submit his work to the quality magazines and run the all-too-frequent risk of rejection if the poems attempted to deal with serious issues or contained poetical innovations of even a minor type. Under these conditions, it was difficult for the poet to retain any degree of intellectual honesty and still find his way onto the printed page. At the turn of the century poetry was still following the old traditions; in America the message of Whitman was unheeded, and the stodgy transmutations of an earlier Romanticism remained the standard models.

On the European scene the French were occupied with new developments in modern poetry, and while the greatness and significance of Whitman was given indifferent consideration in the country which produced him, the espousal of Poe and Whitman in France was the source of innovations and divergent, new trends in French poetics. The new movement toward modern poetry was not confined to France; both England and Ireland were becoming aware that the old traditional forms had lost their force. Because it possessed a leader of quality and conviction, Ireland was the first to establish a definite movement of any dimensions. Epitomized in the works of Yeats and Synge, the Irish Literary Revival represented a return to an unshackled freedom of expression which would be at once simple and dignified. The Irish Renascence “was already

under way when "Poetry" was established in 1912. In that year and those immediately following the trans-Atlantic influence was marked. But England, on the other hand, possessed no leader strong enough to draw its young poets out of the morass of tradition, and the minor poetical revolt which London witnessed was ineffectual because it lacked a leader of sufficient stature who could set the pace for a new movement. The Poetry Review, founded in 1912 by Harold Monroe, attempted to revive poetry in England as a living art, but the magazine was abortive and had to cease publication a year later.

At this time, the state of poetry in America was one of inaction and apathy. The country possessed neither a great leader nor an organ for its poets. The plight of American poetry during this period could best be represented by a brief scanning of a roster of famous American poets between the years 1870 and 1912. Only the names of Emily Dickinson and Stephen Crane would stand out with any degree of greatness, and they were exceptional cases, poets aloof from the struggle for recognition. For the more worldly poet there was little recourse; he was consigned to inaction. To provide the poets with an organ to stimulate their latent talents was Miss Monroe's first intention. She wrote: "For years it had become increasingly evident that the present day poets needed stirring up. Most of them were doing the same old thing in the same old academic way." But the "same old thing in the same


21 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 249.
old academic "way" was, at that time, the basic requirement of acceptance for publication in the quality magazines; these periodicals were not interested in serious poetry. They could not afford to print poems which required careful reading to divine their thought, and the poems that they printed had to have an immediate appeal for the common reader. As a quality magazine's editor once stated the standard of acceptance, "a poem has to appeal to the barber's wife in any Middlewest town." What type of verse did these quality magazines provide? "They carried from two to five tidbits a month, generally of a highly vapid character, sentimentally designed by such hacksters as Margaret Prescott Montaque, Fannie Stearns Davis, Florence Converse, and Margaret Sherwood." Indulgence in anything that departed from the conventional was never permitted by the quality magazines, and, indeed, they were a long time in being convinced of the contrary. It took many years of pioneering before they were jarred from their complacency.

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... nor were Harper's and Scribner's more alert. It was this indifference and aridity that Miss Monroe wished "to refresh with

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clearly not an encouraging one. Lacking public recognition, the poets suffered as a group because they lacked meeting grounds where ideas could be freely exchanged and evaluated. Both of these ills, Miss Monroe hoped, would be rectified by an official organ for poets. "The well of American poetry seemed to be thinning out and drying up and the worst of it was that nobody seemed to care." The design of Poetry was to combat this insidious inertia, and to revive and restore poetry to a dignified position.

The financial aspect of Miss Monroe's proposed scheme was first in the order of consideration. She knew that if any degree of stability for the magazine was to be attained it would have to rest on a firm, self-supporting basis. An independent source of income was absolutely essential if the magazine was to be free from petty forms of influence, and Miss Monroe was determined to accept no plan which did not assure freedom and security. She was adamant in these requirements, and any plan which offered a precarious or temporary solution was rejected as futile. Any acceptable plan had to insure a reasonable period of life for the magazine if it was to perform the function for which it would be established. This financial problem was finally solved when Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, a man of letters and a distinguished Chicagoan, suggested that perhaps Miss Monroe could secure the subscription of one hundred of the city's wealthy citizens, who would guarantee the sum of

24 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 250.

25 Ibid.
fifty dollars a year for a period of five years, thus assuring the magazine of a protected and independent income. This plan offered the best solution in that it guaranteed the magazine a reserve of five thousand dollars a year for a period of five years, and it would effectively block all forms of outside interference.

Although Henry Monroe had been dead for eight years, Harriet still retained the friendship of many of his former business associates, and it was to these men that she turned for help. While many thought the scheme foolish and destined to fail, she never became disheartened nor allowed her enthusiasm to wane. After six long months of constant campaigning, she arrived at her immediate goal.

Of the subscribers Harry Hansen has stated that:

To say that Miss Monroe's first list of guarantors read like a social register would only tell half the story; the truth was that many of these patrons of the arts were artists themselves and only incidentally members of the first families.26

The hope of capturing the support of the wealthy citizens was not fully realized, but her backers proved the better because their interest was at once personal and altruistic. This financial contribution carried no rights. It was gratuitously rendered, and it was clearly understood that the subscription to the fund afforded the guarantor no privileges, nor could it be used as a weapon of influence in determining the policy of the magazine.

Once the necessary financial question had been settled, Miss Monroe turned her attention to the poets. Could she gain the enthusiasm of the poets
and find the necessary audience for them? These and other such questions occupied Miss Monroe's attention for the next few months. "Through June and July of that summer of 1912 I spent many hours at the public library reading not only recent books by the better poets, but also all the verse in American and English magazines of the previous five years." 27 This survey of the most recent poetry afforded Miss Monroe a wide selection from which to choose her poets. From her comprehensive list she selected only those who interested her, basing the choice on their past achievements, and, in the case of young poets, on the indication of promise which they displayed. Having compiled this selected list, she mailed to each candidate a "poet's circular," which explained the motives and aims upon which the magazine was being founded. In many cases she included a personal letter, referring individually to a poet's work and expressing her desire that he would make an early contribution of some of his verses. These letters were sent out early in August and September of 1912, and within a few weeks the enthusiastic replies came pouring in. Miss Monroe then knew that her plan was to be successful.

Among the most encouraging letters was Ezra Pound's from England. He expressed his disgust at the present state of American poetry, analyzing the causes and the effects it was producing in the minds of serious poets, reproaching the degeneracy of American academic institutions, and otherwise expressing his contempt for the intellectual milieu in America, but offering Miss Monroe every assistance in her plan to restore poetry to its proper

27 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 251.
dignity. In response to Miss Monroe's request for poetical contributions, Pound wrote: "Can you teach the American poet that poetry is an art, an art with a technique, with media, an art that must be in constant flux, a constant change of manner, if it is to live?" Pound evidently believed that Poetry could accomplish a high goal for he offered his services as foreign correspondent. His offer was eagerly accepted, and with the assistance of Edith Wyatt and Alice Corbin Henderson as associate editors Miss Monroe published the first issue of Poetry in October, 1912.

CHAPTER III

THE EDITORIAL POLICY OF POETRY

In rereading the back issues of Poetry one is immediately impressed by the diversity represented in its pages. Poetry has printed poems of almost every important poet within the last forty years, and this variety and inclusiveness reflects an important aspect of the editorial policy. Of Poetry's diversity, Horace Gregory has written: "Read swiftly and without discrimination it would seem that the secret of Poetry's editorial selection of verse was to have no policy at all."¹ This statement is, of course, carefully qualified, but as a judgment on the magazine's policy it gives rise to a singularly important question: was there a concrete policy? Underneath the diversity some qualifying judgment, some principle of selection must have been present. The question admits of no easy answer and perhaps can never be answered to the complete satisfaction of all of Poetry's critics. At any rate, part of the answer is to be found in Harriet Monroe.

The founding and editing of Poetry were very important events in Miss Monroe's life. Since she never married, all of her energies were channeled into her work and for her the operation of Poetry assumed an

¹ "The Unheard of Adventure," The American Scholar," VI, 198.
important aspect in life. In view of her personal interest in her magazine it is only to be expected that the editorial policy should reflect the intellectual temper and tone of its founder-editor. She was the dominant figure behind the magazine's policy; nevertheless, this notion of her position has to be qualified. If the policy is to be clearly defined, it must not be thought of as the product of one mind; the influence of Ezra Pound, Alice Corbin Henderson, Eunice Teitjens, and other associates of the magazine must be taken into account. Poetry's policy was by and large the product of Harriet Monroe, but its application must not be thought of as being the sole product of her mind. The aid and assistance which she received from her associates was invaluable, and the magazine would have been less distinguished without their help.

When the first issue of Poetry appeared in October, 1912, the greatness that the magazine later achieved was not even remotely anticipated by Harriet Monroe. In establishing her magazine she was determined that it should be both a forceful and an effective tool in stimulating the art of poetry; but the realization that her periodical was to become a central force in the formation of a new era in poetry was not part of the plan nor even part of the dream. In her mind five or ten years was all she could reasonably hope for; but if in the short time allotted to her the magazine could effectively restore poetry to its position of rightful dignity, then the purposes for which she fought would have been fulfilled. In spite of the fact that she did not feel Poetry would have a long life, the plans for its structure could not have been more carefully laid. Behind the appearance of the first issue was
a period of two years of struggle, vigorous personal effort, and astute editorial planning.

Many months before the magazine launched its first issue Miss Monroe knew exactly what form it would take; she knew what she wanted to do, and actual publication was only a matter of time after she had once sent out the "poet's circular." But in the interim plans were being made in Boston for a periodical quite similar to the one she had planned. The Poetry Journal, as the Boston magazine was to be called, would have forced Poetry to forfeit the claim to its title if it were to appear prior to Miss Monroe's magazine. The title which Miss Monroe had selected was designed to be emphatic and she was determined not to lose it. Knowing that the Boston journal planned to appear in November of that year, she hastily gathered together the best poems that thus far had been received, and by a publication priority of one month she retained the right to the title of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse.

Before entering into any detailed discussion of the editorial policy of Poetry as enunciated in the first issue of the magazine, some mention must be made of Poetry's first editorial staff. The guarantors, as has been noted, were completely autonomous from the group which edited and published the magazine. There were, of course, several exceptions to this general rule: both Henry B. Fuller and Hobart Chatfield-Taylor were members of Poetry's first

2 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 264.

3 A comment on Poetry's sub-title, A Magazine of Verse, might also be appropriately mentioned at this point. Exactly when and why Miss Monroe selected this sub-title is never explained in any of her writings. If it is true that she realized that everything to be printed would not be poetry, but merely verse, it represents only another example of her carefulness in allowing for a margin of error in human judgment.
advisory committee, but as a group the guarantors had no voice in the operation of the magazine's policy nor in influencing the publication of any poems.

Poetry's first editorial staff was composed of Edith Wyatt, as advisory editor, and Alice Corbin Henderson as the first associate editor. Miss Henderson, a locally recognized poet and long a close friend of Harriet's, was a woman of keen intellect and sensitive perception, and the early influence which she exerted on the character of the magazine was considerable. This, then, was the group which Miss Monroe had gathered about her to help in editing the little magazine, and as the early history of Poetry proves, her choice of associates was an entirely happy one.

With the first issue of Poetry Miss Monroe made the magazine's editorial policy clear. In an article printed in the first number, "The Motive of the Magazine," a general statement of the magazine's policy and aim was enunciated. While unsigned, this article was most probably written by Miss Monroe herself since it bears marked characteristics of her journalistic style.

The point, however, is minor, and whether or not she actually composed the article, it definitely had her full approval. In conjunction with this article, there appeared a brief essay, "On the Reading of Poetry," by Edith Wyatt, in which she attempted to explain the proper aesthetic response to poetry as it

4 "Without her influence Miss Monroe's paper might have been, I felt, narrower in its scope and less epoch-making in its effect. . . . The influence she had on the early course of Poetry was decisive." (John Gould Fletcher, Life Is My Song, 194.) "Much of the attitude of the magazine towards the experimentation in new techniques which was then beginning is due to her. She was more susceptible even than Harriet herself to the possibilities of the future." (Eunice Tietjens, The World At My Shoulder, 24.)
was to be understood by the magazine's editorial group. Both of these articles and the "poet's circular," which Miss Monroe had composed and mailed to the poets in the few months preceding the first publication of Poetry, represent the three most important statements of policy. Only a detailed examination of each can completely reveal the essential core of Poetry's editorial policy as it was understood and practiced throughout Miss Monroe's long period as editor.

In discussing these three documents, Edith Wyatt's essay has the first place since it was a statement of poetic theory (albeit not a complete one), and if one was unwilling to accept it as a true position from which to judge the value of any poetic work, then the position of Poetry was fallacious. The implications of the article constituted by no means a complete poetic theory; it was simply a point of view, but one which was essential. For the magazine poetry was a living art, a reflection of life, an art which sprang from the individual mind and not a stereotyped, conventionally expressive art, an art of tradition and rules. The main ideas in Miss Wyatt's essay are contained in the following paragraph:

Many people do not like poetry . . . as a living art to be enjoyed, but rather as an exact science to be approved. To them poetry may concern herself only with a limited number of subjects to be presented in a predetermined and conventional manner and form. To such a reader the word 'form' means usually only a repeated literary effect; and they do not understand that every 'form' was in its first and best use an originality, employed not for the purpose of following any rule, but because it said truly what the artist wished to express. I suppose much of the monotony of subject and treatment observable in modern verse is due to this belief that poetry is merely a fixed way of repeating certain meritorious though highly familiar concepts of
existence—and not in the least the infinite music of words meant to speak the little and great tongues of the earth.\(^5\)

For the magazine, then, poetry was conceived as a living art which had its impetus in the conflicts of life. "The only intolerable condition in any art is inactivity, a supine acceptance of the long-accepted thing."\(^6\) Poetry's revolt against "the long-accepted thing" had a precedent in earlier literary revolts: just as the Romantics rebelled against which they construed as the formal intellectual monotony embodied in the Neo-Classicists, so Poetry and its policy represented a rebellion against the traditions of Victorianism and the Genteel Tradition of nineteenth-century America. In her essay Miss Wyatt envisions poetry as the free and unhindered expression of the poet, and this concept is at the core of Poetry's purpose. Miss Monroe completely concurred in this view; she believed that the art of poetry had ceased to be viewed as an art of living expression, that it had fallen into a state of limpness and conventional rigor. "This was the condition against which Poetry rebelled in 1912, to the scandal of the conservatives."\(^7\)

The second important document in relation to the establishment of the editorial policy was "The Motive of the Magazine." In this article Miss Monroe expresses the belief that no art or interest is too slight to have an


official organ. Every little industry and sport requires its official trade organ. The chief function of such trade organs, she writes, is to propagate and disseminate advances and news of any particular interest; moreover, it provides the opportunity for the interested parties to meet and share their knowledge. The arts have a very special need for an official voice of power if the artist is to take his rightful place in the social scheme. Poetry, unlike other art forms, suffers from inattention. While the arts of music, painting, and architecture are vigorously fostered, while great sums of money are given annually to the men who compose, paint, or build, poetry is neglected in a world which has great need for it, in a world whose great deeds might go unrecorded save for the voice and pen of the poet.

Poetry, Miss Monroe complained, has been left to herself and blamed for her inefficiency. In this article Miss Monroe advances the idea (and this is a key idea, which appears again and again in her editorial articles) that a great age of poetry is impossible unless there is a reciprocal relation between the artist and his public. Without this activating relationship art is like a rose blooming in the desert.

Poetry, she writes, is a modest effort to give the art an official voice, a corner of its own. Poetry's need for an official organ is further fortified by the neglect and indifference which it suffers from the quality magazines. In this article she further states the firm belief that an audience for poetry exists, that it will grow in numbers, and that as a sympathetic appreciation for poetry develops so too will the poets increase in power and in grace.
"The Motive of the Magazine" was a carefully conceived statement of principles, and it formed the basic foundation of the periodical's editorial policy. With the passing of time other statements were issued, clarifying the magazine's position on specific issues, but, as we shall see, Poetry never seriously deviated from its original plans as enunciated in this article. Harriet Monroe did not particularize the policy; nevertheless, the general implications contained in this essay were so adroitly put that twenty-one years after it had first appeared in the magazine she was able to state that Poetry had never veered from its original purposes.  

When the idea of publishing a magazine devoted exclusively to the art of poetry was first released to the public, it responded with mixed emotions. While some quarters predicted a short and unhappy life for the little magazine, others applauded the venture with enthusiastic approval. In spite of the dark doubts expressed by her critics, Harriet firmly believed that there was an audience for poetry. "We believe that there is a public for poetry, that it will grow and that as it becomes more numerous and appreciative the work produced in the art will grow in power, in beauty, in significance." To her it was simply a fallacious argument to say that an audience for poetry did not exist. If the audience happened to be a small one at that time she was willing to encourage it, hoping that it would increase as more and more significant poetry was written. "In a huge democracy of our age no

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8 Poetry, XLIII, October, 1933, 23-24.
interest is too slight to have an organ. Every sport, every little industry requires its own corner, its own voice, that it may find its friends, greet them, welcome them. Miss Monroe was willing to place her faith in the belief that the one necessary thing to stimulate the poets to action was to provide them with a place where they would be able to exchange ideas, to feel confident in the fact that their efforts were not unnoticed. "The present venture is a modest effort to give poetry her own place, her own voice." That the poets needed just such an organ as Poetry was undeniable.

At that time the quality magazines were becoming progressively less receptive toward the poets.

Most magazine editors say that there is no public for poetry in America; one of them wrote to a young poet that the verse his monthly accepted 'must appeal to the barber's wife of the Middle West' and others prove their distrust by printing less verse from year to year, and that rarely beyond page-end length and importance.

Miss Monroe deplored the quality magazines' attitude toward poetry, and her dislike of the treatment which poets received from the commercial editors was the cause of two important policy issues. The first, a reaction against the quality magazines' use of poems as mere page-end fillers, was to afford ample space for longer and more serious poems. "Within space limitations set at present by the small size of our monthly sheaf, we shall be able to print

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 28.
poems longer, and of more intimate and serious character, than the popular magazines can afford to use. This gave Poetry an advantage which no other magazine was in a position to offer; and in the years that followed Harriet was able to give space to many distinguished long poems which might have gone unprinted at that time.

The second feature which Poetry instituted as a reaction against the quality magazines was to pay the poets for their work. This was, of course, not a unique feature; the quality magazines also paid for the poems which they printed, but "the checks which rewarded rare acceptances were absurdly and ruinously small." Paying the poets for their work was but one feature of her program, but it was intended to serve many purposes. She hoped by this means to raise the status of poetry to that of the other arts. Writing poetry had never been a lucrative career, and it doubtlessly never will be, but Harriet hoped to make it a rewarding one. Her position on this question, moreover, did not go without its own reward, and the part which Poetry has played in the advancement of new writers is universally recognized.

Whatever the reasons for their backwardness, few commercial houses or magazines of the past thirty years can claim the honor of having served the advance guard banner: they have discovered or sponsored only about twenty per cent of the post-1912 writers; they have done nothing to initiate the new literary groups.

Paying the poets was one means of stimulating them to action. "There are four motives which inspire literature—accomplishment of an immediate end, self-expression, fame, and money. Sometimes all four combine, but the most insistent is the need for money." Miss Monroe viewed her policy of financial compensation not as a need but as a just payment for work.

When Miss Monroe founded her little magazine she did so with the purpose that it was to be the one place where poets might feel free to express their thoughts, unhampered by the restrictions of changing tastes or by existing poetic conventions.

The most important thing, in poetry as in the other arts, is not what the poet has to say, but whether, having something to say, he can manage to say it with style, magic, beauty, so that the world will stop, look, listen—and remember.

She was prepared to accept any poem which could fulfill this promise. And the type of poetry in which Miss Monroe was most interested has been ably stated by Harold Nicholson.

The Victorians cared mainly for applied poetry, for poetry as a vehicle, either of instruction or diversion, for poetry either as a sermon or a novel; we, caring less for the object or even the form of a poem insist that it shall possess an 'absolute' quality, that it shall be an end unto itself.

In its context, this statement was applied to Tennyson, but it also quite aptly


distinguishes the intellectual climate of the twentieth century from that of the Victorian Age, and it strongly emphasizes the thing in which Poetry was most interested. The quotation also has the additional merit of enumerating the traditional aesthetic vices against which Poetry rebelled.

The third document of importance in relation to the establishment of Poetry's editorial policy was the "poet's circular," which Miss Monroe had composed and mailed to the selected poets. This circular was composed prior to "The Motive of the Magazine," so that this latter article necessarily repeats some of the points made in the circular.

Since the circular was intended as an appeal to the poets, it naturally stressed the importance of the poet's position as it related to the success of the magazine. "The success of this first American effort to encourage the production and appreciation of poetry, as the other arts are encouraged, by endowment, now depends on the poets."19 The circular proceeded to enumerate the advantages which the magazine offered to the poet. First and foremost, it offered them "a chance to be heard in their own place, without the limitations imposed by the popular magazines."20 Also Poetry was prepared to pay the poets for their work; this payment was proportional with the circulation of the magazines. "If we can raise the rate paid for verse until it

19 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 251. The "poet's circular" was never printed in the magazine, but was intended only for private circulation. Miss Monroe first publicly printed it in the pages of her autobiography.

20 Ibid., 252.
equals that paid for painting, etchings, statuary, representing as much ability, time and reputation, we shall feel that we have done something to make it possible for poets to practice their art and be heard. 21 This was, of course, a very noble, if somewhat naive ambition, and the difficulty of attaining a proper perspective of poetry's position at that time makes it hard to gauge the true justification of Harriet's aspirations.

In order that the efforts of the magazine might prove successful, Miss Monroe appealed to the poets to submit their best work. That Poetry's sympathies were for the work of the literary vanguard was clear, but this interest was not an exclusive one, as Miss Monroe pointed out. "We shall read with special interest poems of modern significance, but the most classic subject will not be declined if it reaches a high standard of quality." 22 The magazine had been conceived in a spirit of adventure and the fact that it gave most of its sympathetic support to modern works was quite natural. It should be remembered, moreover, that this spirit was primarily intended to inspire the poet to original creation, to acquire confidence in the merit of the newness of their work. In an essay printed in Poetry two years after its inception Ezra Pound wrote:

Now Poetry has frankly tried to widen the poet's range, to question conventional barriers, whether technical or spiritual, inherited from the past, and to help to bring the modern poet face to face with the modern world. We have printed not only odes and

21 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 252.

22 Ibid.
sonnets, blank verse dramas, and rhymed pentameter narratives, but imagistic songs, futuristic fugues, fantasies in verse libre, rhapsodies in polyphonic prose—any dash for freedom which seemed to have life in it—a fervor for movement and the beauty of open spaces—even if the goal was vague and remote, or quite unattainable in the distance. 23

Pound perhaps tends to dramatize the situation, but his words are true to the facts. In a backward glance, Frederick Hoffman has assayed Poetry’s attitude toward newness and innovation much more soberly. He has said: "One of the values of Poetry’s early years was its hospitality to and its vigorous defense of experimentalism in verse." 24

Miss Monroe was inclined to embrace a radical point of view concerning poetry as may be seen from her own poetical work and from various statements which she made from time to time in the pages of Poetry, but her radicalism was always of a very sober sort. The meaning of this statement can best be explained by an example. "As part of . . . a movement, even the most extravagant experiments, the most radical innovations are valuable, for the moment at least, as an assault against prejudice." 25 This is a carefully qualified statement. Miss Monroe was cognizant of the transitory value of extreme radicalism, but she was also aware of the fact that anything which partook of extremeness was essentially unworthy as art. The point is important as

25 Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds., The New Poetry, New York, 1917, xii. This anthology has had two revisions and has been reprinted fourteen times, the last in 1944.
Miss Monroe's attitude later was opposed by Ezra Pound's point of view. As might be expected, while Harriet Monroe admitted the merit of Pound's radicalism she never endorsed it with her full sympathy. For her, the arch enemy of poetry was complacency; but the solution to the problem of poetical inaction was not extreme radicalism. This issue will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent part of this chapter. At this point it is sufficient to quote Harriet's comments on what she called "colonialism."

The most dangerous enemy of this spirit, the spirit of adventure and originality, is self-distrust—a certain colonialism which leans upon London, Paris, New York, thus bidding our artists imitate instead of create, or exiling them instead of keeping them at home. Every artistic venture confronts the benumbing influence of this enemy, meets the facile temptation to become itself colonial.26

Poetry was designed to stimulate the poet, to give him purpose and direction. Miss Monroe expressed the belief "that a great period, in any department of human activity, comes only when a strong and widespread creative impulse meets an equal impulse of sympathy."27 This concept always annoyed Ezra Pound; he maintained that the truly great poet needs no such sympathy. "The artist is not dependent upon the multitude of his listeners."28 In spite of Pound's opposition to this idea, Harriet always maintained that there had to be mutual sympathy between the artist and his audience; one of the purposes


of Poetry was to create this mutual understanding. And in her wide and varied reading of contemporary verse at that time she perceived "hints of freshness" in the new poetry. Harriet hoped to "find and follow these traces of a new vitality in the art." 29 Poetry, its policy and its prizes, was designed to stimulate the poet, to extend to him the mutual sympathy which she believed to be so necessary for the creation of any art.

Another important feature of Poetry's plans was to revive and educate an audience for poetry. To create the proper relationship between the poet and his audience was, and always has been, one of Poetry's important functions. "Poetry may be conceived in solitude, but it must be born into the peopled world, for it is essentially a social, almost a convivial art." 30 It was one of Miss Monroe's chief hopes that Poetry would "develop for this art a responsive public." 31 She further emphasized her desire for and the need of such a sympathetic audience by inscribing the Whitman motto—"to have great poets there must be a great audience too"—on Poetry's cover. If, in the words of E. M. Forster, the audience would "only connect" the relationship of their position with the inspiration of the poet, the purpose of Poetry would be partially fulfilled. Miss Monroe was never concerned with the size of an audience; she never hoped to bring poetry to the masses. If the magazine could acquire an intelligent, sensitive, and discriminating following, its purpose

29 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 250.

30 Harriet Monroe, "Twenty-One," Poetry, XLIII, October, 1933, 3.

31 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 252.
would be achieved.\textsuperscript{32}

In the "poet's circular," Miss Monroe attempted to enumerate the advantages which a magazine like \textit{Poetry} would have for the poets; the circular was a personal appeal, designed to stimulate the interest of the poet, but it was more than just that; it was also a sound statement of principles—principles which she incorporated into the official policy of the magazine. "A kind of declaration of principles and purposes was this circular, and on the whole we think our worst enemy would admit that the magazine has lived up to it."\textsuperscript{33}

In closing this discussion of \textit{Poetry}'s editorial policy as stated in the first issue of the magazine, some mention must be made of the future plans which Miss Monroe had for the magazine. The chief reason why a number of these points were not explicitly made part of the policy at the time of its inception was that, in the question of prizes, the necessary funds were not forthcoming. To reward the poets who had achieved excellence in their work had always been part of Miss Monroe's plan. Later, when grants of money had been given to the magazine for its annual prizes, a system of awarding several prizes yearly was instituted. Another feature of the policy which had not been

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\textsuperscript{32} It is interesting to note in relation to this question of the size of \textit{Poetry}'s audience that Miss Monroe anticipated a much larger subscription list than was ever realized; she hoped that the number would reach ten thousand, but it never did. For many years the subscription list numbered a bare three thousand, and today it remains at almost the same figure.

\textsuperscript{33} Harriet Monroe, "These Five Years," \textit{Poetry}, XI, October, 1917, 38.
\end{flushright}
made clear in the first issue was a system of turning the magazine's facilities over to a special group or to schools of poetry in order that they might have their work represented in the pages of Poetry. As will be discussed later, this scheme aroused deep resentment and harsh criticism from Ezra Pound; but it had never been Miss Monroe's intention that the magazine should ever become the tool of any specialized group, representing only a small facet of the poetry which was being written at that time.

Poetry was not founded on any theory of poetry nor did it ever foster any school of poetry. "Harriet Monroe had few pretensions as a critic, and throughout her life she held an attitude of sharp distrust toward painters who talked too much about their art and poets who had too many theories concerning poetry."

She made no pretense of being an erudite critic of art, and the fact that she never identified either herself or the magazine with any school of poetry was an unusual position. Being a mature woman of fifty two when Poetry was launched, she never suffered, as did Margaret Anderson of The Little Review, from erratic spells of enthusiasm. "Margaret was volatile, unpredictable, brilliantly imaginative, impatient, stubborn. Harriet was mature, serene, intelligent, and determined." Such qualities of character as Alson Smith enumerates were so much a part of Miss Monroe's personality that their imprint was firmly stamped on the character of the magazine. Of prime


35 Alson Smith, Chicago's Left Bank, 22.
importance to the survival of *Poetry* was this quality of stability, which had its source in the strength of Miss Monroe.

In his chapter on the history of Chicago's little magazines, Alson Smith has said of them that "generally, they are the reflection of a single personality, and always they are highly controversial." The applicability of this statement is immediately seen to be true in the case of Margaret Anderson and *The Little Review*, but it is also true, if to a lesser degree, of *Poetry* and its founder-editor. Unlike the editor of *The Little Review*, Harriet was never the kind of person to become enthusiastically enraptured by anything; all of her actions were motivated by more stable standards. Alson Smith has carefully contrasted the personalities of these two eminent editors and he shows the reflection of their characters to have been strongly imprinted on the kind and quality of their respective magazines. An example can best illustrate this difference: whereas Margaret Anderson printed James Joyce's *Ulysses* and suffered a lawsuit because of it, Harriet would never have published the work. First, she would have thought it obscene, and second, quite unintelligible.

In attempting to analyze the editorial policy of *Poetry* subsequent


37 *The Little Review* was the first to print Joyce's great work in this country, but several issues of the magazine were suppressed and the editors were served with papers by the Society for the Suppression of Vice. A famous lawsuit and a more famous law decision were the result. In respect to this case, it can be said that both Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap (co-editor) championed the cause of intellectual freedom.
to that announced in the first issue, it is impossible to approach the ques-
tion from a chronological point of view. In many respects, as the author hopes
to show in the following pages, the policy was determined directly by Miss
Monroe's attitudes towards certain aspects of poetry; hence a difference order
has been imposed. While a chronicle presents an already existing and natural
order, it would in this case result in a sporadic impression of Poetry's
policy. The writer has tried to isolate the important ideas which constituted
that policy and to relate the various pronouncements pertaining to these con-
cepts. Thus a clearer picture of Poetry's editorial attitude toward ambiguity
and obscurity can be attained if the reader is able to see the related pro-
nouncements on this issue.

At the beginning of this chapter, the diversity represented in
Poetry's pages was discussed and the question of whether or not Poetry had a
concrete policy was asked. When Horace Gregory wrote that the secret of
Poetry's selection of verse seemed not to be dependent on any discernible
principles he was questioning not only the concreteness of the policy but also
its basic liberalism. Was the magazine's policy broad and inclusive? The an-
swer to this question is a qualified yes. That Poetry was to support a broad
and inclusive policy was an early recognized fact in its history. "Eclecti-
cism was the very life of the magazine and within it one may find the evidence
of Miss Monroe's cultural heritage."38 And on the same point Pound has

38 Horace Gregory, "The Unheard of Adventure," The American Scholar,
VI, 198.
written: "An exclusive editorial policy would not have done the work of an inclusive policy. . . . It is to Miss Monroe's credit that Poetry never degenerated into a factional organ." All of these statements concerning Poetry's liberalism are applicable only in the general sense; on the whole, they represent the true spirit of Poetry's policy, but being generalities they do not take cognizance of the violations of Poetry's declared liberal spirit and the fact that the magazine did not always live up to its own ideals.

That Miss Monroe was truly liberal in spirit there seems to be little argument among her critics. When she founded Poetry it was with the spirit of liberalism and a willingness to assay both sides of a question. And on this trait of her character, Pound has paid her the finest tribute:

"The elasticity of her perceptions and the freshness of her interests were those of a great editor, and as no one more acrimoniously differed with her in point of view than I did, so, I think, no one is better able to testify to her unfailing sincerity, to the unfailing purity of her intentions." It was "the freshness of her interests" that gave the magazine its quality of diversity. This inclusiveness was intended from the first, and in the second issue of Poetry an editorial article, "The Open Door," stated the basic liberalism of Poetry.

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 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


40 Ibid.
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.\footnote{41}

The fact that Poetry did not become a factional organ, as Pound has expressed it, was due mainly to the influence of Miss Monroe; she believed that the growth and development of genius could never be an isolated process, and had the magazine restricted itself to a limited field of endeavor the chance of discovering the great poets would be minimized. "The masterpiece is always a rarity, and it blooms not in a desert, but in the midst of lesser growth."\footnote{42}

In its search for the great poets the magazine printed a good deal of "lesser growth," and this quite naturally created controversy. But Miss Monroe had a theory on this, too. "Controversy," she wrote, "is good for the soul, and the magazine which expresses but one opinion is doomed."\footnote{43}

The comments which have been written on Poetry's eclecticism are all interesting and revealing as criticism. If the magazine did not always achieve the ideal which it had set for itself, if it was not as eclectic as it might have been, its policy was always extremely sincere.\footnote{44} Harriet herself had the feeling that the magazine did not always produce the best work. "No doubt," she wrote, "we have compromised, we have followed false gods, we have kept our eyes on the ground, and have strayed into narrow places, and been contented with

\footnote{41} "The Open Door," \textit{Poetry}, I, November, 1912, 44.
\footnote{44} Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.
On the whole, however, Miss Monroe thought that the magazine had achieved a good record for printing the best that was being written at that time. In the early years, nevertheless, the critics were severe with the new little magazine. The conservative *Dial* once criticized *Poetry*'s early efforts as follows: "The quest has seemingly been for the bizarre, for the astonishing, for the novelty for novelty's sake, even for the shocking. . . . The editor too seldom allows a number to go out without containing her own verses."  Perhaps what seems mildly different today was shocking to the conservative mind in 1913. But the criticism which best expresses *Poetry*'s position on the point of liberalism has been made by Morton D. Zabel. He writes:

> It has been safely eclectic because it was stably personal; it has been sanely cosmopolitan because it has been so honestly native. If, in this adaptability to the conditions and confusions of one of poetry's most baffling periods, it has sometimes fallen in grace, it has never lost its sense of tradition, of standards, and authority.

Strong emphasis should be placed on the phrases "safely eclectic" and "stably personal" for they are the keynotes to the magazine's success during Miss Monroe's period of editorship.

It is impossible to make a general statement concerning *Poetry*'s policy of accepting poems without restriction as to their form or content. While the magazine was always willing to accept poems of high quality, certain

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restrictions were inevitable. These restrictions were not part of the policy as declared in the first issue; they came into being only as certain problems arose which seemed, to Harriet, to be carrying modern poetry away from the important issues of the art. Another difficulty in assaying Poetry's liberalism in regard to this problem is the fact that there is no opportunity to see and judge the poems which Poetry rejected as unsuitable for the magazine; in order to make some judgment on the extent of Poetry's liberalism of form and content it is necessary to turn to the printed poems, the editorial comments on this subject, and to the statements of two of Poetry's former associates.

In the "poet's circular," Miss Monroe wrote: "We promise to refuse nothing because it is too good, whatever be the nature of its excellence. We shall read with special interest poems of modern significance, but the most classic subject will not be declined if it reaches a high standard of quality."

While Poetry militated against the evils of tradition, it also recognized the value of trusting to tradition and the magazine was never against traditional poems per se. "The great poets of today do not discard tradition because they follow the speech of today rather than that of Shakespeare's time, or strive for organic rhythm rather than use a mold which has been perfected by others."

Following the lines set down by the poets of the earlier centuries was uninspiring and imitative; the important thing to be learned from tradition was not

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48 Monroe, A Poet's Life, 252.

49 Ibid.
rules of prosody but the basic ideas of life. Of the modern poets, Miss Monroe has said: "On the contrary, they follow the great tradition when they seek a vehicle suited to their own epoch and their own creative mood, and resolutely reject all others." 50

That the magazine’s policy was extremely liberal in respect to poetical form there is no question as a cursory examination of back issues of the magazine will prove. Poetry’s liberal attitude toward form, of course, engendered some of the magazine’s most stimulating controversies: the attacks on the free-verse movement which Poetry championed as a new development in poetical freedom were incited by its liberalism toward poetical form. Indeed, the most condemnatory criticism leveled against Poetry centered around this issue. "Most critics," Harriet once wrote, "get used to one kind of movement; the wave as it recedes, leaves them high and dry—no, high and very damp; the next wave bowls them over, and gets into their eyes and ears." 51 If the magazine was liberal in allowing every poetic form to prove its worth in the arena of public opinion, this policy was due to the editors’ firm conviction that diversity of presentation was the core and life of the magazine. And if, at times, the public disagreed with the magazine’s estimate of the poems which it printed, Harriet considered that to be a good sign. "If one is going to print opinions that the public already agrees with, what is the use of printing ’em at all? Good art can’t possibly be palatable all at once." 52 While Pound’s statement was not

50 Monroe, A Poet’s Life, 252.
52 The Letters of Ezra Pound: 1914-1941, 12.
made with direct relation to the issue of freedom of form, it most certainly epitomizes the magazine's general attitude toward the public and its opinion. If Poetry were to confine itself to the long respected and established meters, its function as a stimulus to innovations and creative originality would cease to exist.

That Poetry aspired to be unprejudiced and impersonal in regard to the intellectual content of the poems submitted to the magazine for publication was part of its original policy. "The editors," Harriet wrote in one of her editorial articles, "desire to print the best English verse which is being written today, regardless of where, by whom, and under what theory of art it is written." While the magazine was dedicated to free thought in policy its practice and theory did not always harmonize. Whether this situation still continues today is beyond the scope of this paper, but under the leadership of Miss Monroe the poet did not always have the intellectual freedom which Poetry's original policy indicated. "There was little enough quarrel with Harriet Monroe, except on the grounds that her editorial scrutiny had been at times a bit austere and that she sometimes interfered with the poet's right to 'absolute freedom' of expression." Her dislike of certain attitudes and philosophies of life undoubtedly prevented her from accepting the works of some poets who expressed these beliefs in their work. This is particularly true of the proletarian poets of the early Thirties. "The 'proletarian' poetry of the thirties


was sometimes published in the magazine, but to a considerable extent so was much lyric poetry of a 'softer' strain. I was quite out of sympathy with the Marxian poets and so was Harriet.  

It was during the late period of Miss Monroe's editorship that she was looked upon, in many quarters, not as a rebel as much as a conservative. Some of Poetry's critics thought that the magazine had changed factions and had veered over to a more conservative position in the Thirties and to a certain extent this view is not incorrect. Since Harriet was out of sympathy with the Marxian or class-conscious poets who were then prominent, she rarely printed their work. The other poets who were coming into the public eye at that time also displeased her; such new poets as Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Ivor Winters, William Carlos Williams, Laura Riding, and others who followed the lead of some of these, were a group for whom she felt little reverence. Of course, Poetry printed these poets, as Harriet always felt that they were serious in their work, and no matter how heartily she disagreed with their philosophy or craftsmanship, she believed that they should not be denied the opportunity to be heard.

Many of Poetry's early critics pronounced it a "bold, shocking, and irreverent" periodical, but if to be new and different is "bold, shocking, and

58 Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.
Irreverent," the magazine certainly lived up to this charge. In the first bound volume of *Poetry* the names of such poets as Pound, Yeats, H.D., Rabindranath Tagore, and Lindsay, proclaim the arrival of a new and different poetry, and while in its early years the magazine might have outraged the sensibilities of the conservatives, it was always restrained and prudent in the type of verse which it printed. The magazine's policy of intellectual freedom was also a prudent one; Miss Monroe knew the limits of propriety and she carefully observed them, much to the annoyance of Ezra Pound. She definitely did not want the magazine to develop into a factional organ dominated by any group regardless of its merits. The fact that she held to a middle course and maintained so prudent a policy was a very definite advantage; and if at times the magazine missed a good work, she still believed that she was directing *Poetry* in the best interests of the art. Indeed, Pound could afford to be derisive in his opposition, but had Miss Monroe bowed to his judgment the magazine would have lost its distinctive character—and its purpose. "If Pound had been allowed to run the magazine at that time we would undoubtedly have had another *Criterion*, exclusive, esoteric, and erudite."59 There is, of course, a need and a place for a periodical like *The Criterion*, but such a magazine must necessarily appeal to a limited audience. Had *Poetry* accepted Pound's advice, the result would have been twofold: they would have lost their audience and gained the respect of the more advanced critics. "Harriet was definitely against losing

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bring the blush to the cheek of a deaf man."\textsuperscript{[4]} "Writing on the walls" or obscenities were flatly rejected by the magazine; however, there were all shades of indecencies for Miss Monroe, and her choice of such words as frank and risque are quite accurate in describing the things to which she objected. Poetry's strictures on this matter were by no means confined to Pound's work; there were many other young poets whose works were rejected because they displayed the adolescent tendency to shock their audience. The early poems of E. E. Cummings are an example of this tendency. But the issue of respectability, moreover, has wider ramifications; as part of a set policy it was the most prudential course to follow. Harriet had no desire to champion the course of intellectual freedom to the point where the poet would be allowed to write and print anything and everything, and she had no intention of embroiling her magazine in a cause of doubtful merit.

Harriet Monroe has been praised as perhaps the least prejudiced and biased of editors, and if these commendations are understood in the comparative sense they are quite true. She was, however, not without some strong feelings on certain issues. That she admired poetry which expressed the immensity and vibrant life of modern culture was surely not a limitation; and, as a matter of fact, her optimistic philosophy of world progress was the foundation for her feelings toward some modern poets. But this unbounded optimism engendered in her an acute dislike for its opposite—pessimism or defeatism. Harriet could

\textsuperscript{[4]} The Letters of Ezra Pound, 126.
never tolerate a defeatist attitude. While Poetry was dedicated to express all intellectual attitudes, it was never, at least under Miss Monroe's editorship, wholly sympathetic toward certain poets. Horace Gregory has made a most interesting observation on Miss Monroe's attitude towards moral decay and defeatism.

To Harriet Monroe there was no lack of consistency in publishing the work of poets whose taste and intentions seemed at a far distance from her own; she had the courage to publish the poetry of many writers long before it had become fashionable to do so, and with this knowledge and assurance, she continued to edit Poetry up to the date of her death in 1936. Meanwhile the early impulses and enthusiasms that had attended the founding of her magazine had begun to change their temper soon after the close of the First World War. It would not be too far-fetched to say that the "poetic renaissance" came to a final conclusion with the publication of T. S. Eliot's poem, 'The Waste Land,' in the November, 1922, issue of The Dial. From that moment onward, Harriet Monroe's position seemed to represent all the fervor, the warmth, the native quickness, and innocence that defined the hopeful attitudes of Middle Western America before the war, and readers of 'The Waste Land' became aware of something from another world than that of the 'new' poetry of which Miss Monroe was so ardent a champion. The unrest and the spiritual malady that had become prevalent in the large cities of Europe and of the United States seemed to speak out in voices so disturbing that it was no longer possible to ignore them, and another day beyond the period of the 'poetic renaissance' had well begun.

Poetry was never able to re-create those exciting days of its early existence—the days of discovering people like, say, Vachel Lindsay or Carl Sandburg. The

65 Marion Strobel in a personal interview.

66 It is interesting to note in relation to this attitude of Miss Monroe's, that Poetry never printed a single poem by either Thomas Hardy or A.E. Housman, although both men lived and wrote for many years after its founding.

intellectual milieu had, indeed, changed, and every serious critic of Poetry will admit that the magazine suffered because of it. Miss Monroe was aware of the change in the literary climate and in Eliot's poem she sensed portentous signs of poetry's future. In one of her editorial articles she wrote:

I have spoken of Eliot's Waste Land, which gives a vivid suggestion of the whole vast modern fabric crashing down in ruinous chaos; and there are many other poems which present or imply or prophesy failure or spiritual disaster in the modern scheme. In other words, the poets have preferred weakness to strength. When mighty deeds are being done, they follow imaginatively not the hero who is doing but the underdog, be he labor-slave or highbrow, who is crushed by them.68

Eliot's great poem, of course, influenced many of the new poets who were coming to the fore in the years which followed the publication of The Waste Land; and for some time Poetry continued to receive poems imitative of Eliot's poem. Dejected young men were writing about "rats and bones and crawling things" without understanding the basic integration with which they were utilized in The Waste Land.69 Harriet's attitude toward the new poetry which developed from the poses of spiritual disintegration was naturally hostile; her personality rebelled against the work of these defeatists. And what Horace Gregory has said of Poetry's changed temper is true to a certain extent; it is quite reasonable that the magazine should reflect the new intellectual climate, that is, that Poetry itself should have lapsed into a period of fallowness. From what has been said concerning Miss Monroe's views on defeatism, it would be


69 Statement of Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.
wrong to conclude that the magazine restricted itself only to poems which reflected the world in a rosy light; the issues were not so sharply drawn and all shades and complexions of both religious and political philosophies are to found in Poetry's pages. It little mattered what the political complexion or religious belief of a poet was; if he could give voice to that idea with style, delicacy, subtlety, and grace, Miss Monroe would accept the work.70

It was difficult to logically separate and categorize the basic ideas which formed Poetry's policy for both the causes and effects are interwoven to form a complex fabric of motives. To discuss the magazine's policy on the form and content of the poems which it accepted, it is necessary to include all of the relevant material relating to this specific issue. To attempt to separate this point from a consideration of the poetical technique produces an unfair impression of the process which Poetry followed in analyzing a particular poem. Poetry had one test which the editors applied to a poem, but the test was a maze of factors.

The one test of acceptance for any poem to be printed in Poetry was the quality of the work. "The test, limited by ever-fallible human judgment, is to be quality alone; all forms, whether narrative, dramatic or lyric, will be acceptable."71 As the decisive test, Miss Monroe could not have selected a more nebulous word than quality; and the exact meaning which she attached to it is both vague and equivocal, but it would be an error to suppose that there was

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70 Statement of Marion Strobel in a personal interview.

not a more concrete guide for judging a poem. The process of judging a poem may have changed from time to time, depending upon the various critics, but the result was consistent, that is, the magazine consistently maintained a high standard of criticism and it did print poems of quality.

Miss Monroe was the final judge of what the magazine would print. As a critic of poetry Miss Monroe had one weak spot: she liked narrative works and at times she would accept them above better poems of a different type. She was, however, rarely the first-reader of the incoming manuscripts; she usually assigned this task to the associate editors. The first-reading was to a large extent the most important. The task of being the first-reader was enormously difficult and exhausting. Regarding incoming manuscripts Miss North has written: "We can accept twenty-five poems a month; we receive five thousand." Needless to say, Miss Monroe always selected the most discriminating of her associates for the position of first-reader; the person chosen for the task had to be mature, alert, and sensitive, and had to be able to maintain a sharp sense of criticism over extended periods of time. The first-reader was responsible for eliminating all the poems which were trite and banal in thought, and all of the poems which were poorly executed in technique. Had the process been one merely of elimination, the first-reader's task would have been greatly simplified, but it was more than just sorting the wheat from the chaff. Up to a

72 Statement of Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.

certain point it was not too difficult to eliminate the good from the bad, but once that had been done there still remained a large number of very good poems; and it was this group which gave the most trouble. "It is here that the personal prejudices of the editors are most likely to make the decision." Once the first-reader had selected the best poems, she submitted them to Miss Monroe for her final decision. Harriet would often show these poems to numerous other people for their criticism before she ostensibly rendered her final judgment. Miss North relates an amusing story concerning this point: when Harriet would show a poem to a visitor for his judgment, she would have already made her own decision on the work and she rarely, if ever, changed her mind regardless of what was said about the poem. Harriet was primarily interested in the visitor's reaction to the poem; hence, whatever was said either in favor or discredit of the poem made no real difference. Often too there was intra-office dissension over the merits of a particular poem, but Miss Monroe's decision was usually final.

The process of selection was subjective to some extent and dependent on the taste of the editors. If Poetry's standard ultimately rested on the variable quality of taste, it always produced remarkable results in selecting and printing only works of high quality. "Harriet had put her trust in the resources of her own imagination and intuition, and since she also possessed the gift of common sense—that rarest of all human senses—she made few

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mistakes in feeling or in judgment." Poetry generally maintained a high standard of criticism, and, if at times the magazine failed to achieve the high quality of its own ideal, the sincerity and honesty of its editors can never be doubted. As editor Miss Monroe did not feel that she was choosing poems for all time; she looked upon Poetry as being analogous to the Art Institute. She, as editor, was hanging up the best contemporary works for display; hence an error in judgment was not as severe a breach as if the magazine were attempting to print only poems of permanent significance.

Granted that the process of selection which Poetry utilized was both objective and subjective in its approach to the poetry, it is impossible to examine the subjective element, that is, the final factors of taste which determined whether or not the magazine would print a specific poem. But the objective standard is more tangible and readily admits of examination. The editors of Poetry devised a set of rules (now no longer in use in the formal sense) a sort of poetic yardstick, which they applied to the new poems. Strictly speaking these rules were not composed as critical touchstones for the editors or first-readers; their chief purpose was to give the poets whose work they rejected some idea of what was wrong with the poems. Any discussion of these rules presents a negative approach to the question; the rules illustrate what the magazine would not accept rather than a positive answer to the question of what the magazine would print. But they are, nevertheless, valuable in that


76 Statement of Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.
they cast a good deal of light on Poetry's critical standard. The rules form the objective half of this standard.

The following listing is by no means a complete one, but it does contain the major points which were the chief efforts of the poets who submitted unacceptable verse. 77

1. Any poem noticeably imitative of a known writer was taboo.

2. Structure was stressed. That is, the editors disliked poems which ran to great length and said too little.

3. Padding of lines to make them fit the rhythm was never accepted.

4. Any poeticesius, such as 'winged' for flew, 'bloom' for flower, 'blue' for sky was out.

5. Propaganda poetry per se was never acceptable.

6. There was an editorial prejudice against overstatement; understatement was always better form. 78

7. There was a prejudice against typographical idiosyncrasies.

8. Personal verse and verse in poor taste were unacceptable.

9. Language must be like heightened conversation unless the work was a period piece, or gained atmosphere by depending on period words; otherwise the poem had to be part of the modern age.

77 The author is indebted to Miss North for these rules. She, as a former first-reader, related the rules from memory and they are therefore not complete, but they serve to show the major prejudices of Poetry.

78 Miss North cites the following as a prime example of the thing which Poetry was trying to avoid. "God! God! Is there a God?/ My brimming eyes drip blood./ Why should I, poor human clod/ Be lost, lost in this flood?"
While these rules do not form a complete statement of the component factors which were considered in judging a poem, they serve to illustrate a part of the process. The subjective part, or the decisions which involved taste more than observable poetic technique, cannot be so easily shown. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to say that the taste of the editors was of a very wide variety as the back issues of the magazine prove.

The great variety of poetic achievement which Poetry encompassed displays the magazine's actively radical policy. While Miss Monroe always desired that the magazine be advanced in its views, she was careful never to allow it to become the tool of any group. Poetry maintained an actively radical, yet modified, policy; its radicalism is best seen by comparing it with other magazines of the same type, and the modification of this radicalism can also be seen by the same method. Harriet was radical in the sense that she wanted the poet to return to the fundamental and cardinal issues of poetry, and in order to achieve her purposes she directed Poetry along these radical lines. The radicalism, however, most certainly must not be thought of as a desire for sweeping changes. Indeed, Miss Monroe rejected them when they appeared in the Thirties; she rejected the advanced radicalism of such writers as James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and E. E. Cummings; and both she and Pound differed on many occasions over the relative merits of his work. Harriet was never prepared to be as radical as Pound (nor as narrow).

In the remaining part of this chapter the author hopes to show that Poetry's editorial policy was one of radicalism, but radicalism tempered by a certain amount of conservatism.
In the radical sense, possibly the most immediate thing which *Poetry* hoped to combat was the poet’s long dependence on traditional forms; Harriet was anxious that the poet be aware of the present. "Numerous books, and more numerous manuscripts appeal importantly for time and space, whose eager authors seem as unaware of the twentieth-century as if they had spent these recent years in an Elizabethan manor-house or in a vine-clad Victorian cottage." The thing which Miss Monroe most strongly objected to was the arid, sterile quality of the verse which was being written at the turn of the century; the poetry of this period seemed to lack creative originality and imagination—two things which the new poetry had in abundance. Of the new poetry, Miss Monroe wrote: "The deprecatory, apologetic attitude toward contemporary American art is more to be found in the academic mind trained upon the past and living upon formula." It was not the spirit of tradition which was the target of her attack but the conformity to externals which tradition engendered. The publication of Pound’s "Contemporania" in 1913 aroused the vehement criticism that *Poetry* was oblivious to the wisdom of tradition; and to this charge Miss Monroe was quick to reply: "Their meaning would seem to be tradition of external form rather than the large tradition of spiritual motive, a mere binding tradition of detail for which we confess little reverence. Such tradition is not for the strong, but for the weak." The purpose of

Poetry was to foster a new spirit of creativeness, and this could not be accomplished if the poets were to remain dependent on "the worn-out machinery of rhymed eloquence." The poet must first seek to understand himself and his age, and to develop his poetic talent so that he can adequately express his own age, and not that of bygone years. Harriet's one admonition to the poets was for them to realize the modernity of the age. "The task for the American poet is twice as difficult as it is for his continental brother. The artistic tradition upon which he has to build is solely . . . individual. It is a great tradition, nevertheless, and essentially so in spirit, and it is in spirit that it must be emulated."

Looking back on the history of modern poetry, the causes and trends which produced this great body of work are more clearly definable. The great innovators and masters--Whitman, Pound, Eliot, and the French Symbolists--to name but a few--made substantial contributions to the main body of modern poetry. To review the past is always an easier task than to foretell the future; history has a permanency which admits of no alteration. To foresee the permanent excellence of certain trends--the very things for which modern poetry is today esteemed--was the task Poetry performed for the art. When Harriet urged the poet to write with greater simplicity of diction and to sever his dependence upon the formal aspects of "rhymed eloquence," she was, of course,

81 Alice Corbin Henderson, "Too Far from Paris," Poetry, IV, June, 1911, 111.

not being original, for these concepts had long been part of the Irish Literary
Movement. Yeats had stressed them as first principles much earlier than the
founding of Poetry; and Miss Monroe, in her great respect for Yeats, recognized
in his poetical doctrine the quality of permanent excellence. Realizing the va-

tue of simplicity of form and diction, Miss Monroe made them part of Poetry's
policy; and the magazine was always favorable to simplicity and sincerity over
studied elegance either of thought or style. And as late as 1918 Harriet still
felt the necessity to admonish the poets: "How often we have urged the poets
to forget the 'magnificent gesture,' to talk 'in ordinary language of ordinary
things.'"85

Miss Monroe's encouragement of these new literary ideals was part
of the magazine's radicalism, and as editor she was prepared to support new in-
novations and experimentation in diction and poetic technique. The ideals which
Poetry fostered can best be seen in Miss Monroe's analysis of modern poetry as
it appeared in the introduction to the first edition of the anthology which
she and Miss Henderson edited.

The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realiza-
tion of life. . . . It is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent,
than most poetry of the Victorian period and much work of earlier
periods. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity
and sincerity—an ideal which implies an individual, unsteretyped
rhythm. It looks out more eagerly than in; it becomes objective.86

Essentially Miss Monroe's analysis of the new poetry embodies all of the


86 Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds., The New Poetry,
things that Poetry was trying to achieve in its editorial policy; the magazine hoped to be able to display the best work which possessed these qualities.

Maintaining the view that modern poetry was objective, it was natural that Poetry was not wholly sympathetic to works of the poets who came to the fore in the late Twenties and early Thirties. Harriet had a strong prejudice against poetry which was of a highly introspective nature, or works which required unusual perspicacity on the part of the reader for understanding. In her mind lucidity was always a virtue; obscurity was always a vice. And with this emphasis on directness and simplicity, Poetry was able to sail through its early years and the period of the Twenties (which were chiefly lyrical), but the poetry of the Thirties presented an entirely new problem for the magazine. If quality appears most salient in Miss Monroe's editorial articles, it is the stress which she laid upon the bonds of art to life. That she felt very keenly on this point can be seen in her own judgment on Ezra Pound's later work:

Of late I have felt that Ezra Pound was sinking too deep in mental easy-chairs of the library, that he was paying the penalty of too much specialization, of isolation with literary groups, apart from the constructive forces which are making the next age. Super-sophistication is more desiccating than ignorance—the artist needs to refresh himself continually at the primal springs of life, by intercourse with simpler people who plant and build and invent, and with powerful people who do these things mightily and direct the energies of the world. 87

87 Harriet Monroe, "Ezra Pound," Poetry, XXVI, May, 1925, 96. This quotation also reveals why Harriet felt so much admiration for the work of Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters.
Harriet's adverse reaction to this type of poetry was by no means limited to Pound. Miss Monroe had a definite preference for simple and direct poetry, and her taste has been called "catholic" by innumerable critics of the magazine. "Very nearly everything that has been written in complaint of Poetry's policy during the past quarter century has been in disapproval of her avowedly catholic taste." The charge that her taste was not as advanced as or as eclectic as it might have been, however, should not eclipse the more dominant features of her character. "No one can question her directness and sincerity, her discriminating and sensitive taste." These are two seemingly contradictory estimates of Harriet's personality, but there is a degree of truth in each of them, and in a certain sense they represent the paradox of Miss Monroe.

While Harriet maintained these strong views on esoteric poetry, she was not so narrow or insular as to banish the poets who wrote in this vein from the pages of Poetry. Even when Miss Monroe heartily disagreed with certain schools or poets, she still believed that they were serious artists, and consequently should not be denied the opportunity to be heard. But still the magazine suffered because of those attitudes, especially during the Thirties when it printed far too many love lyrics from the pens of middle-aged unmarried women. The love lyrics were the only alternative to the esoteric and Marxian

88 Gregory, "The Unheard of Adventure," The American Scholar, VI, 198.
90 Statement of Jessica Nelson North in a personal interview.
91 Ibid.
poets (the greater of the two evils in Harriet's mind). On the subject of esoteric poetry, Miss Monroe has written:

"Once more we have 'the doctrine of the folding-in, the closure, the esoteric—the aristocratic conception of the Poet, the ancient spirit of caste.' The poet deliberately aims at being unintelligible to all but the specialists, deliberately discards all the common aids which the ordinary reader is accustomed to, such as punctuation, capitalization, lineation, grammar, syntax, sentence-structure, etc., telescoping the English language into hints, exclamations, tip-toeing the high-spots of his mood."  

Miss Monroe's conception of esoteric poetry extended not only to poetry that was not intelligible without external aid, but also included poetry which had both grammatical and typographical idiosyncracies—or "typographical gymnastics" as Miss Monroe preferred to call them. The chief defects of "these esoteric intellectuals," she claimed, was that they "were following a tangent from the main curve of the modern movement, a tangent which would inevitably carry them farther and farther into thin-air spaces, remote from both art and life."  

It was this quality of remoteness from life which was the salient objection for Miss Monroe; to violate the bonds that art has to life, was to remove art to a realm of isolation—a realm without reference to life which was the source of art.

While Harriet felt that the works of such poets as Ezra Pound (especially in the Cantos), William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Laura Riding, Yvor Winters, and other who followed the lead of some of these, were

93 Ibid., 36.
intellectually remote—and both extravagant and artificial—she still printed their work.\textsuperscript{94} "Poetry has printed many of these poets, but not with the wide-open hospitality which complete sympathy might have demanded."\textsuperscript{95} In respect to the so-called esoteric poet, it was more a question of his sincerity that puzzled Harriet. Her attitude toward poetic art tended to be more conservative. "We have endured the reproaches of the extremists, because our ideas of poetic art tend rather toward simplicity, intelligibility, recognizably poetic rhythm."\textsuperscript{96} She thought of the esoteric poets as extremists and tangential to the fruitful curve of modern poetry. Of Poetry's policy on this issue, Harriet wrote: "I still feel that progress in the art lies along the good curve of the solid earth rather than along the euphuistic tangent, and that Poetry has followed this grander curve throughout its sixteen years."\textsuperscript{97}

Knowing how Miss Monroe responded to poetry that was intellectually remote, we ought not be surprised to find that she placed a keen emphasis on the intelligibility of a poem (as a matter of fact, this is the reverse side of the coin). As has been said of Harriet's antipathy toward esoteric poetry, her propensity for lucid and intelligible poetry was also reflected in the pages of Poetry. She never attempted to hide her prejudice against poems which were

\textsuperscript{94} Monroe, "Looking Backward," \textit{Poetry}, XXXIII, October, 1928, 35.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
opaque in thought—or what she termed "cryptic intellectuality which leaps from crag to crag with little consideration for less agile followers." And indeed, if one scans the pages of Poetry, few poems of "cryptic intellectuality" will be found. Miss Monroe felt that poems of such quality merited only a kind of quiet derision rather than critical approbation. In perhaps the most vehement editorial article, Harriet berates the "bulky gods" with an almost Juvenalian ferocity. The following three extracts from that article best convey its bitter tone and feeling.

Why not laugh at Ezra Pound and all the other exiles and their rages? From over there they laugh at us, and stamp their feet and swear at us, and curse our 'mechanized' civilization, and long to come back and set it right, now that we are mounting to the top of the world.

Why not laugh, for example, at Gertrude Stein, who indeed must long to laugh at herself when her worshippers gather at her solid knees, and listen solemnly to the cryptic utterances strung off darkly by her imperious mind.

Why not laugh at that bulky god, James Joyce, when his genius gets all tangled up in words, when his sentences stretch like lost armies over pathless pages, with never a comma or period to light the wanderer home.

In view of Miss Monroe's preference for simple, direct poetry, it is not surprising "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. The newer poets when they came in the middle '20's, had to


find other organs than Poetry for a large bulk of their work. It is true that Poetry was unresponsive to certain schools of poetry, but while unsympathetic to a group, Miss Monroe would turn over the facilities of the magazine and allow that group or school to be represented in a special issue of their own making. Poetry was at times unsympathetic, but it was never inhospitable.

In this chapter the author has attempted to clarify Poetry's enunciated editorial policy and to trace its applications and deviations under the editorship of Harriet Monroe. If at times the emphasis seemed unduly concentrated on Miss Monroe, the chief reason for it was to display the intimate relation which existed between Harriet Monroe and the editorial policy. For all practical purposes it might reasonably be said that her domination of the magazine's character reflects her own personality to a marked degree.


101 the school known as the "Objectivists," which Harriet Monroe heartily disliked, was given a special issue in 1931.
Upon receiving a commission from the United States Navy shortly after the end of World War II to do a bust of a famed Japanese envoy, an eminent American sculptor asked: "Shall I give him a good or a bad head?" Our first impulse is, of course, to brand the question as fatuous, but upon reflection the question implies deeper meaning than a superficial examination would indicate. It is a common paradox that one human being will possess both a good and a bad head. Again, it is not uncommon for a person to leave a poor impression on one person and to give another a very good impression, depending upon various circumstances. Both Harriet Monroe and Poetry were affected by this paradox. Miss Monroe made a very harsh impression on such critics as Mary Colum and John Gould Fletcher; on the other hand, she was loved by Sara Teasdale and Eunice Teitjens—to cite but two of her friends. Poetry, too, labored under such a polarity of opinions regarding it. While many critics have praised the magazine as the most intense and penetrating of its sort, others have damned it from time to time as the most harmful influence in American letters.

At the turn of the century poetry was not in the forefront. Miss Monroe saw a growing need for such a periodical as Poetry and she designed her magazine to meet certain needs. Toward this end, she formulated a definite and concrete policy which, she hoped, would guide the magazine in order that it
might fulfill the needs of the times. Poetry, as has been said, was not intended to continue for more than five years; but once the magazine had been launched the good that it was achieving made the continued existence of Poetry obvious and insistent to Miss Monroe. That the magazine has lived for forty-one years is a fact. The chief concern here is that, without knowledge of the future fate of Poetry, Miss Monroe and her associates so designed the magazine's policy that it might be equal to any challenge. Without particularizing the policy, a necessary generality was achieved. Unable to predict the future of modern poetry, the editor and her associates formulated a policy which was necessarily both broad and inclusive. That Poetry was to be inclusive was one of the magazine's primary purposes. The assumption underlying Poetry's policy was that it should transcend the particular and the immediate; with such a policy, radical innovations, sane experimentation, and various schools or groups of poetry could be both accepted and championed with immunity; that is, Poetry did not foster or attempt to represent one school or group over another. It was prepared to accept each and every poem solely on its own merits.

The concept of inclusiveness applied to both the thought and form of all acceptable poems, and in respect to this one point of policy, very few exceptions were made. This, then, could be called one of Poetry's more consistent tenets of policy. The only violations which this point of policy suffered were in the late Twenties and early Thirties. As has been explained, the magazine's editors were not in complete sympathy with either grammatical idiosyncrasies or with poets whose work was intellectually obscure. Under the conditions of the original policy, these poets could have been accepted, as indeed
they were, but their work was not welcomed with the sympathy which it might have been accorded. The chief reasons behind the magazine's failure to extend complete hospitality toward the poets of these groups was that some of their work was not considered as emanating from complete poetic sincerity, and, at times, a certain poetical affectation or artificiality was believed by the editor to have been present in this work. This can, perhaps, best be considered not so much a change in policy as a change or lack of sympathy with the poets of this particular period.

Many of Poetry's critics have noted the magazine's complete approach toward inclusiveness, and, at least while Miss Monroe was editor, such eclecticism can be called a definite characteristic of Poetry. This breadth of policy enabled Poetry to accept the best American and English poetry written at any particular time; it allowed the magazine to accept all forms of poetic achievement, and this fact has proved important to the life of Poetry. Had the magazine been founded to give expression to a definite theory of art or had it been designed to champion a particular school of poetry, its purpose and achievement would have been greatly limited; and had the policy been so formulated Poetry would have lost its purpose.

In addition to the politic position of inclusiveness, Poetry's policy was also formulated to meet certain other requirements. Poetry was to provide the poet with a place of his own and to pay the poet for his work; it was designed, through criticism and awards, to foster a revitalized interest on the part of the poet and to stimulate and educate an audience for poetry. In respect to these aspects of policy, Poetry was always definite and consistent.
Today the need for a revival of interest on the part of the poet and his audience has passed. The Whitman motto ("To have great poets there must be great audiences too") has been deleted from Poetry's cover, testifying to the fact that these aims have been achieved.

In assaying Poetry's editorial policy under Miss Monroe, the role which she played in the firm establishment of the magazine is a paramount consideration. Through her astute and personal guidance of Poetry the periodical survived longer than any other of its type; it was able to maintain its original policy, as the present editors' recent statement in the Fortieth Anniversary issue testifies. In a comparative sense, Miss Monroe was the least prejudiced of editors, and for the role which she played in American poetry her name will long be remembered.
APPENDIX I

The following is a complete chronological listing of editorial articles appearing in *Poetry* during the period 1912-1936. The articles relevant to the topic of this thesis have been indicated by an asterisk.


Monroe, Harriet, "Incarnation," II, June, 1913, 101-104.


*Hagedorn, Hermann, "As to Preaching," II, July, 1913, 142-144.


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*Pound, Ezra, "This Constant Preaching to the Mob," VIII, June, 1916, 144-145.
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Monroe, Harriet, "To the Wilderness," X, August, 1917, 259-263.


*Henderson, A. C., "Our Contributors," XII, May, 1918, 94-96.


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Monroe, Harriet, "Mr. Robinson's Jubilee," XV, February, 1920, 204-211.
Monroe, Harriet, "Mr. Yeats and the Poetic Drama," XVI, April, 1920, 32-38.
Monroe, Harriet, "Men or Women?" XVI, June, 1920, 146-148.


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Monroe, Harriet, "Notes and Queries from Mr. Lindsay," XVII, February, 1921, 262-266.


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Monroe, Harriet, "From Queen Anne to George the Fifth," XIX, November, 1921, 90-94.


*Allen, Hervey and Du Bose Heyward, "This Southern Number," XX, April, 1922, 31-48.


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*North, J. N., "The Late Rebellion," XXII, June, 1923, 153-156.
Catel, Jean, "Literature of Repose," XXIII, November, 1923, 96-100.
Monroe, Harriet, "Byron," XXIV, April, 1924, 32-40.
Walton, Eda Lou, "Navaho Verse Rhythms," XXIV, April, 1924, 40-44.


Swett, Margery, "The Laureate They Deserve," XXV, October, 1924, 38-42.


*Swett, Margery, "Free Verse Again," XXV, December, 1924, 153-159.


*Monroe, Harriet, "Illuminations," XXVI, April, 1925, 36-38.


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North, Jessica N., "Toward Posthumous Fame," XXXIV, September, 1929, 335-338.
Zabel, Morton D., "Cities and Scenery," XXXV, December, 1929, 152-158.
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Monroe, Harriet, "Should He Be Educated?" XXXVII, November, 1930, 90-95.
Monroe, Harriet, "Christmas Again," XXXVII, December, 1930, 150-152.

Monroe, Harriet, "Greatest Women," XXXVII, April, 1931, 32-35.
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Levinson, S. O., XLIX, December, 1936, 159-160.

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Dear Mr. Cahill:

I don't wonder you were puzzled by the paragraph you quoted from Gregory. I have read it several times and it seems to me that what he says means this: Poetry had been the leader in critical and poetic opinion up to 1922. But with the publication of The Waste Land a new body of poetic criticism and style began, with which Harriet Monroe was not in sympathy. The magazine continued with the inclusive policy which had marked it before the war, with the hopeful attitude toward poetry (and life) which had always been its distinguishing feature. Meanwhile the poets who were influenced by Eliot, or what they thought Eliot meant, were writing a sort of poetry with which Miss Monroe was never sympathetic and, as he says later, the only reason they continued to send their contributions to Poetry was that the magazine continued to pay well. At Harriet's death, of course, the policy changed toward the more modern poetry and has continued to be exclusive ever since.

Most of this is probably true. The "proletarian" poetry of the thirties was sometimes published in the magazine, but to a considerable extent so was much lyric poetry of a "softer" strain. I was quite out of sympathy with the Marxist poets and so was Harriet. Of course I only began my active work in 1928 and after 1936 I had very little influence, except during the two years when I was editor. I do think, however, that we turned down very little that was really good. We were publishing all the poets whose reputation has lasted until now. Auden was a featured poet before 1936 (I think) and so were Spender, MacNeice, Day Lewis, and all that school. Stevens was always sought after and I remember Harriet corresponding with Eliot's brother Henry, who lived in Oak Park and trying to get something of Eliot's. Pound was always welcome. I do remember turning down something of Hart Crane's, however, because it was too obscure. We printed Marianne Moore in that period. I had a strong prejudice against the "new criticism" at that time because it was obscure and worcy. I still react against Blackmur and Yvor Winters. But when the period Gregory speaks of was over, the new writers seemed fresh and exciting and we welcomed Dylan Thomas, Randall Jarrell, Elizabeth Bishop, etc. with open arms.

If Ezra Pound had been allowed to run the magazine at that time we would undoubtedly have had another Criterion, exclusive, esoteric and erudite.

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We would have lost our audience (as we have largely done now) but kept the respect of the more advanced critics. Harriet was definitely against losing our audience. Does this answer your questions?

I don't think Pound changed factions. I think he switched influences in his own Cantos, but his judgment was about the same on other poets from start to finish, expect that he left the Imagists early. But he was always "narrow" in his likes and dislikes—and a terrible person to work with.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Jessica North MacDonald
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Daniel J. Cahill has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

17 January 1953

Date

Nicholas Just

Signature of Adviser