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COOP

chickens of our poetry

Editor's Note

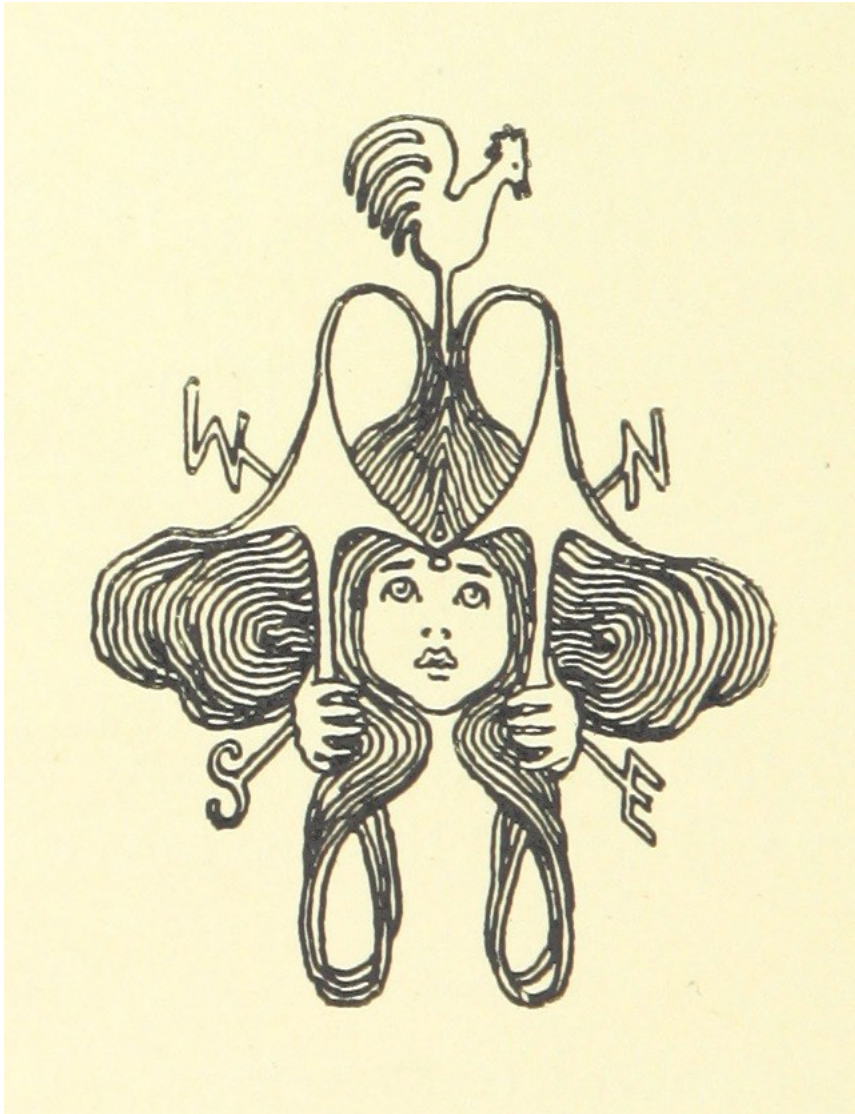
The grand tradition of chicken art and poetry is a long one. As I set out to find chicken poetry in the public domain, I was surprised both at how much and how little I was able to find. I scoured the depths of countless websites. I brought all my Boolean search skills to bear. I trawled a literal century of dusty publications on Archive.org. I thought, "Chickens are so charismatic and seemingly ubiquitous. Shouldn't there be more poems about them that aren't just nursery rhymes for children?"

But when I turned around to view the meager amount I had found, I was surprised to discover that there were too many poems and too much art to fit in a single volume. Hence why this special edition bears a number: 1. There will be more Free Range editions in the future, so keep an eye out!

The grand tradition of chicken art and poetry is long, but it is also deep. I'm so excited to be able to share these old and perhaps forgotten bits of history with you all. I hope they inspire you to think about our favorite barnyard bird in a new way, to explore the deep vein of chicken history for yourself, or to create your own art or poetry.

If you do end up making some chicken art or poetry of your own, send it in! We'd love to see it and to publish you alongside the chickeny greats that you've seen in this special edition.

Rook



From Songs for Little People

H. Stratton, 1896

Via Flickr

Monograph

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For submission and publication inquiries please contact us at coopzine@gmail.com or visit us on our website, coopzine.wordpress.com

When finished, please pass on or recycle!

Content Warning: Some poems portray animal death.

Front cover art: "Chicks and Worm"
by Ohara Koson, 1900-1930
Via Rijks Studio
Color Woodcut

Back cover art: "Two Chicks Fighting Over a Butterfly"
by Ohara Koson, 1900-1910
Via Rijks Studio
Color Woodcut



Weather Vane - Iron Rooster

Albert Eyth, c. 1937
Via The National Gallery of Art
Watercolor and graphite

a new weathervane
on basilica and barn,
and that outside the Lateran

there would always be
a bronze cock on a porphyry
pillar so the people and the Pope might see

that event the Prince
of the Apostles long since
had been forgiven, and to convince

all the assembly
that "Deny deny deny"
is not all the roosters cry.

In the morning
a low light is floating
in the backyard, and gilding

from underneath
the broccoli, leaf by leaf;
how could the night have come to grief?

gilding the tiny
floating swallow's belly
and lines of pink cloud in the sky,

the day's preamble
like wandering lines in marble,
The cocks are now almost inaudible.

The sun climbs in,
following "to see the end,"
faithful as enemy, or friend.

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Two Chicks Fighting Over a Butterfly by Ohara Koson	Back cover

St. Peter's sin
 was worse than that of Magdalen
 whose sin was of the flesh alone;

of spirit, Peter's,
 falling, beneath the flares,
 among the "servants and officers."

Old holy sculpture
 could set it all together
 in one small scene, past and future:

Christ stands amazed,
 Peter, two fingers raised
 to surprised lips, both as if dazed.

But in between
 a little cock is seen
 carved on a dim column in the travertine,

explained by gallus canit;
 flet Petrus underneath it,
 There is inescapable hope, the pivot;

yes, and there Peter's tears
 run down our chanticleer's
 sides and gem his spurs.

Tear-encrusted thick
 as a medieval relic
 he waits. Poor Peter, heart-sick,

still cannot guess
 those cock-a-doodles yet might bless,
 his dreadful rooster come to mean forgiveness,

"Very combative..."
what right have you to give
commands and tell us how to live,

cry "Here!" and "Here!"
and wake us here where are
unwanted love, conceit and war?

The crown of red
set on your little head
is charged with all your fighting blood

Yes, that excrescence
makes a most virile presence,
plus all that vulgar beauty of iridescence

Now in mid-air
by two they fight each other.
Down comes a first flame-feather,

and one is flying,
with raging heroism defying
even the sensation of dying.

And one has fallen
but still above the town
his torn-out, bloodied feathers drift down;

and what he sung
no matter. He is flung
on the gray ash-heap, lies in dung

with his dead wives
with open, bloody eyes,
while those metallic feathers oxidize.

Enigma

Joseph Auslander
Via *Poetry Magazine*

The swallowed thud of cattle shouldering through
Cool translucent distances of dew;
The blue dawn like a shell warmed by their lowing;
The patter of pigeon-feet on the roof; the rooster crowing;
The tepid interval when pale birds cheep
Beneath their wings; the flutter muffled with sleep;
Crickets on dripping planks; the delighted noises of things
that creep

In subterranean softness: things too small for a name
Moving through private tunnels down to their instant of
flame...

Strange, how beautiful these things are; how these
Things are still beautiful; strange
That our sweet flesh falters, knows ghastly change—
And these things are still beautiful under the hawk-dark
trees!



A Corner of My Garden

Marie Danse, 1877 - 1909
Via Rijks Studio
Etching

the many wives
who lead hens' lives
of being courted and despised;

deep from raw throats
a senseless order floats
all over town. A rooster gloats

over our beds
from rusty irons sheds
and fences made from old bedsteads,

over our churches
where the tin rooster perches,
over our little wooden northern houses,

making sallies
from all the muddy alleys,
marking out maps like Rand McNally's:

glass-headed pins,
oil-golds and copper greens,
anthracite blues, alizarins,

each one an active
displacement in perspective;
each screaming, "This is where I live!"

Each screaming
"Get up! Stop dreaming!"
Roosters, what are you projecting?

You, whom the Greeks elected
to shoot at on a post, who struggled
when sacrificed, you whom they labeled

Roosters

Robert Frost

At four o'clock
in the gun-metal blue dark
we hear the first crow of the first cock

just below
the gun-metal blue window
and immediately there is an echo

off in the distance,
then one from the backyard fence,
then one, with horrible insistence,

grates like a wet match
from the broccoli patch,
flares, and all over town begins to catch.

Cries galore
come from the water-closet door,
from the dropping-plastered henhouse floor,

where in the blue blur
their rusting wives admire,
the roosters brace their cruel feet and glare

with stupid eyes
while from their beaks there rise
the uncontrolled, traditional cries.

Deep from protruding chests
in green-gold medals dressed,
planned to command and terrorize the rest,

Geography

Hilda Conkling
Via Project Gutenberg

I can tell balsam trees
By their grayish bluish silverish look of smoke.
Pine trees fringe out.
Hemlocks look like Christmas.
The spruce tree is feathered and rough
Like the legs of the red chickens in our poultry yard.
I can study my geography from chickens
Named for Plymouth Rock and Rhode Island,
And from trees out of Canada.
No; I shall leave the chickens out.
I shall make a new geography of my own.
I shall have a hillside of spruce and hemlock
Like a separate country,
And I shall mark a walk of spires on my map,
A secret road of balsam trees
With blue buds.
Trees Fat smell like a wind out of fairy-land
Where little people live
Who need no geography
But trees.

Street with steps in Taormina, Sicily

Bernard Essers, 1921

Via Rijks Studio



January Calendar with White Rooster

Theo van Hoytema, 1901

Via Rijks Studio

How Can We Fool the Rooster?

Alan L. Strang
Via Public Domain Poetry

Written when the clock was set ahead one hour on April 1, 1918.

Our Rooster wakes at half-past five
And crows with all his might,
He tries to wake the people up
Before the day is light.
When Daddy hears the rooster crow
He knows he should awake
And light the kitchen fire, so Ma
Can cook the Johnny cake.

Now, maybe we can fool my Dad
That it's half-past five when it's half-past four,
And maybe the system's the best we have had
To fool some thousands of people or more;
But, how can we fool that rooster?

I have always thought our rooster had
A clock inside of his head,
And I don't know how we can fix it so
We can set the clock ahead.
I asked my Dad, and he said to me,
"Why, son, you surely know
A rooster's instinct wakens him
And tells him when to crow."

Now the hands of the clock we can turn ahead,
We can fool the people and feel content;
But the thing that worries me night and day,
And on which my entire thought is bent
Is, how can we fool that rooster?



Poultry and a Dog

Jan Griffier 1667-1718
Via Rijks Studio
Print

A White Hen Sitting

Christina Georgina Rossetti
Via My Poetic Side

A white hen sitting
On white eggs three:
Next, three speckled chickens
As plump as plump can be.
An owl, and a hawk,
And a bat come to see:
But chicks beneath their mother's wing
Squat safe as safe can be.



Egoyomi for the Year of the Rooster

Anonymous, 1789
Via Rijks Studio
Color woodcut

A Question

Ellis Parker Butler
Via Public Domain Poetry

Whene'er I feed the barnyard folk
My gentle soul is vexed;
My sensibilities are torn
And I am sore perplexed.

The rooster so politely stands
While waiting for his food,
But when I feed him, what a change!
He then is rough and rude.

He crowds his gentle wives aside
Or pecks them on the head;
Sometimes I think it would be best
If he were never fed.

And so I often stand for hours
Deciding which is right—
To impolitely have enough,
Or starve and be polite.



Chicken with Chicks and Hatching Eggs

Isaac Weissenbruch
Via Rijks Studio
Print



Birds Nest with Eggs

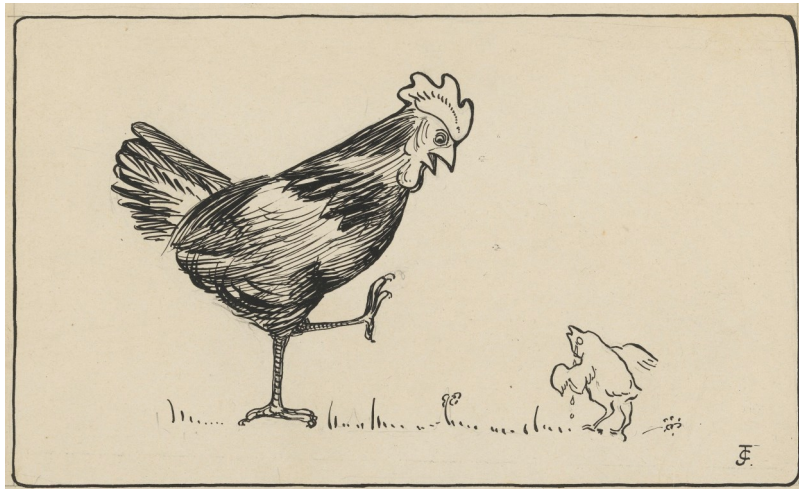
Julie de Graag, 1887 - 1924
Via Rijks Studio
Ink and Watercolor



Cock and Dog

Kubota Shunman, 1816
Via Rijks Studio
Color Woodcut

Mounted the margin, peered below,
 Where to repel him rose a foe.
 His choler rose, his plumes upreared -
 With ruffled plumes the foe appeared.
 Challenged to fight - he dashed him down
 Upon the mirrored wave to drown;
 And drowning uttered: "This condition
 Comes from my mother's prohibition.
 Did she forget, or not believe,
 That I too am a son of Eve?"



Two Chickens

Unknown, c. 1900 - c. 1940
 Via Rijks Studio
 Ink



Chicks

Jakuun (possibly), 1900 - 1910
 Via Rijks Studio
 Color woodcut

Ballad of Another Ophelia

D.H. Lawrence
Via My Poetic Side

Oh the green glimmer of apples in the orchard,
Lamps in a wash of rain!
Oh the wet walk of my brown hen through the stackyard,
Oh tears on the window pane!

Nothing now will ripen the bright green apples,
Full of disappointment and of rain,
Brackish they will taste, of tears, when the yellow dapples
Of autumn tell the withered tale again.

All round the yard it is cluck, my brown hen,
Cluck, and the rain-wet wings,
Cluck, my marigold bird, and again
Cluck for your yellow darlings.

For the grey rat found the gold thirteen
Huddled away in the dark,
Flutter for a moment, oh the beast is quick and keen,
Extinct one yellow-fluffy spark.

Once I had a lover bright like running water,
Once his face was laughing like the sky;
Open like the sky looking down in all its laughter
On the buttercups, and the buttercups was I.

Old Hen and Young Cock

John Gay
Via Public Domain Poetry

Once an old hen led forth her brood
To scratch and glean and peck for food;
A chick, to give her wings a spell,
Fluttered and tumbled in a well.
The mother wept till day was done,
When she met with a grown-up son,
And thus addressed him: - "My dear boy,
Your years and vigour give me joy:
You thrash all cocks around, I'm told;
'Tis right, cocks should be brave and bold:
But never - fears I cannot quell -
Never, my son, go near that well;
A hateful, false, and wretched place,
Which is most fatal to my race.
Imprint that counsel on your breast,
And trust to providence the rest."

He thanked the dame's maternal care,
And promised never to go near.
Yet still he burned to disobey,
And hovered round it day by day;
And communed thus: "I wonder why?
Does mother think my soul is shy?
Thinks me a coward? or does she
Store grain in yonder well from me?
I'll find that out, and so here goes."
So said, he flaps his wings and crows,



Ducks, Birds, and Rooster Near a
Frozen Lake

Henri Verstijnen, 1892 - 1940
Via Rijks Studio
Ink

What, then, is there hidden in the skirts of all the blossom?
What is peeping from your wings, oh mother hen?
'Tis the sun who asks the question, in a lovely haste for wisdom;
What a lovely haste for wisdom is in men!

Yea, but it is cruel when undressed is all the blossom,
And her shift is lying white upon the floor,
That a grey one, like a shadow, like a rat, a thief, a rain-storm,
Creeps upon her then and gathers in his store.

Oh the grey garner that is full of half-grown apples,
Oh the golden sparkles laid extinct!
And oh, behind the cloud-sheaves, like yellow autumn dapples,
Did you see the wicked sun that winked!



June Calendar Page with Chicks

Theo van Hoytema, 1878-1915
Via Rijks Studio

As she surveyed her waddling brood;
"A little water now and then
Will surely do my darlings good!"

But oh! alas, how very sad!
When gentle spring rolled round again
The eggs eventuated bad,
And childless was the old red hen!
Yet patiently she bore her woe,
And still she wore a cheerful air,
And said: "'T is best these things are so,
For babies are a dreadful care!"

I half suspect that many men,
And many, many women, too,
Could learn a lesson from the hen
With foliage of vermilion hue;
She ne'er presumed to take offence
At any fate that might befall,
But meekly bowed to Providence--
She was contented--that was all!

Contentment

Eugene Field
Via Public Domain Poetry

Once on a time an old red hen
Went strutting 'round with pompous clucks,
For she had little babies ten,
A part of which were tiny ducks.
"T is very rare that hens," said she,
"Have baby ducks as well as chicks~
But I possess, as you can see,
Of chickens four and ducklings six!"

A season later, this old hen
Appeared, still cackling of her luck,
For, though she boasted babies ten,
Not one among them was a duck!
"T is well," she murmured, brooding o'er
The little chicks of fleecy down~
"My babies now will stay ashore,
And, consequently, cannot drown!"

The following spring the old red hen
Clucked just as proudly as of yore~
But lo! her babes were ducklings ten,
Instead of chickens, as before!
"T is better," said the old red hen,

Hen's Nest

John Clare
Via Public Domain Poetry

Among the orchard weeds, from every search,
Snugly and sure, the old hen's nest is made,
Who cackles every morning from her perch
To tell the servant girl new eggs are laid;
Who lays her washing by, and far and near
Goes seeking all about from day to day,
And stung with nettles tramples everywhere;
But still the cackling pullet lays away.
The boy on Sundays goes the stack to pull
In hopes to find her there, but naught is seen,
And takes his hat and thinks to find it full,
She's laid so long so many might have been.
But naught is found and all is given o'er
Till the young brood come chirping to the door.



Seven Chicks

Melchior d'Hondecoeter, c. 1665 - c. 1668
Via Rijks Studio
Oil



Chicken Standing on the Back of a Swimming Duck

Miep de Feijter, c. 1928 - c. 1941
Via Rijks Studio
Ink