

“Here we see our friends sprouting tentacles”: Some New Poems from the Juvenilia of James Tiptree, Jr. / Alice Sheldon née Bradley*

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Abstract

With the permission of the literary estate and the archival source secured, I present the complete texts of five previously unknown poems written while Alice Bradley was an undergraduate at Sarah Lawrence College in the 1930s and published only in the college’s student literary magazine. These new poems complement the previously unpublished verse from the 1940s and 50s that was posthumously collected in the chapbook *Neat Sheets: The Poetry of James Tiptree, Jr.*, and provide a fascinating window into Bradley/Sheldon/Tiptree’s early literary interests and ambitions. Based on the formal experimentation with orthography and references to humans with tentacles and mechanized angels, those interests clearly included both high modernist experimental poetry and some aesthetic features of the issues of pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* that she was sneaking alongside her loftier literary reading. Other details of the poems will prove intriguing to readers of Tiptree’s science fiction: for instance, the playful byline “a. bradley” attached to one of the poems invents a new middle initial for Bradley, doubling the first letter of her name, and hints at the author’s notorious love of pseudonymity later in life. The poems are prefaced with an introduction and commentary approximately 3000 words in length that primarily serve to explain their provenance, document some of their apparent literary influences, and suggest their interest for perhaps tracing a longer trajectory than previously understood for Tiptree’s much later career as a science fiction author.