

Honest Robin: “Out” in 1911

In 1911, English Quaker Henry Bryan Binns, one of the earliest Whitman biographers, and a friend to Edward Carpenter, published *The Great Companions*, a book clearly inspired by Whitman and Carpenter.

The book’s title is taken from Whitman’s prophesy of the emergence of great companions, and the chapter’s title is taken from Whitman’s reminder that they would be the spiritual equivalents of those pioneers who tamed the American west.

In this characteristic vignette, Binns seems to be alluding to period practices of a touch of makeup (lipstick?) and the wearing of notorious colors such as Wildean green, sure to trigger homophobic reactions on the street.

– Mitchell Santine Gould, curator, LeavesofGrass.Org

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Henry Bryan Binns [1873-1923]. *The Great Companions* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1911), Chapter 7 excerpt, 51-2.

Honest Robin.

He is so frank a fellow he thinks shame of hiding up his heart. Glad in his youth, he vests in green.

Thoughtful and red as a berry is his mouth, his grey Scots eyes quiet and comradely.

Brown-legged, light-shod, carrying his spade, heroic through the sunshine, he swings along our open street indifferent to the jeering lads.

When Robin loves, open and downrightly he proffers all his manhood and proclaims it: with divine gesture, he defies the lords and commonalty: “Faith,” says he, “is bond for honest comrades; other, means treachery and misdoubting: what for is Liberty if not for Love?”