

# NEW VERSE

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## CONTENTS

STEPHEN SPENDER : Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes. W. H. AUDEN : Five Poems. And Poems by LOUIS MACNEICE, J. N. CAMERON, MARTIN BOLDERO, CHARLES MADGE, DAVID GASCOYNE, GAVIN EWART, ALLEN TATE, EDGAR FOXALL. Ezra Pound's Cantos, by GEOFFREY GRIGSON. Lucastration, or Pound, Eliot and F. L. Lucas.

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**ORPHEUS EURYDICE HERMES**

That was the wonderful mine of souls.  
Like still silver ore they went  
as veins travelling its dark. Between roots  
spurted the blood, that goes forth to men,  
and heavy like porphyry it seemed in the dark.  
Further, nothing red.

Rocks were there  
and pathless woods. Bridges over voids  
and yonder huge, gray, blind loch,  
that over its far background hung  
like rainy sky above a landscape.  
And between the meadows, of mild and full forbearance,  
appeared the white strip of the single road  
laid in like a long pallor.

And on this single road they came.

Foremost the slender man in the blue mantle,  
who stared before him, dumb and impatient.  
Without chewing his pace devoured the way  
in huge bites : his hands hung  
heavy and clenched out of the fall of folds.  
and nothing more they knew of the light lyre,  
which in the left had grown ingrown  
like ranks of roses in the olive tree bough.  
And his senses were as if in two :  
for whilst his glance ran before him like a dog,  
turned round, went back and then away again  
and waiting at the next corner stood,—  
his hearing hung like an odour.  
Sometimes it seemed to him as if it stretched  
right to the walking of those other two,  
who need must follow this whole climb.  
At other times it was his climbing echo  
only, and his mantle's draught, that were behind him.

He told himself however, they surely came ;  
said it aloud and heard his voice die away.  
Indeed they came, only they were two,  
of terribly light going. Had he dared  
but once to turn (was not the looking back  
the sure destruction of this entire labour,  
now first completed ?), he must have seen them,  
the two soft-treading, who silently follow him :

the god of journeys and of far embassy,  
with travelling cap over fair eyes,  
carrying the slender rod before his body  
and with wings fluttering at his ankles ;  
and on his left extended hand was—she.  
She who was so much loved, that from a lyre  
more lament came than from lamenting women ;  
and from lament a world was born, in which  
all was once more there : wood and valley  
and road and region, field and river and beast ;  
so that around this world lamenting, just as  
around the other earth a sun  
and a star set silent heaven went,  
a heaven lamenting with misplaced stars :—  
this one who was so much loved.

And still she walked, leaning on that god's hand,  
her step narrowed by the long winding sheet,  
uncertain, mild and without impatience.  
She was shut in herself, as with high hope  
and thought not of the man, who went before her,  
nor of the road, which climbed up into life.  
She was shut in herself. Her being dead  
filled her like fulfilment.  
Like a fruit with sweetness and the dark  
so was she full with her great death,  
which still remained so new, that she grasped nothing.

She was in a new maidenhood  
untouchable ; her sex was closed  
like a young flower against the evening,  
and now her hands to marriage were  
so much estranged, that even the slender god's  
endlessly gentle guiding touch  
disturbed her like a too great intimacy.

She had already ceased to be that woman,  
the blonde who echoed through the poet's songs,  
no more was she the great bed's scent and island  
and that man's property no more.  
She was already loosened like long hair  
abandoned like the fallen rain  
and portioned out like hundred fold provision.  
She was already root  
when thus precipitately  
the god did stop her and with pain in his call  
the words spoke : " He has turned "—,  
she grasped nothing and whispered softly : " Who ?"

But far off, dark before the light way out,  
someone stood, whose countenance  
could not be recognised. He stood and watched  
as along the pale strip of a meadow path  
with mournful glance the god of embassy  
silently turned, following the figure,  
already walking back on this same road,  
her step narrowed by the long winding sheet,  
uncertain, mild and without impatience.

R. M. RILKE  
(English Version by Stephen Spender.)

## A NOTE ON WORKING-CLASS SOLIDARITY

There will be no festivities when we lay down these tools,  
For we are the massed grooves of grease-smooth systems.  
The Communist measures the future, the Elect fear the past,  
But we are those ribless polyps that nature insures  
Against thought by routines, against triumph by tolerance,  
Against life by the sense of mechanical footbeats,  
Against protest by cant, extinction by syphilis,  
And the glory of crucifixion by the price of timber.

EDGAR FOXALL

## TWO POEMS

### ON ONE CONDITION

If there were an open way  
a stairway leading back to those soft-lidded eyes  
and in the treetop voices that say  
shall come, it shall come, for it shall come  
a door half open to surprise  
the dead sun's red baffled in those eyes

If the writing in the road  
had led a stranger's foot nearer that door and in  
and the flicker of passing people told  
how soon that world shall end, this world shall come  
how soon shall time be tense, and shivering skin  
out of a touch make the two worlds kin

If appearances, and across  
the appearances the names, their square of sense between  
had saved enough to leave to lose  
and gathered up in arms all that shall come  
and the seen and the unseen  
had stood the one behind the other

If it had been

## ON GOING DOWN

Oh hated silence, when the end of time  
 Bears on us down, and we go down, unclimb  
 What have been an ascent should shoulder high  
 Towards what would. But being sent down, I  
 Remain no word to say  
 And so slow still heard shouting streams away.

Remains, bones, syllables, cases, none remains  
 No sky high prize, no eyes to ease deep pains  
 Metal at midnight struck was : No more meet.  
 All's met by that ; and that is to repeat  
 The sound of words on stone  
 The telling no sense river, left, alone.

So to refuse, and then refunded, find  
 Misunderstood, today was in my mind.  
 Passed sentence. But no sentence that to write  
 Can ever shed its long shell into light.  
 So, hopeless and obscure  
 The last word signals over and is pure.

CHARLES MADGE

## POEM ✓

Just as those who gaze get higher than those who climb  
 A paradox unfolds on any who can tamper with time.  
 Where bus encumbers upon bus and fills its slot  
 Speed up the traffic in a quick motion film of thought  
 Till bus succeeds bus so identically sliding through  
 That you cannot catch the fraction of a chink between the two  
 But they all go so fast, bus after bus, day after day,  
 Year after year, that you cannot mark any headway  
 But the whole stream of traffic seems to crawl  
 Carrying its dead boulders down a glacier wall  
 And we who have always been haunted by the fear of becoming  
 stone  
 Cannot bear to watch that catafalque creep down.

Therefore turn we away to seemingly slower things  
And rejoice there to have found the speed of fins and wings  
In the minnow-twistings of the latinist who alone  
Nibbles and darts through the shallows of the lexicon  
Or among plateglass cases in sombre rooms where  
Eyes appraise the glazen life of Majolica ware  
Or where a gardener with trowel and rheumatic pains  
Pumps up the roaring sap of vegetables through their veins.

LOUIS MACNEICE

## AUGUST A LA POUSSIN

The shutter of time darkening ceaselessly  
Has whisked away the foam of may and elder  
And I realise how now, as every year before,  
Once again the gay months have eluded me.

For the mind, by nature stagey, welds its frame  
Tomblike around each little world of a day ;  
We jump from picture to picture and cannot follow  
The living curve that is breathlessly the same.

While the lawn-mower sings moving up and down  
Spirting its little fountain of vivid green,  
I, like Poussin, make a still-bound fête of us  
Suspending every noise, of insect or machine.

Garlands at a set angle that do not slip  
Theatrically (and as if for ever) grace  
You and me and the stone god in the garden  
And Time who also is shown with a stone face.

But all this is a dilettante's lie.  
Time's face is not stone nor still his wings,  
Our mind, being dead, wishes to have time die  
For we being ghosts cannot catch hold of things.

LOUIS MACNEICE

## DREAM

Given me by the poet's male lover  
 The lustre-brown half of the cracked jug  
 On the mantelpiece (the other half  
 is white with a small picture of a ship)  
 Has emitted a clear note

The electric cat noses among the chairs  
 Of the café sweeping up  
 Fragments of macaroons

In the middle of the Square the wood axe  
 Cuts at the bent back throat  
 With no blood  
 The angle of neck and head grows  
 Gradually obtuse.

MARTIN BOLDERO

## THE MEDITERRANEAN

Quem das finem, rex magne, dolorem ?

Where we went in the boat was a long bay  
 A sling-shot wide walled in by towering stone,  
 Cracked margin of antiquity's decay—  
 And we went there out of time's monotone :

Where we went in the black hull no light moved  
 But a gull white-winged along the feckless wave ;  
 The breeze, unseen but fierce as a body loved,  
 That boat drove onward like a willing slave :

Where we went in the small ship the seaweed  
 Parted and gave to us the murmuring shore  
 And we made feast and in our secret need  
 Devoured the very plates Æneas bore :

Where we feasted and caroused on the sandless  
 Pebbles, affecting our day of piracy,  
 What prophecy of eaten plates could landless  
 Wanderers fulfil by the ancient sea ?

When derelict you see through the low twilight  
 The green coast that you thunder-tossed would win  
 Drop sail, as hastening to drink all night  
 Eat dish and bowl—to take that sweet land in !

We for that time might taste the famous age  
 Eternal here yet hidden from our eyes  
 When lust of power undid its stuffless rage :  
 They, in a wineskin, bore earth's paradise.

—Let us lie down once more by the breathing side  
 Of ocean, where our live forefathers sleep  
 As if the Known Sea still were a month wide—  
 Atlantis howls but is no longer steep !

What country shall we conquer, what fair land  
 Unman our conquest and locate our blood ?  
 We've smashed the hemispheres with careless hand :  
 Now, from the Gates of Hercules we flood

Westward, westward till the barbarous brine  
 Whelms us to the tired world where tasseling corn  
 Fat beans, grapes sweeter than muscadine .  
 Rot on the vine : in that land were we born.

ALLEN TATE

## AND THE SEVENTH DREAM IS THE DREAM OF ISIS

### 1

white curtains of infinite fatigue  
 dominating the starborn heritage of the colonies of St Francis  
 white curtains of tortured destinies  
 inheriting the calamities of the plagues of the desert  
 encourage the waistlines of women to expand  
 and the eyes of men to enlarge like pocket-cameras  
 teach children to sin at the age of five  
 to cut out the eyes of their sisters with nail-scissors

to run into the streets and offer themselves to unfrocked priests  
teach insects to invade the deathbeds of rich spinsters  
and to engrave the foreheads of their footmen with purple signs  
for the year is open the year is complete  
the year is full of unforeseen happenings  
and the time of earthquakes is at hand

today is the day when the streets are full of hearses  
and when women cover their ring fingers with pieces of silk  
when the doors fall off their hinges in ruined cathedrals  
when hosts of white birds fly across the ocean from america  
and make their nests in the trees of public gardens  
the pavements of cities are covered with needles  
the reservoirs are full of human hair  
fumes of sulphur envelop the houses of ill-fame  
out of which bloodred lilies appear.

across the square where crowds are dying in thousands  
a man is walking a tightrope covered with moths

## 2

there is an explosion of geraniums in the ballroom of the hotel  
there is an extremely unpleasant odour of decaying meat  
arising from the depetalled flower growing out of her ear  
her arms are like pieces of sandpaper  
or wings of leprous birds in taxis  
and when she sings her hair stands on end  
and lights itself with a million little lamps like glowworms  
you must always write the last two letters of her christian name  
upside down with a blue pencil

she was standing at the window clothed only in a ribbon  
she was burning the eyes of snails in a candle  
she was eating the excrement of dogs and horses  
she was writing a letter to the president of france

the edges of leaves must be examined through microscopes  
in order to see the stains made by dying flies  
at the other end of the tube is a woman bathing her husband  
and a box of newspapers covered with handwriting  
when an angel writes the word TOBACCO across the sky  
the sea becomes covered with patches of dandruff  
the trunks of trees burst open to release streams of milk  
little girls stick photographs of genitals to the windows of their  
homes

prayerbooks in churches open themselves at the death service  
and virgins cover their parents' beds with tealeaves  
there is an extraordinary epidemic of tuberculosis in yorkshire  
where medical dictionaries are banned from the public libraries  
and salt turns a pale violet colour every day at seven o'clock  
when the hearts of troubadours unfold like soaked mattresses  
when the leaven of the gruesome slum-visitors  
and the wings of private airplanes look like shoeleather  
shoeleather on which pentagrams have been drawn  
shoeleather covered with vomitings of hedgehogs  
shoeleather used for decorating wedding-cakes  
and the gums of queens like glass marbles  
queens whose wrists are chained to the walls of houses  
and whose fingernails are covered with little drawings of flowers  
we rejoice to receive the blessing of criminals  
and we illuminate the roofs of convents when they are hung  
we look through a telescope on which the lord's prayer has been  
written

and we see an old woman making a scarecrow  
on a mountain near a village in the middle of spain  
we see an elephant killing a stag-beetle  
by letting hot tears fall onto the small of its back  
we see a large cocoa-tin full of shapeless lumps of wax  
there is a horrible dentist walking out of a ship's funnel  
and leaving behind him footsteps which make noises  
on account of his accent he was discharged from the sanatorium  
and sent to examine the methods of cannibals

so that wreaths of passion-flowers were floating in the darkness  
 giving terrible illnesses to the possessors of pistols  
 so that large quantities of rats disguised as pigeons  
 were sold to various customers from neighbouring towns  
 who were adepts at painting gothic letters on screens  
 and at tying up parcels with pieces of grass  
 we told them to cut off the buttons on their trousers  
 but they swore in our faces and took off their shoes  
 whereupon the whole place was stifled with vast clouds of smoke  
 and with theatres and eggshells and droppings of eagles  
 and the drums of the hospitals were broken like glass  
 and glass were the faces in the last looking-glass.

DAVID GASCOYNE

## NO FLOWERS BY REQUEST

The thing finished is perfect.  
 Death perfects, in point of fact  
 And I am always a fraction  
 Of my coming perfection.

Submerged the submarine can see  
 Past waves with its exalted eye.  
 So, in the grave, upon my eyes  
 These sores may fester, memories.

But, tissue touched with right reagent,  
 The past might well appear a pageant  
 Coloured and moving in its plane  
 Without the third dimension, pain.

GAVIN EWART

## POEM

On the wall a lino-cut  
 Of a Persian cat  
 Stretches paws towards Herodotus  
 In this interior not meant for us.

Not his or hers  
 Its frigid hairs  
 Are the asexual offerings of Time,  
 The mind unblended, undivided sum.

Stillborn at the start,  
 This hard but abstract Art  
 Will not permit the claws to open, shut,  
 Wrapped in cold surfaces that hold them flat.

GAVIN EWART

## THREE POEMS

### A CALENDAR FLUSH

The calendar tells him of so-many journeys.  
 Also, in confirmation, he remembers  
 Passing by numerous tolls and fords and bridges.  
 The tolls—they led through half-a-dozen lands ;  
 He'd been well stocked, it seemed, with foreign moneys.  
 The fords—he must have had long legs for them.  
 The bridges—how many hundred riveters  
 Did they recall ? Distracted now he seeks  
 To fit these numerous tolls and fords and bridges  
 In a continuous road, to reassemble  
 Income, boot-leather and the building-trade,  
 And draws and draws for necessary cards  
 To fill a calendar-flush of sequent days.

### IT'S A FINE THING TO BE A RHYMER

It's a fine thing to be a rhymmer—glee  
 It is to let your lust and spite be rife,  
 Yet so disguised that should the master threaten  
 " Sirrah, the whip !" the fool can prance and simper  
 " Whoop, Jug, I love thee ! Nothing but a story.

It happened in Queen Anne's reign, and she's dead.  
 All's fair in rhyming." Fool, I loathe your fancies.  
 Whether they flit, in search of sanctuary,  
 To Queen Anne's reign or to Cloudecuckooland,  
 Dodging the whip, the faggot and the axe,  
 They ring too sharp an echo from here and now.

### SUMMER'S SLAVE

What have you now to answer, summer's slave,  
 To autumn's cold call of emancipation?  
 What, besides gooseflesh? Know that summer's slave  
 Can never be the citizen of winter.  
 It would be wiser, then, to keep your livery,  
 Follow your master in his lordly exile  
 Off to some feudal, decorative coast  
 —An easy life, obtaining sustenance  
 From gossip and report of winter's doings,  
 Knowing the body politic of winter  
 Is well established without help from you.

J. N. CAMERON

## FIVE POEMS

### I.

Sleep on beside me though I wake for you:  
 Stretch not your hands towards your harm and me,  
 Lest, waking, you should feel the need I do  
 To offer love's preposterous guarantee  
 That the stars watch us, that there are no poor,  
 No boyish weakness justifying scorn;  
 To cancel off from the forgotten score  
 The foiled caresses from which thought was born.

Yes, sleep : how easily may we do good  
To those we have no wish to see again.  
Love knows he argues with himself in vain ;  
He means to do no mischief but he would :  
Love would content us. That is untrue.  
Turn not towards me lest I turn to you.

## II.

I see it often since you've been away :  
The island, the veranda, and the fruit ;  
The tiny steamer breaking from the bay ;  
The literary mornings with its hoot ;  
Our ugly comic servant ; and then you,  
Lovely and willing every afternoon.  
But find myself with my routine to do,  
And knowing that I shall forget you soon.

There is a wound and who shall staunch it up ?  
Deepening daily, discharging all the time  
Power from love. Our loves, our lives, our hope,  
Quack remedies that make a three-days' claim  
And injure worse ; of this we are quite sure,  
And that this ends in death, but of no more.

## III.

At the far end of the enormous room  
An orchestra is playing to the rich ;  
The drum-beats nagging like a nervous twitch,  
The fiddle soaring like a flying dream :  
At tables round me all the winners sit,  
Lean over, talking to a lovely prize ;  
And I imagine you before my eyes,  
Flushed with the wine I order, and my wit.

It is an enemy that sighs for you ;  
 Love has one wish and that is, not to be :  
 Had you been never beautiful nor true,  
 He would not have been born, and I were free  
 From one whose visit will go on and on  
 Till you be false and all your beauties gone.

## IV.

The latest ferrule now has tapped the curb,  
 And the night's tiny noises everywhere  
 Beat vivid on the owl's developed ear,  
 Vague on the watchman's, and in wards disturb  
 The nervous counting sheep. Blessing this moon,  
 Like treasures touching sides how many lie,  
 Successful lovers who were once as I :  
 But in your northern house you sleep alone.

All the hot stars beyond me and our sun  
 Down the great trackways where the tribe is nothing  
 And meaningless a change from love to loathing  
 Their vast involuntary errands run :  
 And I find nothing sensible to do,  
 But, shivering, look towards the north and you.

## V.

Love had him fast : but though he caught his breath,  
 He struggled only to possess another,  
 The snare forgotten in his little death ;  
 And you, the seed to which he was a mother,  
 That never heard of love, through love were free,  
 While he within his arms a world was holding,  
 To take the all-night journey under sea,  
 Work west and northward, set up building.

Cities and years constricted to your scope,  
 All sorrow simplified, though almost all  
 Shall be as subtle when you are as tall :  
 Yet clearly in that almost all his hope  
 That hopeful falsehood cannot stem with love  
 The flood on which all move and wish to move.

W. H. AUDEN

## LUCASTRATION

*The Criticism of Poetry.* F. L. Lucas. Milford. 1s.\*  
 (Warton Lecture on English Poetry.)

Though lions roar, please let a mouse in velvet squeak :  
*Ezra may be sweet and Eliot strong.*  
*No matter ; they are damned. They quoted Greek*  
*And got their accents wrong !*

## THE METHODISM OF EZRA POUND

*A Draft of xxx Cantos.* Ezra Pound. Faber. 7s. 6d.

“ . . . He explains that it will, when the hundredth Canto is finished, display a structure like that of a Bach Fugue. There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the descent into Hades from Homer, a metamorphosis from Ovid, and mixed with these mediæval or modern historical characters. He has tried to produce that picture Porteous commended to Nicholas Poussin in ‘Le Chef d’œuvre Inconnu,’ where

\* In this sciolistic pamphlet, bred of fear, presumption and petulance, the pathetic Mr. Lucas denies merit to all contemporary criticism and poetry. Messrs. Eliot and Pound are dismissed in a footnote on p. 7 for classical howlers and (deliberately) wrong accents.

everything rounds or thrusts itself without edges, without contours—conventions of the intellect—from a splash of tints and shades, to achieve a work as characteristic of the art of our time as the paintings of Cezanne, avowedly suggested by Porteous, as ‘Ulysses’ and its dream associations of words and images, a poem in which there is nothing that can be taken out and reasoned over, nothing that is not a part of the poem itself. He has scribbled on the back of an envelope certain sets of letters that represent emotions or archetypal events—I cannot find any adequate definition—A B C D and then J K L M, and then each set of letters repeated, and then A B C D inverted and this repeated, and then a new element X Y Z, then certain letters that never recur and then all sorts of combinations of X Y Z and J K L M and A B C D and D C B A and all set whirling together. He has shown me upon a wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Chastity, in the middle the Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura’s day. The descent and the metamorphosis—A B C D and J K L M—his fixed elements, took the place of the Zodiac, the archetypal persons—X Y Z—that of the Triumphs, and certain modern events—his letters that do not recur—that of those events in Cosimo Tura’s day.”

After the esoteric verbiage, the shows of learning, the thick and heavy criticism in which the Cantos have been bedded, it is well to quote this clear exposition of their purpose. The writer is W. B. Yeats, the source his “Packet For Ezra Pound” which is a book strangely unknown to many people.

It may comfort (or irritate) those who are puzzled by Pound to find someone such as Yeats, an ‘accepted’ (though belittled and misunderstood) poet, considering Pound as an adult, considering him as a poet, and considering his Cantos worth discussion; but an exposition only helps one to read and to criticise the Cantos. It by no means does away with the problems which they provoke or establishes their success.

The two problems are these: how far in its incomplete state is this very long poem justified by its form, and can the material

of Mr. Pound's poetry be accepted in the bulk without misgiving? Form in a poem, even a short poem, is the hardest thing to detect and be sure about. On an unfinished poem of the length of the Cantos judgement must be unfinished as well, though as far as it goes the structure should be clear, like the cellular structure of a rounded organism when half dissected. This cellular analogy is important. It would be absurd to condemn the Cantos by deferring to "conventions of the intellect," for it is in the nature of contemporary art that it dispenses with the old exaggeration of logic and balance. The Cantos must be as different in structure from "Paradise Lost" as a painting by Braque or a drawing by Henry Moore differs from a painting or drawing by Poussin. They must be part of an organism, growing from and round certain foci—the archetypal events or fixed elements—but the growth must be firm, the cells full and active.

By this ruler I find the Cantos less satisfactory than they should be. In Cantos I and II the two archetypal events are magnificently stated. Thereafter what appears to me chaotic may, it is true, only appear so because of the extreme intricacy of the irregular but continual intergrowth of fixed elements, archetypal persons, and contemporary events. The difficulty is that the first problem involves the second. The form depends on the substance to a most intimate degree. Where, it might nearly be said, most poets use words, Mr. Pound uses quotations and translations and reminiscence, and single words which are often meant to convey a large burden outside themselves. The method is familiar through "The Waste Land" (which owes much to Pound), and the total form depends, in more than the immediate sense, in the way in which this peculiar material is put together. As the pieces of material are larger, their link, positive or negative, more obvious, so the pattern in that section of the total form becomes the clearer. Thus in Canto I, given the knowledge of Andreas Divus's translation of Homer in the 1530's, it is clear that Mr. Pound intends one to link classical culture with renaissance and renaissance with mediæval culture. To be sure of his pattern from beginning to end of these XXX Cantos, one must be able to catch every thin, delicate shaving of suggestion which Mr. Pound employs.

Describing Helen, for example, in Canto II, Mr. Pound says that she

*has the face of a God  
And the voice of Schœney's daughters.*

Schœney is Schœnus, father of Atalanta, a fact which five seconds with Lempriere will discover. But why Schœney? The answer is that Golding, in his translation of the 8th book of the *Metamorphoses*, describes

*“ Atalant, a goodly Ladie one  
of Schœnyes daughters ”*

and that Mr. Pound intends another cultural link. It is true that he quotes the passage in “*Pavannes and Divisions*,” but not every reader will have read “*Pavannes and Divisions*” or Golding’s translation, and there is no reason why he should have done. Where, as often, it is possible to discover what Mr. Pound implies by each em, each cell of his material—Provençal, Japanese, Chinese, from Ovid, Homer, Dante, the *Poema del Cid*, or from contemporary events—it is often possible and essential to admit that he uses it with skill and force.

A lump of dough or a trickle of tar has shape and consistency; and it would be stupid to say that there is not a homogeneity about these thirty Cantos. There is a homogeneity of material, a homogeneity in style or the way in which it is expressed; but remembering again that the thirty Cantos are only a fragment, and affirming that many of the innumerable implications can only be understood after a more thorough study of all Mr. Pound’s reading than I have carried out, I doubt still whether the Cantos have, in their splash of tint and shades, the compulsive and pervading discipline, the cellular inevitability that must belong to such a rounded organism. Coleridge’s distinction between imagination and fancy detects in many stretches of the Cantos an arbitrary collocation by which they are included in the lesser kind of poetry.

I agree with all who have emphasised it that the writing is often magnificent, but it is best often in the longest passages of unmixed

material. It is athletic writing, of a kind which has only been made possible by long severe training and dieting (which is feasting on the right food). Mr. Pound has been finely critical of his own work. A quick way of proving this is to compare the writing in the three cantos in "Quia Pauper Amavi" with the present strict, abbreviated version. But is it half enough to write well? The Cantos impress me with the fact that Mr. Pound sees rather than thrusts himself deeply into the depth of living and appreciates critically and creatively the implications of human culture as the one safe controller of specific destiny. But I believe that Pound, in his methodist extreme, and Eliot in so far as he has allowed himself to be influenced in this way by Pound, display in their poetry the evils of exaggerated and decadent Humanism. Mr. Eliot (who has used a humanist method for anything but humanist ends) argues the identity of life and literature, that an experience from literature can be as vital as any other. The retort is yes—to the experiencer. Mr. Pound, of course, can see his troubadours as living persons, but a quotation, an allusion, meant to have a big cultural and emotional significance, is not a person, and more than most symbols or elements poetry from the simple word to the image, quotations and allusions are inexact instruments. The experience so conveyed is second-hand to the reader, more so than with a carriage of words or of more elaborate personal symbols of a fixed meaning. It is vitiated by a double poetic ambiguity. A satirist could make good points by fancying a poem written in the quotations from a poem written itself in the same quotations from the Cantos which have quoted the quotations from Dante, Ovid and others.

I believe, in brief, that the method of the Cantos and of much of Eliot is a bad one well used. Other poets in the past have used it, but only as an occasional means of imagery. Though capable of great variety, it is a narrow means and one which well accords with inferior perceptive and visual powers, with living in culture rather than creating it.

Both Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pound have talked much about technique. Mr. Eliot has talked of Pound's "Selected Poems" as a text-book of modern versification, of the Cantos as a mine for juvenile poets

to quarry ; and in Retrospections (" Pavannes and Divisions ") Mr. Pound has talked revealingly of his explorations and experiments, his search for that precision, lacking in Victorian verse, which he finds in the verse of Arnaut Daniel and Cavalcanti. " If a man's experiments try out one new rime, or dispense conclusively with one iota of currently accepted nonsense, he is merely playing fair with his colleagues when he chalks up his result." This is true and unfrivolous, but it is going into poetry with too great a consciousness of poetry. Technique is a monstrously hard thing to acquire, but to think too much about it, divorced from its only purpose, is debilitating. Cocteau has said : " The nightingale sings badly," but he has also said in large capitals, " WE SHOULD BE MEN DURING OUR LIFETIME AND ARTISTS FOR POSTERITY." In no age but our own Humanist fag-end could a poet so much as mention that the writing of his or his friends' poetry can teach other poets.

This is not the proper way of ending an article on the Cantos. They contain, I repeat, much splendid verse, verse stripped of " rhetorical din and luxurious riot," verse " nearer the bone " and as much like granite as it can be, verse of the right kind for a long poem, though verse, I think, too brief, not as it should be through compression, but through deliberate economy. I miss in the Cantos the extreme physical shock which cursory inexpert reading finds at once in an incident or image in Dante, a shock which comes more than once in the work of Mr. Eliot, but there is much in them to admire, much, as Mr. Eliot has injured his case for them by declaring, to profit by. Mr. Eliot and Mr. Pound have restored the understanding of verse and have been good teachers. Yet in as far as they have paradoxically written most original poems which are valuable products of the beginning of a new or at least a transitional art-age somewhat in terms of a dead or dying age, in as far as they adorn art by art and derive art from art, they should by other poets be left alone. This basic idiosyncrasy has damaged what it has made ; and Mr. Pound should be allowed to drive his rich, royal coloured coach down his blind boulevard without rear-guard or procession.

Mr. Ronald Bottrall if he likes can follow on his scooter.

GEORGE GRIGSON

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