NEW VERSE

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WHY

THE OBJECT OF NEW VERSE needs expansion in no complex or tiring manifesto. Poets in this country and during this period of the victory of the masses, aristocratic and bourgeois as much as proletarian, which have captured the instruments of access to the public and use them to convey their own once timid and silent vulgarity, vulgarising all the arts, are allowed no longer periodical means of communicating their poems.

Periodicals exist into which poems are now and then allowed. Of the weeklies we name "serious", one or two admit verse—by writers very often whose temporary credit should long have expired—and they use it to finish off some lump of Elia-aping which will not fill the column, or print it under their last correspondence or under some such heading as "Miscellany" or "Pastiche"; and the poet who wishes room for his best poems must be content with the very few pages he can be given in the few grave and entertaining quarterlies and monthlies which contrive obstinately to continue in the poisonous and steaming Gran Chaco of vulgarity, sciolism and literary racketeering.

NEW VERSE, then, has a clear function. When respectable poems (as it believes) are being written and forced to remain in typescript, it can add itself as a publishing agent to those few publishers who bring out (with conscience money) a few books of verse. It favours only its time, belonging to no literary or politico-literary cabal, cherishing bombs only for masqueraders and for the everlasting "critical" rearguard of nastiness, now represented so ably and variously by the *Best Poems of the Year*, the Book Society and all the gang of big shot reviewers. NEW VERSE does not regard itself as a verse supplement to such periodicals as the *Criterion* and *Scrutiny*. There is no "poetic" and therefore no supplementary experience; poetry by its words (to borrow a metaphor of Eliot's) and so by itself drives roots down to draw from all human experience. If the poem is only one organism in the creation of which those experiences are collected, concentrated, transmitted, it is the chief organism; and one (incidentally) in such an ulcerous period as our own which can serve magnificently. So NEW VERSE believes.

NEW VERSE can be bought for sixpence—the price of ten Players or a brief library borrowing of *Angel Pavement* or a 'bus fare from Piccadilly Circus to Golders Green. If its aims seem stratospherically high, it can be helped to achieve them by the readiest support and recommendation. G. E. G.

TURN AGAIN WORTHINGTON

(or a thought for intending mystics)

Upon this beach the falling wall of the sea
Explodes its drunken marble
Amid gulls' gaiety.

Which evercrumbling masonry, cancelling sum,
No one by any device can represent
In any medium.

Turn therefore inland, tripper, foot on the sea-holly,
Forget those waves' monstrous fatuity
And boarding 'bus be jolly.

LOUIS MACNEICE

SONG

I have a handsome profile
I've been to a great public school
I've a little money invested
Then why do I feel such a fool
As if I owned a world that had had its day?

You certainly have a good reason
For feeling as you do
No wonder you are anxious
Because it's perfectly true
You own a world that has had its day.

I'll throw my money in the gutter
I'll throw it all away
I'll throw it where the workmen can pick it up
Then nobody can say
I own a world that has had its day.

The workmen will never get it
Though you throw it all over the town
The armament firms will collect it all
And use it for shooting them down
To save a world that has had its day.

I'll get a job in a factory
I'll live with working boys
I'll play them at darts in the public house
I'll share their sorrows and joys
Not live in a world that has had its day.

They won't tell you their secrets
Though you pay for their drinks in the bar
They'll tell you lies for your money
For they know you for what you are
That you live in a world that has had its day.

I'll book a berth on a liner
I'll sail away out to sea
I'll settle down on an island
Where the natives shall set me free
I'll leave a world that has had its day.

Most of the natives are dying
They've sampled your sort before
It gave them no satisfaction
They're in no mood for more
Who come from a world that has had its day.

I'll hire a furnished attic
A room on the top floor
I'll spend my mornings writing
A book that will cause a furore
About a world that has had its day.

You may be a little genius
You may be doing your best
To tell us about yours truly
But where is the interest
It's just a world that has had its day.

I'll attend when the parson is preaching
I'll tell all my sins to the priest
I'll do exactly as they ask
I'll go to heaven at least
After this world has had its day.

You may sit down under the pulpit
You may go down on your knees
But you don't believe them any more
And they won't give you ease
They're of this world that has had its day.

I'll go down to the brothel
Stick a syringe in my arm
I'll go out poaching on my own estate
Then I shall feel perfectly calm
About my world that has had its day.

It's no use turning nasty
It's no use turning good
You're what you are and nothing you do
Will get you out of the wood
Out of a world that has had its day.

Remember you're no old soldier
Remember that you are afraid
Remember you'd be no use at all
Behind the barricade
You belong to your world that has had its day.

Your son may be a hero
Carry a great big gun
Your son may be a hero
But you will not be one
Go down with your world that has had its day.

W. H. AUDEN

WAYSIDE STATION

I

in ears of stocks and cheiranthuses, bees
under rural sunlight breezeless
song of finches, sleeping dog, field dust
and a gramophone from the dwellinghouse droning
an old waltz from an open window.

a Bell rings. a Board drops.
the crossing gates swing open. South
slide the rails, to and from the sky.

II

dim berberis bushes are yet green
over tweed collars look-out noses peer
the passengers stamp, Enisled. late it is
late, how late they will be, though phlegmatic.
more sullen bushes, aground, are flooded out
a lout with bicycle lamp crosses amid
clammy white taciturnity.
Fog collapses upon the clamped rails.

JOSEPH GORDON MACLEOD

TWO POEMS
from "THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN"

I

Junction or terminus—here we alight.
A myriad tracks converge on this moment,
This man where all ages and men are married,
Who shall right him? Who shall determine?

Standing astonished at close of day
We know the worst, we may guess at good:
Geared too high our power was wasted,
Who have lost the old way to the happy ending.

A world behind us the west is in flames,
Devastated areas, works at a standstill;
No seed awakes, wary is no hunter,
The tame are ruined and the wild have fled.

Where then the saviour, the stop of illness?
Hidden the mountain was to steel our hearts.
Is healing here? An untrodden territory
Promises no coolness, invites but the brave.

But see! Not far, not fiction, a real one,
Vibrates like heat-haze full in the sun's face
Filling the heart, that chaste and fleet one,
Rarely my kestrel, my lucky star.

O man perplexed, here is your answer.
Alone who soars, who feeds upon earth—
Him shall you heed and learn where joy is
The dance of action, the expert eye.

Now is your moment, O hangfire heart;
The ice is breaking, the death-grip relaxes,
Luck's turned. Submit to your star and take
Command, O start the attacking movement!

II

Wystan, Rex, all of you that have not fled,
This is our world, this is where we have grown
Together in flesh and live; though each alone
Shall join the enclosed order of the dead,
Enter the silent brotherhood of bone.

All you that have a cool head and safe hands
Awaken early, there is much to do;
Hedges to raze, channels to clear, a true
Reckoning to find. The other side commands
Eternity. We have an hour or two.

Let us speak first against that ancient firm
Who sell an armament to any cause,
Fear and Pain brothers: call them bullies and curs
Who take us into corners and make us squirm,
Finding the weak spot, fumbling at secret doors.

Let us tell them plainly now they haven't a chance,
We are going about together, we've mingled blood,
Taken a tonic that's set us up for good;
Their disguises are tabled, their movements known in advance,
We have found out who hides them and gives them food.

Lipcurl, Swiveleye, Bluster, Crock and Queer,
Mister I'll-think-it-over, Miss Not-today,
Young Who-the-hell-cares and old Let-us-pray,
Sir Après-moi-le-déluge. It is here
They get their orders. These will have to pay.

Hear, the ice-wall of winter at our back,
Spring's first explosions throbbing across the plain,
Earth's diastole, flood tide of heart and vein:
Collect your forces for a counter-attack,
New life is on the way, the relief train.

CECIL DAY LEWIS

REGINAL ORDER

Slow swell of walk insists
"I'm woman"; suggests
Hot spheres of flesh.

Uvula'd talk lifts lip
From new-licked smile.
Lids close to a slit.

Creates thick lust
This radioactive she,
Bids man be brisk.

MARTIN BOLDERO

To SOME YOUNG COMMUNISTS from AN OLDER SOCIALIST

Under the cold eyes, the cat eyes of those young,
This car, cutting corners, into the ditch slithers;
And the middle-aged, mucky, stained and strained dither,
Feeling themselves fools, watched, their war-scarred withers wrung.

So we say, won't you help with the car, wise ones we want to trust,
But they won't—why should they?—they will walk fiercely, singing,
with friends:
No drugs for the old duds, nor care for dud cars not worth mending,
Leave it and walk, they say, that's good enough for us.

We try to walk, warily re-adjusting wrenched sinews,
But oh it's too hard, comrades, we can't, you've killed us, we're dead
and done.
Leave us by road-sides, sunk, head in hands, it may be sunny,
Dreaming no more of the dances that fairies in fields renew.

As for the car, we don't care much, it had jolly gadgets;
If someone finds and mends and drives it, we mustn't mind,
Nor that, hoping to help, with you to give and take kindness,
We have been left to a fate worse than we once imagined.

Tolerance and irony were the things we once hated.
Now there is nothing but that—you've cornered, corralled the rest.
Look, our car's luggage of high violent hopes is only socks and vests:
Kick them away, careless, marching, you and your mates.

We who were young once in that war time, we are now not young
but apart,
Living with photos of friends, dead at Ypres or Menin,
Remembering little of lies or truth perhaps defended;
We were hit then in the head, but now, hopeless, in the heart.

NAOMI MITCHISON

EVERYMAN HIS OWN PYGMALION

(Moriturus me Saluto)

Run not away, my statue,
(for you're so realistic it's just the sort of trick that
your nippy little nudity would play upon a chap that
knows better but can't make any better
works of art than you)
But, safer than command, here and now I chain you
As once the Rhodians their contumacious marbles
Because for you with your futile charms and abysmal
Lack of all values
I have got, though not as a work of art, a future
(oh I know you're not listening, I know you've got no interest
in anything as permanent as what they call a future,
you want to be hopping round the corner,
the old world beat of sluts)
Still I persist, confident in those chains,
A calculating Pygmalion, and you
My so realistic triumph calculated
With more than eye or chisel, more than Bernini's magic.
I go for a little rest and to brush off
This powder which incredibly was once
The subject matter of you
And when I return (in the meantime stay you here
but these—I forgot—chains will keep you here)
When I return, THEN...
But I am at the moment too tired to imagine
What will evolve then...outwards like a bubble
Spreading effulgent...but I am too tired
Just at the moment.
Well; I must be off for my little rest
There beyond the yewtree
Among those stones there;
Wait for me—but of course you being chained and I

Having the only key, wait you long or little,
No one else can unlock you or achieve
Rape or elopement.
Goodbye then, my dear, one stone kiss for the next
Kiss will be a creation—wait here
My life's work, soul's wanton, wait me here
A little time or long.

LOUIS MACNEICE

EPITAPH FOR A RIVETER

There need be no haste, slowly bear
Him along by the tenements;
He will never give heed to the Metro
Crisply accelerating below the fence.

Womb's entourage gave him small respite
From the forensic bark of punctual steel:
Expend no curses on the pathogen
That stars him in his last newsreel.

RONALD BOTTRALL

POETRY and BELIEF in GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

A consideration of Hopkins's poetry brings us close to a problem which has agitated modern criticism a good deal—I mean the relation of poetry to the poet's beliefs. The problem has been discussed in relation to Dante by Mr Eliot, and more generally by Mr Richards in his book on "Practical Criticism". These critics are mainly occupied in discussing whether it is necessary to share a poet's beliefs in order fully to enjoy his poetry. The aspect of the problem that arises in the case of Hopkins is even more vital—the effect of a poet's beliefs on the actual nature of his poetry.

In Hopkins's poetry, as perhaps in the work of other poets, we can distinguish (1) poetry which is the direct expression of beliefs, (2) poetry which has no obvious relation to any beliefs at all and (3) poetry which is not so much the expression of belief in any strict sense but more precisely of doubt. All Hopkins's poems of any importance can be grouped under these three categories. When this has been done, I think that there would be general agreement that in poetic value the second and third categories are immensely superior to the first. Indeed, so inferior are such poems as "Barnfloor and Winepress", "Nondum", "Easter", "Ad Mariam", "Rosa Mystica", and one or two others, that Robert Bridges rightly excluded them from the first edition of the "Poems". Of the "Poems" published by Dr Bridges, one or two might conceivably be classified as poems of positive belief, like the exquisite "Heaven-Haven" and "The Habit of Perfection". "The Wreck of the Deutschland", the long poem which Hopkins himself held in such high regard, is a poem of contrition, of fear and submission, rather than of the love of God:

Be adored among men,
God, three-numberèd form;
Wring thy rebel, dogged in den,
Man's malice, with wrecking and storm.
Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue,
Thou art lightning and love, I found it, a winter and warm;
Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung:
Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then.

This is the beauty of terror, the "terrible crystal" of the phrase in which Canon Dixon so perfectly defined Hopkins's quality.

Of the poetry which has no obvious relation to beliefs of any kind (they are the greater part of his work), I mean poems such as "God's Grandeur", "The Starlight Night", "Spring", "The Windhover", "Pied Beauty", "Hurrahing in Harvest", "The Caged Skylark", "The Candle Indoors", "Felix Randal", "Inversnaid", and the two "Echoes", the poetic force comes from a vital awareness of the objective beauty of the world. That awareness—"sensualism" as Dr Bridges calls it—is best and sufficiently revealed in original metaphors such as "mealed-with-yellow sallows", "piece-bright

paling", "daylight's dauphin", "a stallion stalwart, very violet-sweet", and many others of their kind, in which the poet reforges words to match the shape and sharpness of his feelings. Dr Bridges, in the context of the work I have already quoted, speaks of "the naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism which hurts the 'Golden Echo'"—a phrase I cannot in any sense apply to the poem in question; for while I appreciate the magnificent sensualism of this poem, I fail to detect any asceticism. But that in general there was a conflict of this sort in Hopkins is revealed, not only by the fact that he destroyed many of his poems which he found inconsistent with his religious discipline, but most clearly in his curious criticism of Keats.

The implication of this criticism is that the poet, by nature a dreamer and a sensualist, only raises himself to greatness by concerning himself with "great causes, as liberty and religion". In what sense did Hopkins so sublimate his own poetic powers? In a poem like "Pied Beauty" we see the process openly enacted. After a catalogue of dappled things, things which owe their beauty to contrast, inconsistency and change, Hopkins concludes by a neat inversion—an invocation to God who, fathering-forth such things, is Himself changeless. In "Hurrahing in Harvest" again we have an extended metaphor: the senses glean the Saviour in all the beauty of summer's end. "The Windhover" is completely objective in its senseful catalogue; but Hopkins gets over his scruples by dedicating the poem "To Christ our Lord". But this is a patent deception. It does not alter the naked sensualism of the poem; there is no asceticism in this poem; nor, essentially, in any of the other poems of this group. They are tributes to God's glory, as all poetry must be; but they are tributes of the senses; and a right conception of God and of religion will not be hurt by such tributes.

In the third section, poems expressive not so much of belief as of doubt, I would place those final sonnets, Nos. 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 50 in the published "Poems". These all date from the last years of Hopkins's life—the first six from 1885, the other from 1889, the actual year of his death. But even earlier poems express at least the premonitions of despair: "Spring and Fall"—the blight man was born for; the "Sibyl's Leaves"—the self-wrung rack where thoughts against thoughts grind. But the sonnets themselves are complete in

their gloom, awful in their anguish. I need only quote the last terrible sonnet:

> *Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend*
> *With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.*
> *Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must*
> *Disappointment all I endeavour end?*
> *Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,*
> *How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost*
> *Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust*
> *Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,*
> *Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes*
> *Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again*
> *With fretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes*
> *Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,*
> *Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.*
> *Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.*

Is there any evidence in the known facts of Hopkins's life which throws light on this state of mind? Father Lahey, in his memoir of Hopkins, speaks of the three sorrows of his last years. The first two were due to external causes and do not concern us here; but Father Lahey then writes:

> "Of Hopkins' third sorrow it is more difficult to speak. It sprang from causes which have their origin in true mysticism. Hopkins, smiling and joyful with his friends, was at the same time on the bleak heights of spiritual night with his God. All writers on mysticism—St Teresa, St John of the Cross, Poulain, Maumigny, etc.—have told us that this severe trial is the greatest and most cherished *gift* from One Who has accepted literally His servant's oblation. Hopkins was always remembered by all who met him as essentially a priest, a deep and prayerful religious. With the fine uncompromising courage of his initial conversion, he pursued his never-ending quest after spiritual perfection. The celebrated 'terrible' sonnets are only terrible in the same way that the beauty of Jesus Christ is terrible. Only the strong pinions of an eagle can realise the cherished happiness of such suffering. It is

a place where Golgotha and Thabor meet. Read in this light his poems cease to be tragic."

The relation of doubt to belief is another and a profounder question than the one which concerns us now. No one who has thought about such matters fails to realise the paradoxical significance of the cry of the dumb child's father: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief". As Father Lahey points out, this absence of spiritual complacency is of the very essence of Christian mysticism. An absence of spiritual complacency may also well be of the very nature of poetic sensibility.

Of that psychological aspect of creativity in the poet I have dealt at length in my recent book on "Form in Modern Poetry"*. I will only say here, by way of résumé, that we are born with sensibility and come into a world of ready-formulated ideas. As we develop, we may either adapt our sensibility to receive these ideas; or we may painfully create ideas (disciplinary dogmas) which the freely expanding personality can hold in tension. The space between self and dogma is *bridged*—there is a bridge, not an abysm of despair—bridged by doubt. My contention is, that a creative gift or poetic sensibility is only consistent with such a state of spiritual tension and acuity. True originality is due to a conflict between sensibility and belief: both exist in the personality, but in counter-action. The evidence is clear to read in all genuine mysticism and poetry; and nowhere more clearly than in the poetry and mysticism of Gerard Hopkins.

HERBERT READ

LAWRENCE AS A POET

Last Poems. By D. H. Lawrence. Orioli, Florence.

A fundamental fact about Lawrence's poetry is that its reader cannot escape the problem of belief. By all but a small special part of it he is forcibly invited—and the energy of the poetry is the force of this invitation—to do something in his response for which "believe" seems to be the appropriate word. The "do you—don't

* Sheed and Ward, London, 1932.

you?" "will you—won't you?" challenge is more insistent with his than with any other poetry I can think of—and this is so whether the doctrine is being argued in take-it-or-leave-it, literal language or being uttered through symbols of experiences which are themselves made symbolic. In either case one is invited to "believe"—and yet a great part of this doctrine is of a kind that no one, without doing violent damage to himself, can "believe". Are there two "believes" here, different in sense though the same in feeling? This is the capital problem with most of Lawrence's poetry.

If there are two kinds of believing here (let us call them "adopting the attitude as good" and "accepting the doctrine as true"), readers of Lawrence will sort themselves out by the degree to which these activities are separable in their minds. There are those who can follow him in his attitudes to life without agreeing that his doctrines are true. And there are those who cannot separate them—who must take them or reject them, attitude and doctrine, together. It will be idle for men of these different sorts to dispute about his poetry: they should be disputing about the uses of language and the senses of "belief" instead.

For those who can separate kinds of beliefs, Lawrence's poems fall into a number of classes, according to whether his own queer dealings with himself in restricting his own outlook on the world did or did not vitiate the poem. His was a singularly all-round mind at the beginning of his course, with an intellectual equipment and logical aptitudes not inadequate to the prodigious sensibility, plasticity, sincerity and courage that made him Lawrence. But quite early he took to shutting up these intellectual faculties whenever they threatened his system of intuitions. He deliberately turned his intellect into a giant slave of his intuitions instead of making it a partner, and the result was a loss of sanction that ruins a large part of his work. Whenever his own experience was alone relevant—being universally normal experience—there was no loss of sanction, as in the Death poems here.

The youth walks up to the white horse, to put its halter on,
and the horse looks at him in silence.
They are so silent they are in another world.

And it is so in scores of slighter though longer poems where, also, Lawrence is not reaching out beyond the field of his own marvellously deepened and clarified experience. But when he does reach out of it, and passes from "feeling something" to "feeling *that* so and so"—where the so and so involves other men's other experience as well as his own—his prophet's trick of despising evidence too often betrays him. It does so here in some poems of political doctrine ("The Cross" is a good example) as it did in his earlier poems that are *arguments from* his experience of sex. "Birds, Beasts and Flowers" escapes this danger, since the arguments there are not made to follow from the perceptions but to display them.

The danger is two-fold. The poem becomes, *as doctrine*, false (which might be a slight matter except in so far as acceptance of it as true is required); secondly, and much more serious, the attitude to life in the poem becomes peculiar to Lawrence, *merely his*, or at best sectarian. Instead of a poem proceeding from "the all in each of all men" we are left with a document—often a very moving one, but essentially a piece of a case-history. Lawrence's loyalty to his gift, to his intuition, was sometimes a disloyalty to his completer humanity—a fault as bad as being, for example, *only* a Frenchman. It forced him to write out of much less than his whole self.

These are the (fairly well known) problems which Lawrence's "Last Poems" bring up as violently as any of his earlier. Here 30 serious poems may stand with his best, and there are about 250 utterances of the Pansy kind—all in the colloquial, unrhymed, sometimes meditative, sometimes argumentative manner of his later work. Even in the best the reader must be prepared for those patches of prose which Lawrence took no particular care to clear out of his verse. Few of these poems are memorable in the narrow sense in which what you remember are the words—first, last and always. What remains is the sense of passionate awareness that opened as you read. If poetry requires "an identity of content and form", Lawrence was not a great poet. But this is a question *either* of definition *or* of the technical ways appropriate for certain purposes. "Do not let us introduce an Act of Uniformity against poets." Lawrence's ways were right for his purposes whenever his purposes had behind them as much of himself as they required.

I. A. RICHARDS

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