

# NEW VERSE

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## THE FABER BOOK OF MODERN VERSE

Edited by MICHAEL ROBERTS

A comprehensive anthology, from Hopkins and Yeats to the younger poets of to-day, of all the poets who have counted in the development of poetry in the twentieth century. Its arrangement and choice is such that it is not merely a collection of fine poems, but the best possible critical introduction to modern poetry. 7/6

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**FABER & FABER**

24 Russell Square, London, W.C.1

## HOMAGE TO CLICHÉS

With all this clamour for progress  
This hammering out of new phases and gadgets, new trinkets and  
phrases  
I prefer the automatic, the reflex, the cliché of velvet.  
The foreseen smile, sexual, maternal, or hail-fellow-met  
The cat's fur sparking under your hand  
And the indolent delicacy of your hand  
These fish coming in to the net  
I can see them coming for yards  
The way that you answer, the way that you dangle your foot  
These fish that are rainbow and fat  
One can catch in the hand and caress and return to the pool.  
So five minutes spent at a bar  
Watching the fish coming in, as you parry and shrug  
This is on me or this is on me,  
Or an old man momentarily sharpens a pencil as though  
He were not merely licking his fur like a cat—  
The cat's tongue curls to the back of its neck, the fish swivel round  
by the side of their tails, on the abbey the arrows of gold  
On the pinnacles shift in the wind—  
This is on me this time  
Watch how your flattery logic seduction or wit  
Elicit the expected response  
Each tiny hammer of the abbey chime  
Beating on the outer shell of the eternal bell  
Which hangs like a Rameses, does not deign to move  
For Mahomet comes to the mountain and the fish come to the bell.  
What will you have now ? The same again ?  
A gin and lime or a double Scotch  
Watch the response, the lifting wrist the clink and smile  
The fish come in, the hammered notes come out  
From a filigree gothic trap.  
These are the moments that are anaplerotic, these are the gifts to  
be accepted

Remembering the qualification  
 That everything is not true to type like these  
 That the pattern and the patina of these  
 Are superseded in the end.  
 Stoop your head, follow me through this door  
 Up the belfry stair.  
 What do you see in this gloom, this womb of stone ?  
 I see eight bells hanging alone.  
 Eight black panthers, eight silences  
 On the outer shell of which our fingers via hammers  
 Rapping with an impertinent precision  
 Have made believe that this was the final music.  
 Final as if finality was the trend of fish  
 That always seek the net  
 As if finality was the obvious gag  
 The audience laughing in anticipation  
 As if finality was the angled smile  
 Drawn from the dappled stream of casual meetings  
 (Yet oh thank God for such)  
 But there is this much over  
 There is very much left over :  
 The Rameses, the panther, the two-ton bell  
 Will never, you think, move  
 Will never move his sceptre  
 Never spring, never swing  
 No, no, he will never move . . .  
 What will you have, my dear ? The same again ?  
 Two more double Scotch, watch the approved response  
 This is the preferred mode  
 I have shut the little window that looks up the road  
 Towards the tombs of the kings  
 For I have heard that you meet people walking in granite  
 I have shut up the gates under padlock  
 For fear of wild beasts  
 And I have shut my ears to the possible peal of bells,  
 Every precaution—  
 What will you have, my dear ? The same again ?  
 Count up our fag-ends

This year next year sometime never  
 Next year is this year, sometime is next time, never is sometime  
 Never is the Bell, Never is the Panther, Never is Rameses  
 Oh the cold stone panic of Never—  
 The ringers are taking off their coats, the panther crouches  
 The granite sceptre is very slightly enclining  
 As our shoes tap against the bar and our glasses  
 Make two new rings of wet upon the counter  
 Somewhere behind us stands a man, a counter  
 A timekeeper with a watch and a pistol  
 Ready to shoot and with his shot destroy  
 This whole delightful world of cliché and refrain—  
 What will you have, my dear? The same again?

LOUIS MACNEICE

## I. INVOCATION

journeyman to axis  
 reader of papyri  
 voice in the lift-shaft  
 wine meniscus  
 thinlegged child  
 lover of cambric  
 loser of sixpence  
 expecting the second feature  
 expecting the second coming  
 expecting the last post  
 expecting to be late  
     with a smile  
                     showing incipient caries  
 with a word  
                     in the Oxford English Dictionary  
 with a tear  
                     probably glycerine  
 for the dead travel fast.

## 2. SIGNS

the letter to write  
the seaside cruet  
the magic flute

goldbearing quartz  
the speeding fox  
the last waltz

the rising gale  
the flowered voile  
the schoolbell

the hairshirt  
the reward of Gelert  
the cleft palate

the shores of France  
the uncut romance  
the cataleptic trance

the flying start  
the dish-clout  
the murdered heart.

## 3. LULLABY

Say goodnight and step over the mountain  
the cat will not stop washing his face  
and the morning will be stepping up to you  
to develop an intoxicating fluency  
the voices of peasants, not singing to you.

Say goodnight and step out of the window  
the night will spread its cold hands on your face  
the world will still keep turning to the right  
and in the darkness the turned-up whites of eyes  
people dressing and undressing for some sake.

Say goodnight and close the door behind you  
the wireless keeps on playing to the room  
and if a gesture like the boyhood of Raleigh  
and if a word who is there left to listen ?  
the timid footsteps dropping so far behind you.

Say goodnight, letting no further persuasion  
flatter you from your sheets, letting the eye  
turned inwards on yourself lose power to image  
but hopeless now slip down into the sea  
which has been waiting all along so patiently.

#### 4. VALEDICTION

I say a sheet of paper  
I say a sheet of paper and two doves  
and I say it is raining cats and dogs  
and I say I like cats and I dislike dogs.

As it was in the beginning  
the Seven Cardinal Virtues  
the Seven Deadly Sins  
as it shall be in the end  
the Seven Deadly Sins  
the Seven Cardinal Virtues  
for ever and ever, throughout the ages  
down to this second, already finished.

To make sure that the ink is dry  
to obviate handshaking and the obvious virtues  
and the obvious feelings and the obvious failings  
three-faced time in a thousand places  
and to say goodbye.

KENNETH ALLOTT

## BOURGEOIS NEWS

Floods are frequent because the rivers of Britain have been neglected for a century. Positive movements of transgression carry the sea and its deposits over the lands, drowning them and their features under tens or hundreds of fathoms of water. Efforts to advance the prosperity of the country should be directed towards building on the foundations already laid by the native himself, rather than to hazardous introductions or innovations. Commercial possibilities are not clearly and courageously visualised, and the new ventures are often the product and concern of individuals facing the traditional difficulties of lonely pioneers. The indoor staff remains comparatively small. The vigour of mountain building, of volcanoes, and of other manifestations of unrest, has shown no sign of senility or lack of energy. An operator received concussion and a wound on the head from a cast-iron cover blown off a 60A switch-fuse box.

Geodesists have welcomed escape from the rising and sinking of the crust. To follow their food from over-grazed or sun-scorched regions they required to be able to migrate easily and quickly. To-day you cannot fight summerheat with haphazard measures. The fermenting mass is turned three times. Nevertheless the gates are not kept locked and there is a considerable freedom to the public provided no fires are lighted and respect is shown for the plantations.

Colonel Popham, who began work as a tea planter, murmured, "They say a man is too old at forty. Or is it fifty? I think it must be seventy or eighty. I speak four different Chinese dialects fluently. It helped a lot. Then the slump came and trade went stagnant. I have lost all my money, but I can always earn more. As soon as I have saved up enough I shall put it all into another show. What is money for? If it is to be spent it finds work for a lot of people and keeps in circulation. Our seventy-eight-year-old customer said he had taken the umbrella with him round the world, through jungles and across prairies. He boasted that he had never lost it because he would never lend it. He brought it to us to be re-covered. That was less than five years ago. We now occupy three floors of the building where we began, and have overflowed into an adjoining building. No company such as this with a fine tradition for honest dealing with native peoples can remain in a depressed condition for an indefinite period. A reorganisation

scheme has been delayed owing to some difference of opinion with the American (Guggenheim) interests. That has now been settled, and the way is clear for the reorganisation plan. London could be reached in twenty minutes. Rows of imposing neon-lighted shops erected. Supercinemas built.”

\* \* \* \*

The mountains heaved up like a rough sea for twelve miles, and the hamlet with its 200 inhabitants disappeared. Two mail-coaches arrived safely at their destination, but with the drivers frozen dead in their seats. Trains were buried for three days. London awoke to chaos on the 19th. The snow lay a uniform solid three feet thick and fifteen feet in drifts. Many boats careered wildly along the road, crashing into houses and other buildings on the river bank. The crew of the Strathrye soaked their beds in paraffin and ignited them to attract attention. Days were passed in making shrouds, in farewells, in drinking holy thin soup. The schools were empty so that the whole family could die together, and no debts were paid.

Shortly after midnight a great light was seen to be appearing on the high hills a little way off. As the light became brighter they shrieked and lamented and wrapped themselves in white cloth. The light, however, turned out to be the primitive acetylene lights of an early motor-car. The aborigines immediately proceeded to take the carburettor to bits with a great deal of interested chatter that thoroughly frightened the traveller. To his amazement they then put the pieces together again, after which the engine worked perfectly and the boat went on its way.

\* \* \* \*

A man of fifty-nine will sit next Sunday on a divan of cloth of gold and precious stones. Ten million people in all parts of the East will give thanks. He looks beautiful. His neck has grown straight and supple. He swings his head about more than usual, as if he enjoys the movement. Fir bushes grow around, the path has been kept weeded, but no one visits this strange, empty mausoleum. Mrs King has resolutely refused to allow the body to be taken out of her home. “She still regards him as living.”

He was interested in the stock market. But in New York the market closes at 3 p.m., which is noon in Hollywood. The rest of the day was empty. He had no hobbies. He went from one extreme to the other. He tore his nervous system to shreds



worrying over grievances, more often imaginary than real. Then suddenly he would thrust his worries from him and be the most gay, charming, high-spirited companion in the world, full of a vaulting optimism as little justified as his depths of gloom. He had said that he made his wife an annual allowance up to 1917, when he gave her two factories. Then he was in poor circumstances and could not do any more.

“At last I found what it was,” he said. “I wanted to see my wife. I wanted her to grumble at me for eating the wrong food and wearing the wrong clothes. Pretty bunches of evenly sized bright pink and yellow sticks may attract her and increase the sales of rhubarb, which have been declining for some years.”

\* \* \* \*

This is an interesting Government. And a strange one. It is big. Very big. It is strong. Very strong. Yet all the three leaders of it are discredited. Far from being extinguished the antelope has become a menace, since it is roaming the south-west of the province in herds, and farmers are imploring the Government to protect them from it. Even the most thorough-going rogues have enjoyed such popularity that thousands of admirers have refused to believe any ill of them, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. Japan, for instance, has had her representatives in special training for weeks at a camp near the old Shogun city of Kamakura. What we have to do is to listen to the tiny voice of conscience and not smother it. In the past two or three weeks I have been visiting armaments works. The net result of my conclusions is that I do not think the country can afford to allow valuable men like Sir Charles Craven to be wasting their time giving evidence before armaments commissions. It takes around eight months to make a 4·7-inch gun. It does seem to me a poor kind of compliment to the intelligence of the councillors to suggest that they do not know their own minds from one day to the next. As they must not leave their room during the deliberation, which will be long, twelve beds have been installed for them. In the course of yesterday, the successive bulletins were of a more reassuring nature: “The most probable cause is the present state of flux in native life, the disappearance of tribal discipline, and the results of undigested education. It is possible to change some factors; it is not possible to change geography.” These reassurances did not everywhere produce the desired effect.

On the third day, using wire ropes, the wreck was lifted to the surface, but a swell on the sea made it impossible to get it onto the lighter. The ropes snapped, and the flying-boat drifted for 100 ft., and sank in 60 ft. of water, where it remained. As the day wore on, and the anti-cyclone began to withdraw to the Continent, three quarters of those present made for the door. There was no panic. They could go on their way peacefully, because they were strong.

CHARLES MADGE

## SERMON FROM HILLS

Hailing in rain-clear days from colder hills  
Than zipping out hard words, God states  
The unalterable panacea for ills.

Across the playing ground are khaki scouts  
Lagging despondently with flags,  
The cotton smuggling feverishly at sticks.

Around the hills, in their warm trousered legs  
Rich men caress their hanging gold,  
And ride to luncheon when the interest lags.

The live bears frolic round their chromium homes  
And hearing midnight in the town  
Wonder in woolly brain upon God's tone.

Only are left some few. But He lets down  
No sheet of food ; gold's blanket hung  
Smothering His arms, the pilferer of a crown.

In churches empty choir boys have sung  
A foolish mockery of Christ,  
Across Whose mind no pomp-inflated hymn has rung.

The ascertainable hope He founded lost,  
Now like the summer's life of sap  
Dead under dowdy earth leaves in the frost.

B. H. GUTTERIDGE

## THE BALTIC SHORE

Long, long the hours on the edge of darkness,  
But brief our trembling remembrance. Night. Listen.  
Again, soft through the blue October curtains  
Detect the fragrant and familiar tread ;  
The breath on the brow, the warning word at the gateway,  
The stride of the slender and immoderate dead :

Empty and dark those spells of agitation,  
The fruitless spasm, the glance, the tremor, the word,  
The street now silent, silent the church at midnight,  
The clock's hand pointing, doomed the boys in the square  
Kissed once too often, the nightly rehearsed caresses,  
The delicate fingers enclosing the evil air.

Yes, frail the memory but frightful the unremembered  
Sessions endured by those clasped in desire :  
Long, long the pause upon the brink of silence,  
The stare at the extended arms on the tender bed,  
Never to emerge again the voluptuous spirits  
From the kiss of the past, the embrace of the passionate dead.

Gaze : on the seas below the dear adorers,  
Those fondled once on field, by cliff or water.  
The huge and desolate eyes of the self-deceivers :  
They loved their land, they struggled and they fell !  
Now in their comprehending terror swaying  
On the immense and equalizing swell :

Yet sways the man-entangled sea ; and pale  
Beyond the harbor slide the men through darkness,  
Know the cold waves, love the cold finger-breaking  
Dog-watch, the swell, the swing, the crest, the call,  
The whine of the sail, the turn at the wheel, the aching  
Eyes fastened on forgetfulness, the fall.

O spires, o streams, o sorrows, o temptations,  
Those quaint and charming islands of our childhood !  
Sweet days of indecision ! but approaching  
Crawls the curved drumbeat of our governing fears :  
Huge heaven now slants on our diverted eyelids,  
Night breaks to northward, ends the inconstant years.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH

## BEFORE A FALL

And what was the big room he walked in ?

The big room he walked in,  
Over the smooth floor,  
Under the sky light,  
Was his own brain.

And what was it he admired there ?

He admired there  
The oval mirror.

And what was it the oval mirror showed him there ?

It showed him the roots  
Through the ceiling,  
The gross armchair, the bookcase  
Shuttered with glass,  
The Hymns bound in velvet,  
The porcelain oven,  
The giant egg cups,  
The hairy needles,  
And the silence—

And the smell of smouldering dung  
Hung between the walls  
(Which were yellow as dandelion).

And how did he leave ?

On the smooth floor  
His neat feet jarred  
And his teeth grew down  
To his heart, and he slipped  
On the white stairhead—

Which ended ?

Which ended in coldness  
And darkness,  
Through which he fell  
(So they tell)  
With little hope, and slowly.

MARTIN BOLDERO

## NEW YEAR

Solace me with your sex that I may not know  
How fast your heart beats on the other side  
To mine ; how they will set these boys to kill  
In summer, the most beautiful season for war.

What is different from my class and you  
Is the sense of unity I do not feel.  
Time's cuckold and someone's mistress to a grave  
Of notorious and botched ambition I dance.  
Miming our propaganda, permitted  
On the eve of festivity the slack  
Of the noose, we await zero hour and the masked,  
But not mysterious, booted Leader.

My tragedy is my power of prophecy,  
Learnt from those men I love  
Vainly, like you, but with the despairing same  
Knowledge of our deathless progeny,  
From common graves and prisons rising  
Where our thin blood has written history.

R. B. FULLER

## POEM

It is said of one lot they built roads ;  
Another left curious phallic mugs :  
And our own is dying on us  
—an old relative with a stinking disease.

We shall know what happens when the slaves are not fed  
and luxury becomes insupportable ;  
When sewers disgorge into private houses  
And the geese are heard over the capitol.

The fingers of the unfortunate, the sensitive,  
rest on the pulse : in the close night  
One is heard crying for swabs and the stoppered flask.  
The eyes of those left of us will  
With the clear and antiseptic day  
look painfully for what remains.

R. B. FULLER

## PORT SAID

Do you feel, shivering, the touch of the world's knife ?  
Look, cross the city, listen to the metal street,  
Cross the black bridge and behold the water-haired women  
    Grieving on the pebbles below, beating  
    Their spotted linen, beating  
    Their loins, listen to these feet

Climbing sadly the shaded path that curves  
Over the water ; the travellers watching the sands  
For omens of war ; the spies sloe-eyed and shuddering  
    Like harlots ; the negroes singing  
    Of trouble, and beside them standing  
    Those with the long white hands

Not male not female shaping the sign of Hermes :  
Below, the expecting gorge : above, their eyes  
Like pearls in the shell-white faces, thinking " Can it  
    Be hard to die, is death  
    A gentle lover ?" and the girls lying  
    In twos, whispering lies.

Not pleasant ; think of those other cities ; the dead ones ;  
The priests in their stained robes passing the urns, and the silken  
Virgins bearing the frozen nectarines,  
    Those led to the sacrifice, the  
    Sufferers, the boys with the curling  
    Tresses and eyes like pearls,

Sick of a dead world, and in the river the oarsmen  
Naked and hairless, crying to the shepherds, old  
Old men and wise ; the divers bleeding, the widows  
    Burning, the counsellors warning,  
    The poets singing the golden  
    Princes, and how they told

Of another age, an age of silver, and that knife  
Severing the race, that age of ice like a sheet over  
The terrified towers and windowed cliffs and over  
    The flowerlike bodies deprived  
    Of spirit, gently covering  
    Their solitude like a lover.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH

## NOT SO HOT

*The Dog Beneath The Skin.* By W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. Produced by the Group Theatre, January 12th, 1936, at the Westminster Theatre.

This is not a play so much as an imaginative Irish stew, a general-store, a pot-pourri or a Cook's tour in a number of variety acts of the simplified world which Mr. Auden sees. It is picaresque and so diffuse, formless but possessing a kind of unity from the uniform distortion of the figures (not characters) represented. It has no beginning, middle and end. It might have gone on indefinitely. And nobody would have minded very much because Mr. Auden is a true British dramatist whose typical 'sudden splendours' and 'beauties' are incidental. It is instructive to compare this play with *Orphée*. Mr. Auden is not a dramatist but a poet interested in the theatre. It is pertinent to inquire whether he writes at his best in these scenes which are best theatre, and, if not, whether this does not bring up the whole question of a modern poetic drama. *Murder in the Cathedral* is country-house charades performed by elderly, rheumatic folk; this play is dangerously near to being the same charades played by the Juniors for once allowed to stay up late. There is just a little too much spontaneous fun and ragging.

The piece was not produced but thrown on the stage. The verse-speaking was save in one or two instances bearable. The acting varied from very bad to quite good. The cutting was abominable e.g. the end of the brothel scene and the Destructive Desmond cabaret turn. The scene in the operating theatre as produced and acted was intolerable. The substitution of a woman for a dummy in the bedroom scene (Act III Sc. V of text, Act III Sc. II as acted) spoils the point of the scene. The new ending seems to have been devised to round things off neatly. As the play is a straight line and not a circle this was a work of super-erogation.

K. A.

## THE NEWEST YEATS

*A Full Moon in March.* By W. B. Yeats. (Macmillan. 5s.)

I do not know how much Yeats was influenced by Synge but his latest verse play, *A Full Moon in March*, reminds me of Synge (astonishing though that may seem) and of what Yeats found in Synge, 'an astringent joy and hardness.' This little play (beside which its earlier version, *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, is merely a decorative piece) is the thin end of the wedge but it has the weight of a life and a philosophy behind it and its edge is a very sharp one, a final expression of the necessity of desecration and the bravado of defeat. It must be read several times for at first sight one may say 'There is nothing new here' (true but not entirely). Yeats' study of Swift has born fruit—

*I study hatred with great diligence,  
For that's a passion in my own control.*

In 1900 Yeats desired rhythms which should be 'the embodiment of the imagination, *that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time.*' (Italics mine.) But the metaphysical paradox demands the descent into time; Yeats' later poetry is an open-eyed recognition of that descent.

Of the shorter poems in this book none is as striking as the best in *The Winding Stair* but the Supernatural Songs improve on re-reading. And no one by this stage should have the impertinence to read Yeats only once.

L. M.

## ELEMENTS OF VERSE

*The Winter House.* By Norman Cameron. (Dent. 2s. 6d.)

*Songs of the Forest: the Folk Poetry of the Gonds.* By Shamrao Hivale and Verrier Elwin. (Allen and Unwin. 6s.)

Most of Mr. Cameron's poems have been published in NEW VERSE, readers of which will have presumably made up their minds about them, this way or that, a long time ago. But they are so peculiar and isolated among all the poetry which is being written just now, the good and the bad poetry, that they are worth



an expository note. First, Mr, Cameron is not a moral poet. He is not interested in uplift, and he is not, at any distance from immediate politics, a politician. Second, he is not a professional poet, writing his twenty lines a day, he is not a literary chap (he might never have read Eliot, or Hopkins, or Auden, or any poet except Shakespeare and Laura Riding and Rimbaud); he is a natural poet, with all the virtue, and all the limitations, of the spontaneous amateur. His poems are not forced (as bogus writers force their poems with extra artifice beyond illumination). They are each an expanded image, an event, with the organic or circular nature of an event. That is to say, they are a genuine pure poetry in opposition to the bogus pure poetry of imagism, or of William Carlos Williams. One need only enjoy them without wishing that they were bigger or better, as one enjoys nursery rhymes or folk song. And of these individual imaginative products of introversion, a good many (e.g. *Public House Confidence*, *Mountain Monastery*, *The Unfinished Race*, *The Disused Temple*, *By Leave of Lack*) body out phantasies which are the community's as well as Mr. Cameron's.

This book of the folk poetry of the Gonds, people of a relatively simple, and a very vital culture in the Central Provinces of India, can also be recommended as intrinsically delightful and topically instructive. Here also you have a pure poetry, though it comes from a better psychological balance than Mr. Cameron's, from people enjoying (this is not sentimentally said) a life more vitally complete, whatever its narrowness. Poems such as *The Rain Song* (86):

*Gently, gently falls the rain.  
 In the courtyard, moss has gathered.  
 A little orphan girl has slipped on it.  
 The old mother has run to catch her,  
 But she has caught hold of the branch of the mango tree.*

as Poem 106 :

*On the mountain of red earth, a green parrot had its home.  
 On this side lived a pigeon, on that side lived a maina.  
 The one was sold for five rupees, the other went for ten.  
 On the mountain of red earth, a green parrot had its home.*

are element poems. Blake turned the element of English folk-

song into great poetry which was individual and (in no moral or Day Lewis sense) communal. These Gond poems are elements for us in the same way, elements as Eskimo carvings or Azilian painted pebbles are now for the sculptor and the painter.

It should be complained that these versions are sometimes spoilt by the final editor's familiarity with English verse of the written tradition; and they are unscientifically presented. "The versions faithfully convey the meaning, though not the form, of the originals, except that we have omitted for the most part the strange cries and ejaculations that punctuate the verses. . . . Nor have we burdened our pages with a repetition of the stock refrains that are attached to every song, but which often have no connection with its theme." In later issues of NEW VERSE we hope to publish literal versions of some of the longer dance poems of the Gonds of Bastar State.

G. E. G.

## THE STUFFED GOLDFINCH

*Ideas of Order.* By Wallace Stevens. (New York: The Alcestis Press, 551, Fifth Avenue.)

*Harmonium* (1923), Mr. Wallace Stevens's only other book of verse, gave him a reputation. There we had a delicate man, an ironist, an imagist, a modern, a thin-fingered undemocratic American. There we had *Peter Quince at the Clavier*, *Two Figures in Dense Violet Night*, *The Emperor of Ice-cream*; and here we have them still. The same titles, *Dance of the Macabre Mice*, *Lions in Sweden*, *Botanist on Alp*, *Evening without Angels*—less panache, periwinkle, cantilene, fewer melons and peacocks, but still the finicking privateer, prosy Herrick, Klee without rhythm, observing nothing, single artificer of his own world of mannerism, mixer-up of chinoiserie, recollections of light in Claude, sharp sound in Mozart, trinkets of culture; substituting for Claude's "calm sunshine of the heart" (the human heart and real sunshine) an uneasy subjective twinkle of sequins, describing thirteen ways of seeing a blackbird, forgetting the bird. Too much Wallace Stevens, too little everything else.

And he knows all this : refer to *Sailing After Lunch*, nearly a good poem, and a confession. Read also that

*Poetry is a finikin thing of air  
That lives uncertainly and not for long  
Yet radiantly beyond much lustier blurs*

—decidedly this charming Wallace Stevens is fixed in his 1923. He is dated between the two realities of the past and the future ; that means, he is an “ imagist ” emanation of a *dies non* we do not remember and do not bother to recall.

*Second Hymn To Lenin And Other Poems.* By Hugh Macdiarmid. (Nott. 3s. 6d.)

We would respect Mr. Hugh Macdiarmid if we could. He has written 8 books of verse, 2 of fiction, 1 of politics,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  of criticism,  $\frac{1}{2}$  a book of agriculture, and he has edited two anthologies. He has a name, he has contributed to *The Criterion*, he is always mentioned in books about Scotland, he dislikes Mr. St. John Ervine. And yet, here are these 77 pages of unvarying twitter. You expected a bulbul, you find—and don't need fieldglasses to make sure—a moulting, maundering chiff-chaff. In these poems there is just a little virtue. The sentiment is sometimes neat. Bathos is just avoided. Great authors have been read and respected. But the poems read only a little better than the ballads hawked round by the unemployed. They are very similar. They have the same sincerity, and they have the same roughness, which is pathetic and moving in the street, but dull and ridiculous in a Scottish highbrow. We would sooner have a quick one, of course, with Mr. Macdiarmid than with Mr. Humbert Wolfe, but even the greasy ripples of Mr. Wolfe get nearer than these highbrow doggerels to good verse.

G. E. G.

## CACUS, AVENTINÆ TIMOR ATQUE INFAMIA SILVÆ

Thunder has been rumbling through *The Observer*. Hot Shot St. John Ervine has spent three articles roaring inaccurately against these young, modern, Bolshy poets, yauping an old yaup about the obscurity of the clearest, simplest quotations.

He has been compared in *Observer* (i) to a scrub bull, by Mr. Grigson, (ii) to a sea lion, by Mr. Louis MacNeice: "I think it is time Mr. Ervine had a new reincarnation. He might feel happier, say, as a sea lion in the Zoo. Then they would give him fish when he barked."

Wyndham Lewis wrote: "Mr Ervine is very contemptuous about 'obscurity,' and that is one thing: and he is very contemptuous about communism, and that is another. But one can go much further than that, and say that they are almost opposite things. A difficult author—Mallarmé, Henry James, or Hopkins—would be no hero in Russia to-day. Indeed it should be self-evident that 'difficulty' (that is, highly individualised expression) must be regarded not only as anti-popular, but, since useless for purposes of propaganda, a sort of affront—like an idle man."

And see, on *that*, note of lecture (below) by Day Lewis.

The old jane, Edith Sitwell, saw a chance of piping in; poet Martin Boldero and Geoffrey Grigson are the same persons, she announced, but world and *The Observer* stayed calm and poet Boldero (after doubting whether the old jane was *either* one of Mr. Cochran's Young Ladies *or* the World's Sweetheart) dared the old lady and sent in another poem to NEW VERSE.

## SURREALISTS GET THE BIRD

"The poet's justification lay not simply in the creation of poetry but also in its recognition by the community; he was psychologically compelled to serve both God and Mammon. On the other hand his poetry was fundamentally conditioned by his relationship with society, and therefore by the demands and vicissitudes of that society. He believed that any theory of 'pure poetry' was apt to break down because it upset that ratio. It laid, in practice, enormous stress on the poet's integrity, his duty to himself as creator, but underestimated his duty to, and dependence on, society, which did not mean anything like writing to order. The poet was more than a caterer. He drew life—not only as a human being, but as a poet—from the community: there must be reciprocity, he must give life back, and to cut himself off from that source of

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life was much more likely to cripple than to liberate him. He hoped that it would not be thought that he was denying the existence or the value of 'pure poetry.' His concern at the moment was to criticise theories or schools of poetry that consciously 'willed' to produce it, and asserted that it was the only or the best kind of poetry . . . . . pure poetry was something fortuitous ; it was, he believed, a sudden spontaneous illumination, which might be engendered in the course of writing a poem. He did not believe it was in the poet's control to create or sustain that illumination and he distrusted the claims of any literary method to produce it. To the idea of poetry as exclusive, esoteric, a-moral, the private affair of the poet, moving in a different world from prose, he would oppose the idea of poetry as catholic, diverse in function, moral, everyone's business (potentially, at any rate), assimilating not rejecting prose meaning, a way of synthesising and communicating reality."

*CECIL DAY LEWIS, Lecture to Edinburgh Poetry Club  
(from " Scotsman " report, Jan. 11, 1936).*

## UP GEORGIA

Lascelles Abercrombie, eminent critic, professor, georgian, New Verse Secret Service now learns, is serving on cross-word puzzle committee for publishers of *John Bull*, *Passing Show* etc. Lascelles Abercrombie is the only living poet in the Oxford Collected Editions.

## QUERY

Is there no vacancy for poet Blunden or President of Magdalen ?

## RA RA

“The softness, mental slop and lack of guts among young men who have had no troubles, who have been brought up easy, often drives elderly soldiers and even men like myself to think a bit of war would be good for 'em.”

EZRA POUND in “*British-Italian Bulletin*” (pro-Musso propaganda) January 18th.

## SHE SAID IT

“Mr. Ronald Bottrall has a control over speech rhythms which is nothing short of amazing. Under his touch, they flow or harden, change their focus and their tempo, and are invariably expressive in the highest degree.”

THE OLD JANE, in “*London Mercury*.”

“Mr. MacNeice's poems are very dull, and seem coated with chocolate.”

THE OLD JANE, in “*Life and Letters*.”

## A PRIZE

The Editors of *The Southern Review* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, U.S.A.) announce a prize of two hundred and fifty dollars, plus the usual publication rates, for the best poem or group of poems to be submitted before May 15, 1936. The work submitted must fall within the approximate limits of one hundred and fifty and five hundred lines. Manuscripts entered for the award must be unsigned, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope and by a signed statement entering them into the contest. The Editors retain the right to publish in *The Southern Review* at the usual rates any poems entered.

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