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THIS MODERN POETRY

BABETTE DEUTSCH

7/6

WHAT IS SURREALISM?

ANDRÉ BRETON

In this pamphlet, prepared specially for the International Surrealist Exhibition, Mr. Breton explains exactly what Surrealism stands for, and holds that it is the most vital movement in contemporary art and literature.

With 4 illustrations. 2/-

FABER & FABER

24 Russell Square, London, W.C.1

OFFERING

I offer you my forests and street-cries
with hands of double patience under the clock
the antiseptic arguments and lies
uttered before the flood, the submerged rock ;
the sack of meal pierced by the handsome fencer
the flowers dying for " a great adventure."

I offer you the mysterious parable
the mount of reason, the hero's glassy hymn
the disquieting uproar of the obvious
hate in the taproom, murder in the barn
the long, experienced finger of the Gulf Stream
the flying sense of glory in a failure's dream.

I offer you the bubble of free-will
the rarefied agony of forgotten places
the green cadaver stirring to the moon's pull
the cheerful butchery of raw amateur faces
which like the half-blind nags shipped off for food
die, doubtless serving some higher good.

I offer you the Egyptian miracle
the acrobat doing handsprings in the rain
a touched-up photograph in sepia
of the future teasing the fibres of the brain ;
I offer you the seven league army boots he wears
striding down the black funnel of the years.

I offer you a coral growth of cells
a flash of lightning anchored in a carafe.
The withered arm of the last century
cannot provoke a demon to anger us ;
the straphanging skeleton of what has been
is out of date forever like the crinoline.

I offer you clouds of nuisance, fleur de lys
the opening lips of summer where pigeons rest
the exploding office of the vast nebula
the heraldic device under the left breast
the taut string and the scribbler's Roman tread
impinging on the slow shores of the dead.

I offer you the tithes of discontent
the deck-games played with shadows on a cruise
beyond the islands marked on the ancient maps
with the broken altars, markets in disuse
to some " unspoilt " and blessed hemisphere
where comfort twists the lucid strands of air.

I would offer you so much more if you would turn
before the new whisper in a forgiving hour.
Let all the wild ones who have offended burn
let love dissemble in a golden shower
let not the winds whistle, nor the sea rave
but the treasure be lapped forever in an unbroken wave.

There is nothing that I would not offer you
my silken dacoit, my untranslatable
whether in the smug mountains counting the stars
or crossing the gipsy's palm in the Easter fairs
with so much that is so difficult to say
before the frigid unpeculating hours
shall drive this foreign devil to the sea.

KENNETH ALLOTT

CASEY JONES

Casey Jones has left today,
The decision was made in a desperate way,
Short as a wire and quick as a plane
And he isn't going to see any of you again.
There was no kind of good in staying on
When the delight was gone.

His hand at the welding was unsteady for months,
And the boss came very near sacking him once.
No rain for weeks ; the old mower in pawn,
It was an impossible pastime cutting the lawn.
There was no kind of good in staying on
When the delight was gone.

Cries in the head were making him light,
He found it difficult sleeping at night,
The warmth of the women was a shocking reward,
And their unfortunate wishes were growing weird.
There was no kind of good in staying on
When the delight was gone.

O where did he head for? The wind in the wood,
And the goat on the tether was coughing up blood,
The clock on the church was pointing at ten
As he passed by the women and he left the men.
There was no kind of good in staying on
When the delight was gone.

O where was he going? He didn't quite know,
For vague as a bandage the infected go,
And the mind must follow the deceived decision
Of the night before and the dream's incision.
There was no kind of good in staying on
When the delight was gone.

E. V. SWART

ALLOTMENTS: APRIL

Cobbled with rough stone which rings my tread
The path twists through the squared allotments.
Blinking to glimpse the lark in the warming sun,
In what sense am I joining in
Such a hallooing, rousing April day,
Now that the hedges are so gracious and
Stick out at me moist buds, small hands, their opening scrolls and
fans?

Lost to some of us the festival joy
At the bursting of the tomb, the seasonal mystery,
God walking again who lay all winter
As if in those long barrows built in the fields
To keep the root-crops warm. On squires' lawns
The booted dancers twirl. But what I hear
Is spade slice in pebbled earth, swinging the nigger-coloured loam.

And the love-songs, the mediæval grace,
The fluting lyrics, "The only pretty ring-time,"
These have stopped singing. For love detonates like sap
Up into the limbs of men and bears all the seasons
And the starving and the cutting and hunts terribly through lives
To find its peace. But April comes as
Beast-smell flung from the fields, the hammers, the loud-speaking
weir.

The rough voices of boys playing by the hedge,
As manly as possible, their laughter, the big veins
Sprawled over the beet-leaf, light-red fires
Of flower pots heaped by the huts ; they make a pause in
The wireless voice repeating pacts, persecutions,
And imprisonments and deaths and heaped violent deaths,
Impersonal now as figures in the city news.

Behind me, the town curves. Its parapeted edge,
With its burnt look, guards towards the river.
The worry about money, the eyeless work
Of those who do not believe, real poverty,
The sour doorways of the poor ; April which
Delights the trees and fills the roads to the South,
Does not deny or conceal. Rather it adds

What more I am ; excites the deep glands
And warms my animal bones as I go walking
Past the allotments and the singing water-meadows
Where hooves of cattle have plodded and cratered, and
Watch today go up like a single breath
Holding in its applause at masts of height
Two elms and their balanced attitude like dancers, their arms like
dancers.

BERNARD SPENCER

POEM

Acid smells bore into the morning air :
Laurel leaves on the mountain that
Should shine are curded with black.

By the pure edge of the sea the blue
Flower of the caper and even the yellow
Petals of the prickly pear twist in
The midday sun. The fresh water
Dries white on the limestone rock

The sour soil, behind the dykes, of
The flats of sorrow, the emptinesses
Of salt black water sometimes also
Are visited by the sun, and in the evening
By the egrets and the flamingoes.

AGAIN AND AGAIN

The snake under
the asphodel
The pitted hollies among
the wild peonies
The black-hooded Sard
among the ewes
The tortoises
in the river
Dürer's swine
rooting the osmundas—

Even in the mountains, this image,
In the Silver Gates in the world
Out of time, in the sharp air,
And in the month
Of the youngest fruit

With the fawn ox
With the loose-bellied hound
With the dancers under the church
With the balance of waterpots
from the constant spring.

ABOUT NOW

In this bitter season, I discern the reality
In the bigness of the black leaves
Against the early light, in the white
Lilac between the divided cypress,
In the black-blue air among the pear
Flowers, in the funeral
Swellings on the ash, and the dove-grey
Of the special maple
By the obstinate wall.

I discern the reality in the bromide
Of the lighted window from the
Empty street,
In this bitter season

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

THE DOMESTIC STONES

(FRAGMENT)

The feet of morning the feet of noon and the feet of evening
walk ceaselessly round pickled buttocks
on the other hand the feet of midnight remain motionless
in their echo-woven baskets

consequently the lion is a diamond

on the sofas made of bread
are seated the dressed and the undressed
the undressed hold leaden swallows between their toes
the dressed hold leaden nests between their fingers
at all hours the undressed get dressed again
and the dressed get undressed
and exchange the leaden swallows for the leaden nests

consequently the tail is an umbrella

a mouth opens within another mouth
and within this mouth another mouth
and within this mouth another mouth
and so on without end
it is a sad perspective
which adds an I-don't-know-what
to another I-don't-know-what

consequently the grasshopper is a column

the pianos with heads and tails
place pianos with heads and tails
on their heads and their tails

consequently the tongue is a chair

HANS ARP

(English by David Gascoyne)

THE ECONOMIC MAN

And the age ended, and the last deliverer died
In bed, grown idle and unhappy ; they were safe :
The sudden shadow of the giant's enormous calf
Would fall no longer now across the lawn outside.

No, not again. In marshes here and there, no doubt,
A sterile dragon lingered to a natural death ;
But in a year the spoor had vanished from the heath :
The kobbold's knocking in the mountain petered out.

Only the sculptors and musicians were half-sad,
And the pert retinue at the magician's house
Grumbled and went elsewhere : The vanquished powers were
glad

To be invisible and free ; without remorse
Struck down the son, indifferent to the mother's curse,
And ravished the daughters, and drove the fathers mad.

W. H. AUDEN

AT PRESENT

For a long time without songs
Flowers cultivated flowers for sale
O beautiful abstract virtues

Washing is in vain one no longer sees oneself
Quietly sleeping in a bed of ashes
Under shelter of all the morrows

There is no way out
No more daylight between the houses
A cockroach sleeps on every sill
Content has taken death for sign

The stunningly charming young
And the old in their stinking chains
How alike they are !
The others awaken in spite of them
Their brows and their bellies are wrinkled
But fire still draws them on

Out of touch with everything save misery
Alert, they would rather not believe
In the immobility of their blood.

PAUL ELUARD

(English by David Gascoyne)

THE DRUNKEN BOAT

(Translated from Rimbaud)

Descending the impassive rivers, suddenly
I felt no longer guided by the hauling-crew :
Whooping Redskins had made them butts for archery,
Nailing them naked upon stakes of varied hue.

I paid no heed. I'd always been indifferent
To crews or cargoes—English cottons, Flemish wheat.
And when my haulers' tribulations were all spent
The rivers gave me leave to follow my own gait.

So out into the frenzied chopping of the tide,
The other winter, deafen than an infant's brain
I charged ! And whole peninsulas cut floating wide
Never passed through a more triumphant hurricane.

The tempest granted my sea-watch prosperity.
Lighter than cork I danced over the waves ten nights,
Over those famed eternal snares, nor wished to see
Again the oafish winking of the harbour lights.

Sweeter than a sound apple's flesh is to a child
Green water soaked my piny shell and washed it clear
Of stains where the blue wines and vomit had been spilled,
Carrying off with it anchor and steering-gear.

And since that time I've plunged, seeking voraciously,
Down through the poem-sea, milk-foaming and star-sown,
Those blue-green deeps where a pale flotsam passes by
From time to time—a thoughtful dead man coming down ;

Where suddenly the blue is tinged with mad desires
That pulsate slowly under the hot firmament ;
Stronger than alcohol and vaster than your lyres
The bitter, rusty-coloured springs of love ferment !

I know how the sky splits in lightning, and what moves
Currents and surf and water-spouts ; the evening light
I know ; I've seen dawn risen like a flock of doves.
Sometimes I've seen what man's believed he had in sight.

I've seen the low sun stained with an uncanny dread,
Illuminating with its long and violet rays,
Like actors in an ancient drama, waves that spread
Their shudders all throughout their overlapping maze.

I've dreamed the green night with its dazzlingly bright snow,
And kisses rising slowly up to the sea's eyes,
The never-heard-of liquors passing to and fro
And singing blue and yellow phosphorescences.

Whole months I've ridden close upon the mad cow-byre
That rages by the reefs on which the rollers hammer,
Not thinking how the shining-footed Maries could aspire
To set a gag upon the smoking Ocean's clamour.

Past Floridas such as you'd not believe I've flown,
Where flowers and eyes of panthers mingle in confusion,
Panthers with skins of men, and rainbows stretching down
To bridle glaucous herds below the sea's horizon.

I've seen fermenting marshes like huge lobster-traps,
Where whole Leviathans in reedy meshes rot ;
Or part of the smooth waters suddenly collapse
And miles of sea come cataracting to the spot !

Icebergs and silver suns, pearl waves and brazier skies
And where in deep brown gulfs the stranded horrors lurk,
Where the gigantic serpents, preyed upon by lice,
Crash down from twisted trees, amid black-smelling mirk !

I would have shown to children how the swordfish glitter
Through the blue waves, these fish of gold, these fish that sing.
My long tacks were caressed with scum that flowers litter,
And winds of which I cannot speak have lent me wing.

Sometimes, forsaken martyr of the poles and zones,
The sea gave me dark flowers with yellow Giant Rays
And made my heavy tossing sweeter with its moans ;
And I was left there like a woman when she prays.

Almost an island, carrying a pitching freight,
Droppings of pale-eyed birds and disputations sound ;
Or else through my frail cordage, while I held on straight
In search of sleep descended, back-foremost, the drowned . . .

I, hidden where the coves' hair overhangs the brink
Or up into the birdless ether typhoon-tossed,
I—why, the Monitors and Hansamen would think
My water-drunken carcass not worth salvage-cost.

Free, smoking, overhung with mists of violet,
Who burrowed through skies reddening like a wall that bears
(Jam that the worthy poets think so delicate)
Lichens of sunlight and deep azure-snotty smears,

Who raced along, flecked over with electric moons,
Mad plank with hippocamps out-riders for my course,
What time the dark-blue sky, belaboured into swoons
By July's cudgels, through the blazing funnels pours,

Who trembled to feel jarring, fifty leagues away,
The rut of Behemoths, the gathering Maelstrom's threats—
While through the blue, still tracts eternally I stray
I long for Europe, land of ancient parapets.

Such starry Archipelagos I've seen ! The sky
Before the traveller in ecstasy wide-thrown ;
Can it be there that you, sleeping in exile, lie,
A million golden birds, my Vigour not yet known ?

And yet, I've wept too much. The dawns are sharp distress,
All moons are baleful and all sunlight harsh to me
Swollen by acrid love, lethargic dizziness.
My keel is splitting—ah, let me get out to sea !

If Europe has a water I desire, I ask
The cold, black pool by whose edge sadly pondering
A crouching child, at odorous coming down of dusk,
Launches a boat frail as a butterfly in spring.

Your languors bathed me, and I can no more, sea-rollers,
Pick up the wake of cotton-freighters, or commune
On equal terms with flags and pennants' boastful colours,
Or swim under the frightful eye of a pontoon !

(English by Norman Cameron.)

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

The phantom child was wax in the bloodless light,
Wrapped in the candles where the virgin smiled
And the tinsel infant, serene in a pool of height,
Wrapped in the song for the undefiled.

In the winter the children died : now we have no child
But this wax and this tinsel and the children wrapped in the land,
Which is dead in the country-haunted night and the field
Rigid against the sorrowful hand.

Here is the churchyard ; caress the shapes of the stones.
The children ? Are they radiantly dead, or does
The churchyard merely swaddle the well-known bones ?
We don't know. Let's find if the phantom knows

If we knew we'd no longer be hungry. The phantoms must know.
We will ask them . . . but stop ! see how the phantoms are angry !
Quickly let us run from these eyes that have seen tomorrow
But still are feverishly hungry.

DERMOT MCKAY.

A QUEER COUNTRY

If you would like to know, it is a great land of love and especially of hate. No tree from end to end of it grows up to a thigh, and fieldfares (bird like the common thrush, but red under the wings, and their eggs are like blackbirds') build in the birch roots, and sing a very weak song from the top branches. Even the volcanoes (between eruptions) are covered over with ice. When they explode, they roll their lava down into the icefields which lock them in, and ice-bergs crash down the flooded white rivers (who ever heard of ice-bergs in a river ?) and break the marigolds in the small meadows and snap the telegraph poles (for there are a few men in this country). There are midges, but not mosquitoes. The language is fully inflected. The geysir goes off when fed with a stillborn infant or

soap. A few trolls live behind waterfalls, which provide electricity for the capital.

In quiet times, it is true, foreign ornithologists come to observe the red-necked phalaropes which play on the rivers, and they send Harlequin clutches by fast monoplane to Croydon, to be hatched out under hens in Cumberland castles. It is true that mute swans and icebergs—a glacier calves at the northern end—may be observed swimming together in the same lake. Tomatoes are raised by natural steam under glass. Rhubarb grows wild; so does angelica, and dirty linen is washed in the thermal springs. Sulphur is exported. The death-rate much exceeds the birth-rate, and they have rechristened contraceptives *Russian Letters*. The people are often theosophists and careful editors of ancient texts, having no army, no navy and no air-force, in spite of a very large public debt. They drink Spanish red wine and have very fine blonde hair. It is curious that this queer country, which is dark all the winter (except for the capital) and lit only by the scarlet flare of the volcanoes, is very seldom visited by the moon. *Laki* is the name of the principal Volcano. Fortunately, it has been inactive now for one hundred and thirty-seven years.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON.

HONEST DOUBT

(We hope to print authoritative answers to these questions about Surrealism in the next NEW VERSE.)

My only knowledge of Surrealism is derived from Mr. Gascoyne's books, a few French writers like Breton and Aragon, some paintings of Dali, Ernst, and others, and from the pages of the *Minotaur*. I have never met a surrealist, so my ideas of the movement may be completely misconceived. I hope therefore that surrealists will forgive my asking some very elementary questions, in the hope that they will answer them for me. Surrealism claims to have both æsthetic and political implications, so I shall divide my inquiry into two parts.

A. *Æsthetic.*

(1) Is genuine surrealist writing always and absolutely automatic, and never consciously worked over? If, as I imagine, this is not always the case, at what point does it cease to be surrealist? Obviously all poets make a great use of unconscious imagery; indeed in all verbal thinking of any kind, the words and images are given from the unconscious and it is impossible to decide how much of the activity is conscious and how much unconscious.

(2) Has all repressed material an equal æsthetic value? What are the æsthetic standards and how are they applied? Are all subjects of equal importance?

(3) The work which seems to me, perhaps wrongly, the best kind of surrealist writing e.g. that of Lewis Carrol, Edward Lear, and Rimbaud in *Les Illuminations* is the work of highly repressed individuals in a society with very strong taboos. I should have thought it probable that surrealism could only flourish

either (a) when people know nothing about their unconscious, i.e. where psychoanalysis is unheard of.

or (b) in a society with a strong sexual or political censorship, e.g. under Fascism (cf. the political satire like *Little Jack Horner*)

and that the moment you are allowed either by yourself or society to say exactly what you like, the lack of pressure leaves you material without form. Am I quite wrong?

(4) There is a passage in Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne*, (quoted by Mr. Leishmann in the introduction to his translation of Rilke's "*Requiem and other Poems*") which seems to me true, and a warning to surrealism.

" . . . nothing is more uniform, more monotonous than fantasy; for in the apparently infinite and eternally changing country of dreams there are in reality certain short, given roads which everyone travels and no one gets beyond. People can be very different, but their dreams are not; for there they get themselves presented, more or less quickly, more or less completely, but nevertheless constantly and conjointly, with the three or four things they desire; there is no one who really sees himself with empty hands in his dream; therefore no one discovers himself in his dream, never becomes conscious of his peculiarity; for his dream knows nothing of the satisfaction one finds in winning the treasure, how one lets it go when it is lost, how one is sated when one enjoys, what path one sticks into when one does without."

B. Political.

(1) As far as I understand him, the surrealist writer says "The conscious mind, its reason and its judgement, are so conditioned to-day by the Bourgeois world, that to the revolutionary writer it is artistically valueless." If this is correct,

(a) does this apply to all individuals, proletarian as well as Bourgeois ?

(b) why does not it also apply to the repressed unconscious, which always contains material which has been worked over by the conscious mind, elaborated and rejected ?

(2) What is the peculiar revolutionary value in the automatic presentation of this repressed material ? Is it

(a) a socially moral one ; holding the mirror up to the face of the bourgeois ? If it is, is it not then only the task of revolutionary bourgeois writer, i.e. the writer with the bourgeois unconscious, with the genuine copy ?

or is it (b) a personally moral one ; autoanalysis ? If it is, is it not then only the preliminary task of the would-be revolutionary writer before he can see clearly to create genuine revolutionary art ?

(3) Is it true to say that the surrealist rejects absolutely the use of reason and the conscious faculties in creative work, not only at the beginning of work but throughout all the stages of creation ? If it is, how does this square with Communism and Psychoanalysis, both of which are profoundly rational, believing, certainly, in unconscious forces, economic or instinctive, as the driving forces in life, but also in the necessity for their conscious recognition and rational understanding and guidance ? There is a rough and ready parallelism between the Conscious and the Unconscious, and the Masses and the Communist Party.

J. B.

TWO WHIFFS OF LEWISITE

Noah and The Waters. By C. Day Lewis (Hogarth Press. 5s.)

Poems of Strife, By Julius Lipton. With an Introduction by Cecil Day Lewis (Lawrence and Wishart. 1s.)

The reasons why Mr. Day Lewis's morality play is very dull are (i) that it states a dilemma—shall we stay Right or go Left?—more in the familiar, open, and so rather boring nature of the dilemma than in the nature of humanity or Mr. Day Lewis (but perhaps the nature of the dilemma is the nature of Mr. Day Lewis, familiar, open, rather boring i.e. Mr. D. L. is a politician, a bewildered moralist, and also a man of letters with unconfessed and vulgar ambitions :

*Hiding his threepenny self in Nicholas Blake
A thriller writer on the literary make),*

and (ii) that using the methods of poetry to state this dilemma without ever getting down to the poetic, the poem is lower middle-class aping the aristocrat. It is fake poetry. And fake Auden, very much of it : *Prehistory sleeps below in many beds, A common for rare wood-larks, The green burrows Of Britons, A continuous bombardment of the clouds with belladonna will begin at midday.* Mr. Day Lewis is experienced in several of the kinds of possible ineptitude. These Audenesque images, for example, are only utilitarian fancies, lacking the incantatory force and emotional value which images would have in a good poem by Auden. The conscious Mr. Day Lewis is always on guard : Mr. Auden's images come out of Mr. Auden's nature, Mr. Day Lewis's are at least half manufactured by his will. Mr. D. L. is inept also in possible kinds of poetic cliché, sound, word, phrase etc., as well as in mannerism. These clichés are not deliberate : *They beat down our weapons, we had better retire—And seven-league footfall of wind striding through dry grasses—Nurseries that splash crude colour.* Mr. D. L. is inept in not feeling or knowing the things a situation does not allow to be said (e.g. First Burgess's speech pp. 30, 31, 32, spotted with impossible bits of overcleverness). Mr. D. L. is inept in not knowing his audience, for however Noah may see them (p. 49), it is tactless (it cannot be sly) to make the proletariat an undifferentiated mass of H₂O, a substance which

evaporates quickly, takes any shape and has only the force of gravity ; and in mere poetics these shapeless waters are a very bad symbol. They are vague, and one does not willingly visualise them in the revolutionary part.

Mr. Day Lewis, of course, is in a jam. He is a bourgeois, and he looks yearningly at the workers, and he is ready to commit the final treason and give his public praise to rubbish which happens to be workers' rubbish. There is no possible interest except a news interest or a sociological interest in Mr. Julius Lipton's "Poems of Strife." Nothing in them "promises" that he will become "a real revolutionary poet," but he works "fifteen hours each day, in a 'sweat-shop' wielding a heavy press iron," and so he's O.K. with Mr. Day Lewis. Mr. Day Lewis gravely introduces his worthless but worthy noise, and talks about the bourgeois tradition of poetry, and the proletarian tradition which will have to be drawn out of it ; and he slimes from the difficulty of the restricted response to the 'best art' by saying that "Art, because it speaks directly to the emotions, has always been potentially a revolutionary force. Thus capitalism, as it has given the workers the leavings of its economic production, has tended also to offer them the dregs of its artistic production." The worker's taste has been spoilt. "The gutter-press newspapers, dope fiction, sentimental and unreal films" have weakened "the workers' responses to the emotional appeal of real art," and so "the worker-poet will find himself, like the bourgeois poet to-day, influencing at first only a few of his fellows. But let him not despair. If his work," my dear brethren, "is true poetry, it will do more than a thousand culture-fanatics to re-establish literature as a vital force, to heal the breach between the living word and the living man." These pieties will no doubt recommend Mr. Day Lewis to Mr. Joad, Miss Ethel Mannin, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Mr. Herbert Morrison and Lord Strabolgi, but Mr. Day Lewis, who is not even truth's pimple squeezer now, needs to be yoicked off his literary perch. Re-establishing literature ! "Changez la vie" was the last order in M. Breton's speech when he opened the Surrealist Exhibition. Mr. Day Lewis, like any other professional man of letters, wants *poetry* and *poets* changed. He does not realise, feeble innocent, that the sly capitalists merely capitalise the desires of the mass. The 'false art' of fiction and film comes out of their false life. Changez la vie ! Mr. Day Lewis must forget all about poets and poetry and propaganda and tradi-



THE ASSASSINS

poems by Frederic Prokosch

Several of Mr. Prokosch's
poems, now first published in
book-form, have appeared in
New Verse. 5s. net.

CHATTO & WINDUS
40-42 Chandos Street, London, W.C. 2

tion and healing breaches. He must read his Auden a little better. Mr. David Gascoyne delivered himself from all this self-interested cackle of the literary pullets when he said that the revolution has no need of the poets, but the poets have great need of the revolution.

NEW BOOKS

Other books received—there will be further comments on one or two of them in later numbers—are Mr. Eliot's "COLLECTED POEMS 1909-1935" (Faber. 7s. 6d.), which includes "Sweeney Agonistes," "Coriolan," the Ariel poems, some small poems of no weight, the choruses from "The Rock," and, rather diffidently inserted at the end, Mr. Eliot's new long poem "BURNT NORTON," rather a dull meditation on time and God and love, which breaks only a few times from a thin monotony into richness; "THE ASSASSINS," Mr. Prokosch's first book of poems (Chatto and Windus. 5s.), several of which were first published in NEW VERSE; "THORNS

OF THUNDER ” (Nott 5s.), translations from Paul Eluard, edited by George Reavey; “POEMS ” by Benjamin Peret selected and translated by Humphrey Jennings and David Gascoyne (Contemporary Poetry and Prose. 2s.); and “DRAMATIS PERSONÆ ” by W. B. Yeats (Macmillan 8s. 6d.), an account of early days of the Irish Theatre Movement, extracts from journals, descriptions of receiving the Nobel Prize in Sweden etc., in which there is much relevant to Yeats’s present poetry.

Also Mr. David Gascoyne’s poems “MAN’S LIFE IS THIS MEAT ” (Parton Press. 3s. 6d.), M. André Breton’s “WHAT IS SURREALISM ? ” (Criterion Miscellany, Faber. 2s.), Mr. Archibald Macleish’s play in verse “PANIC ” (Boriswood 6s.), and the “COLLECTED POEMS ” of Andrew Young (Cape 6s.), next to Edward Thomas the most attractive of the “nature ” poets, an accurate reporter (and a little more perhaps) of natural facts which have moved him. Miss Babette Deutsch’s “THIS MODERN POETRY ” (Faber, 7s. 6d.) is a neat, not very original survey (one catches her borrowing, for example, without acknowledgement from the Hopkins number of NEW VERSE), a bit too much in the *literary* tradition, and much too respectful to the American mannerists; but Miss Deutsch has read everything. She is a good guide for readers who can escape from her now and then.

Worst books of the last two months are “NEW OXFORD POETRY 1936 ” edited by A. W. Sandford (Blackwell 3s. 6d.) and “POEMS ” by R. P. Hewett (Lawrence and Wishart 5s.). One remembers that the shrinking fieldmouse of letters, Mr. Edmund Blunden (“The War is over. What have these young poets, Auden, Spender, and so on, to worry about ?” Mr. Blunden was overheard to say once in a Piccadilly teashop to Mr. I. A. Richards), one remembers that Mr. Blunden in these days creeps in and out of Merton College, but that does not explain the extraordinary punk of the 1920 kind which—but for a short light poem by Mr. Kenneth Allott—fills the revived “Oxford Poetry.” Such a ridiculous atavism is waste of publishing. If Mr. Blackwell cannot find better poems and a livelier editor for 1937, he had better shoot Oxford Poetry back into his grave yard.

Mr. Hewett is a Nice Chap, Leftish, Oxford, Ealing, etc. etc. He knows all about Hopkins and Rubert Brooke. He bullies next to nothing into some shape. The Merton Fieldmouse approves of him.

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Some rude remarks about NEW VERSE have been made in "Poetry" of Chicago. NEW VERSE was smacked for "the rancor, petulance, and personal indecencies that have lately crowded its pages" for "slap-dash impertinence."

For tuquoque, may we advise readers

- (i) that "Poetry" has been a paralysed body for many years, only blinking its dull eyes.
- (ii) "Poetry," as almost corpse, prints for preference corpse poetry, or mannerism in every Right to Left American manner of the last thirty years.
- (iii) that the almost dead cannot, in nature, be rancorous, petulant, indecent, slap-dash, impertinent (i.e. plain in speech), or anything but almost dead.

We say this with a sigh, with regret. Miss Monroe and M. D. Z. must have the cobwebs cut away: they must die publicly. "Poetry," English and American poets agree, should have stopped publication

long, long ago. We shall take warning ourselves against the onset of such paralysed senility, useless to poets and readers. Meanwhile rancorous, waspish, rude (or plain) we shall be whenever there is need.

OBIT PERORATORY

“ But though Nature in her witlessness may not know, it will be long before posterity, while it roars along its roads past the forest tower of the Wrekin or the peace of Clun, forgets whose footsteps walked there once ; and among the dreary Roman tiles and drains and flues of the real Uricon, for long years yet, some will turn to remember him whose troubles are now ashes like the Roman’s, where the calm of the eighteenth century still broods over the greatest Roman city of the West.”

F. L. Lucas on A. E. Housman.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER RECEIVED

Is it true that you really are Martin Boldero ? Are you also Gavin Ewart and A. J. M. Smith ? If so who is Geoffrey Grigson ? And from what, of which is the old jane ?

Perhaps the o.j. would review Mr. Eliot’s Book of Dropsical Doggies and Wopsical Pussies for N.V. She’s rather a dab at pussies and wopsies. Is there any truth in the rumour that Mr. Eliot is writing a cookery book ?

CUCKOO

“ I was born by the wildest seas that England knows . . . ”

The Old Jane.

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