

Contemporania

Pound, Ezra, 1885-1972

TENZONE

Will people accept them?

(i. e. these songs).

As a timorous wench from a centaur

(or a centurian),

Already they flee, howling in terror.

Will they be touched with the truth?

Their virgin stupidity is untemptable.

I beg you, my friendly critics,

Do not set about to procure me an audience.

I mate with my free kind upon the crags;

the hidden recesses

Have heard the echo of my heels,

in the cool light,

in the darkness.

THE CONDOLENCE

A mis soledades voy,

De mis soledades vengo,

Porque por andar conmigo

Mi bastan mis pensamientos.

Lope de Vega.

O my fellow sufferers, songs of my youth,

A lot of asses praise you because you are "virile,"

We, you, I! We are "Red Bloods"!

Imagine it, my fellow sufferers—

Our maleness lifts us out of the ruck.

Who'd have foreseen it?

O my fellow sufferers, we went out under the trees,

We were in especial bored with male stupidity.

We went forth gathering delicate thoughts,

Our "*fantastikon*" delighted to serve us.

We were not exasperated with women,

for the female is ductile.

And now you hear what is said to us:
We are compared to that sort of person
Who wanders about announcing his sex
As if he had just discovered it.
Let us leave this matter, my songs,
and return to that which concerns us.

THE GARRET

Come let us pity those who are better off than we are.
Come, my friend, and remember
that the rich have butlers and no friends,
And we have friends and no butlers.
Come let us pity the married and the unmarried.

Dawn enters with little feet
like a gilded Pavlova,
And I am near my desire.
Nor has life in it aught better
Than this hour of clear coolness,
the hour of waking together.

THE GARDEN

En robe de parade.
Samain.

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,
And she is dying piece-meal
of a sort of emotional anemia.

And round about there is a rabble
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.
She would like some one to speak to her.
And is almost afraid that I
will commit that indiscretion.

ORTUS

How have I labored?
How have I not labored
To bring her soul to birth,
To give these elements a name and a centre !

She is beautiful as the sunlight, and as fluid.
She has no name, and no place.
How have I laboured to bring her soul into separation;
To give her a name and her being!

Surely you are bound and entwined,
You are mingled with the elements unborn;
I have loved a stream and a shadow.

I beseech you enter your life.
I beseech you learn to say " I "
When I question you:
For you are no part, but a whole;
No portion, but a being.

DANCE FIGURE

For the Marriage in Cana of Galilee

Dark eyed,
O woman of my dreams,
Ivory sandaled.
There is none like thee among the dancers,
None with swift feet.

I have not found thee in the tents,
In the broken darkness.
I have not found thee at the well-head
Among the women with pitchers.

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark;
Thy face as a river with lights.

White as an almond are thy shoulders;
As new almonds stripped from the husk.

They guard thee not with eunuchs;
Not with bars of copper.

" Is this," they say, " the nonsense
that we expect of poets ? "
" Where is the Picturesque? "
" Where is the vertigo of emotion? "
" No! his first work was the best."
" Poor Dear! he has lost his illusions."

Go, little naked and impudent songs,
Go with a light foot!
(Or with two light feet, if it please you !)
Go and dance shamelessly!
Go with an impertinent frolic!
Greet the grave and the stodgy,
Salute them with your thumbs at your noses.
Here are your bells and confetti.
Go! rejuvenate things!
Rejuvenate even " The Spectator. "
Go! and make cat calls!
Dance and make people blush,
Dance the dance of the phallus
and tell anecdotes of Cybele!
Speak of the indecorous conduct of the Gods!
(Tell it to Mr. Strachey.)

Ruffle the skirts of prudes,
speak of their knees and ankles.
But, above all, go to practical people—
go! jangle their door-bells!
Say that you do no work
and that you will live forever.

PAX SATURNI

*Once . . . the round world brimmed with hate,
..... and the strong
Harried the weak. Long past, long past, praise God,
In these fair, peaceful, happy days.*

A Contemporary

O smooth flatterers, go over sea,
go to my country;
Tell her she is " Mighty among the nations"—
do it rhetorically!

Say there are no oppressions,
Say it is a time of peace,
Say that labor is pleasant,
Say there are no oppressions,
Speak of the American virtues:

And you will not lack your reward.

Say that the keepers of shops pay a fair wage to the women:
Say that all men are honest and desirous of good above all things:
You will not lack your reward.

Say that I am a traitor and a cynic,
Say that the art is well served by the ignorant pretenders:
You will not lack your reward.

Praise them that are praised by the many:
You will not lack your reward.

Call this a time of peace,
Speak well of amateur harlots,
Speak well of disguised procurers,
Speak well of shop-walkers,
Speak well of employers of women,
Speak well of exploiters,
Speak well of the men in control,
Speak well of popular preachers:
You will not lack your reward.

Speak of the profundity of reviewers,
Speak of the accuracy of reporters,
Speak of the unbiased press,
Speak of the square deal as if it always occurred.
Do all this and refrain from ironic touches:
You will not lack your reward.

Speak of the open-mindedness of scholars:
You will not lack your reward.

Say that you love your fellow men,
O most magnanimous liar!
You will not lack your reward.

COMMISSION

Go, my songs, to the lonely and the unsatisfied,
Go also to the nerve-wracked, go to the enslaved-by-convention,
Bear to them my contempt for their oppressors.
Go as a great wave of cool water,
Bear my contempt of oppressors.

Speak against unconscious oppression,
Speak against the tyranny of the unimaginative,
Speak against bonds.
Go to the bourgeoisie who is dying of her ennui,
Go to the women in suburbs.

Go to the hideously wedded,
Go to them whose failure is concealed,
Go to the unluckily mated,
Go to the bought wife,
Go to the woman entailed.

Go to those who have delicate lust,
Go to those whose delicate desires are thwarted,
Go like a blight upon the dulness of the world;
Go with your edge against this,
Strengthen the subtle cords,
Bring confidence upon the algae and the tentacles of the soul.

Go in a friendly manner,
Go with an open speech.
Be eager to find new evils and new good,
Be against all forms of oppression.
Go to those who are thickened with middle age,
To those who have lost their interest.

Go to the adolescent who are smothered in family—
Oh how hideous it is
To see three generations of one house gathered together!
It is like an old tree with shoots,
And with some branches rotted and falling.

Go out and defy opinion,
Go against this vegetable bondage of the blood.
Speak for the free kinship of the mind and spirit.
Go, against all forms of oppression.

A PACT

I make truce with you, Walt Whitman—
I have detested you long enough.
I come to you as a grown child
Who has had a pig-headed father;
I am old enough now to make friends.
It was you that broke the new wood,
Now is a time for carving.
We have one sap and one root—
Let there be commerce between us.

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals on a wet, black bough .