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Notes from "The Life of Ezra Pound".

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The Life of Ezra Pound
by Noel Stock

Hulme: 1909

"verse forms, like manners, & like individuals, develop and die. They evolve from their initial freedom to decay and finally to virtuosity. They disappear before the new man, burdened with the thought more complex and more difficult to express by the old name. After being too much used, their future effect is lost."

And again "Prose is in fact the museum where the dead images of verse are preserved. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language."

Pound.: "I have this morning written a Ballad of Simon Zelotes, which is probably the strongest thing in English since 'Reading Gaol' and a thing that anyone can understand."

To catch up on theory Pound urged
W.E.W. to read Aristotle's Poetics,
Longinus On the Sublime, & the
essays of De Quincey and Yeats,
and to leave "something about
the progress of English poetry
in the last century" he recommended
the poetry of Yeats, Browning,
Francis Thompson, Swinburne
and Rossetti. "He said" "a
man's real work is what he is
going to do, not what is behind
him."

One of P's first publications:
"Sestina: Altaforte" in
Hueffer's The English Review — poem
on the troubadour Bertram de
Born and his times — written
in the British Museum Reading
Room.

P: "I wanted the curious
involution and recurrence
of the Sestina. I wrote the

2/ first strophe and then went to
the Museum to make sure of
the right permutations, for
was then living in Langham
Street, next to the 'pub',
and had hardly any books with
me. I did the rest of the poem
at a sitting. Technically it is
one of my best, though a poem on
such a theme [the stirring up
of war] could never be very im-
portant. "

✓ The opening fanfare, "Damn
it all! All this our South stinks
peace"

more. Reverential-inspired poems
and 'translations' among them
'Francesca' Stock: "Here,
unperceived amid the rhetoric
of so many other poems of
his development, is the first clear
instance of the cool flute tone,
issuing in matter-of-fact
yet formal language, which

I believe will be acknowledged
eventually as the distinctive
feature of Pound's main
achievement as a poet:

← You came in out of the night
← And there were flowers in
[your hands]

I who have seen you and the
[familiar things]
Was angry when they spoke your
[name]

In ordinary places.

So that I might find you again,
Alone.

✓ P's

✓ I am torn, torn with thy beauty,
O rose of the sharpest thorn!

3/ 1909— Pound in answer to what
are the conditions for an epic:

Stuck: Pound said. 1. a beautiful tradition,
2. a unity in the outline of that
tradition, as was to be found in
the Odyssey, 3. a Hero, mythi-
cal or historical, and 4. a 'damn
long time for the story to lose its
garish detail and get encrusted
with a bunch of beautiful lies.'

An epic, in the real sense, said
Pound, was the speech of a nation
through the mouth of one man.

4/ In "The Greek Marble"

"I have told thee of the hills
→ And the lesp of reeds
— — — — —

Yeats - (Ford Madox Hueffer's friend)
seems in opposition to his objective

ideas. Pound: "Mr. Yeats
has been ^{subjective} subjective; believes in
the glamour and associations
which hang near words.

"Works of art beget works of
art." He has much in

common with the French
symbolists. Mr. Hueffer

believes in an exact rendering
of things. He would strip

words of all 'associations' for

the sake of getting a precise
meaning. ... You will find

his origins in Gautier or
in Flaubert. This school tends

to lapse into description. The
other runs into sentiment.

Rabindrinath Tagore
Translated into English. —

"I do not know the exact value
of your English words. Some
of them may have their souls
worn out by constant use
and some others may not
have acquired their souls
yet."

Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory:
"My digestion has got rather
queer again, a result I
think of sitting up late with
Ezra and Sturge Moore &
some light wine while the
talk ran. However, the criti-
cism I got 2 them has
given me new life and I
have made that Tara
press a new thing &
am writing with new confidence
having got Milton off my
back. * Ezra is the best
critic of the two. He is full
of the middle ages & helps me
to get back to the definite and

5/ concrete away 2 modern
abstractions. To talk over a
poem with him is like getting
you to put a sentence into
dialect. All becomes real and
natural. Yet in his own work he
is very uncertain

The business of poetry, Hueffel
said, was 'not sentimentalism
so much as the putting of
certain realities in certain
aspects, or the putting of
'one thing in juxtaposition
with the other'

O.D.H. Laurence -

in a couple of poems low-life:
'so English. feet under foot',
can get within shot of him.
Mr. Laurence has attempted
realism and attained it. He
has
✓✓ "The poetic fact pre-exists."

He regarded poetry as something like maximum efficiency of expression, taking into account that in verse the 'thinking', word-arranging, clarifying faculty must move and leap with the energizing, sentient, musical faculties. It is, he says, the difficulty of 'this amphibious existence' which keeps down the number of good poets.

On the difference between poetry and prose he says that certain poignant verse has a passionate simplicity 'which is beyond the precision of the intellect'.
Pound: (Tame Cat):

It rests me to converse with beautiful women
Even though we talk nothing but nonsense,
The purring of the invisible antennae
Is both stimulating and delightful.

6/ He wrote his mother that Jacob Epstein was a great sculptor: 'I wish he would wash, but I believe Michel Angelo never did, so I suppose it is part of the Tradition.'

Gaudier - Borska. sent a large head of Pompadour in marble supplied by the sitter. J-B: 'You understand it will not look like you, it will not look ... like you. It will be the expression of certain emotions which I get, from your character.'