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POINTS FROM T. S. ELIOT'S "EZRA POUND: HIS METRIC AND POETRY"

Scott-James commented on Pound's work that he used unfamiliar meters whilst scorning the limitations of form and meter. However, this was what Pound was all about. One needed to practice the adaptability of meter to mood. Not only this, one required a trained ear and to use a variety of meters with the original use of language.

Now at the time, this was somewhat of a breakthrough in poetry. Pound was pushing the limits of form and meter, and purposely so. It was not that he did not appreciate what previous poets had written, but there was nothing new. All the same, hence is *break the pentameter*.

For many years, decades - nay, centuries! iambic pentameter was the form of choice. Yet this form albeit flexible under certain circumstances is limited in what it can do and be used for. I suppose the other choice would be the *vers libre*. But as Eliot points out, *vers libre* is a loose term. Any verse can be called *free* by those whose ears are not accustomed to it.

This is precisely the problem with today's *modern* poets. These proponents push the *vers libre*, but have little to no idea of what it is all about. They believe that there is no rime, no fixed line length and no meter. Through their ignorance (or arrogance) they have not realized that every verse has meter. Indeed a variety of meters are present in most *vers libre* pieces. Pound used *vers libre* as a vehicle, not as a fanatic pushing its virtues.

Believers in the free verse will say that the formal poetry is bad and the formalists may say that the free verse is bad. We find a lot of bad verses irrespective of the style. Today we can say that there is more *bad* free verse because there is nothing to it.

A slightly humorous but correct observation by Eliot:

Who is responsible for the bad free verse is a question of no importance, inasmuch as its authors would have written bad verse in any form ...

And the same could be said of any style or form. So this is not to say that all free verse is bad, or that all formal verse is bad. There is much good in both arenas.

People (readers) will respond to a poem if they can detect or feel a melody about it. We may consider this the music of verse. Every song has its words ...

... but the word is never chosen merely for the tinkle; each has always its part in producing an impression which is produced always through language.

We must all admit that there is a musical quality to poetry. Without it, it is merely a jumble of words and disconnected thoughts which have no meaning to anyone else. The writer may have some ideas about it, but has been unable to convey these thoughts, feelings, emotions ... or whatever to the reader. The result is that it has

been a complete waste of time and effort, if there was any effort to start with.

This music aspect as stated by Pound:

Poets who are not interested in music are, or become bad poets ... Poets who will not study music are defective.

Strong words and opinion, but who is trying to fool who with what? It is not a matter of writing down the first things that come to mind. These may be the workings of a poem, they are certainly not a poem. Some disagree, but the truth is that this case is a rarity. We need to put something of ourselves into it and not sit back and hope that it will stand by itself or speak for itself.

All poets must be open to new concepts, and the old. The poet must develop and must necessarily change. Not *will ... must*. We must change in both attitude and form.

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