

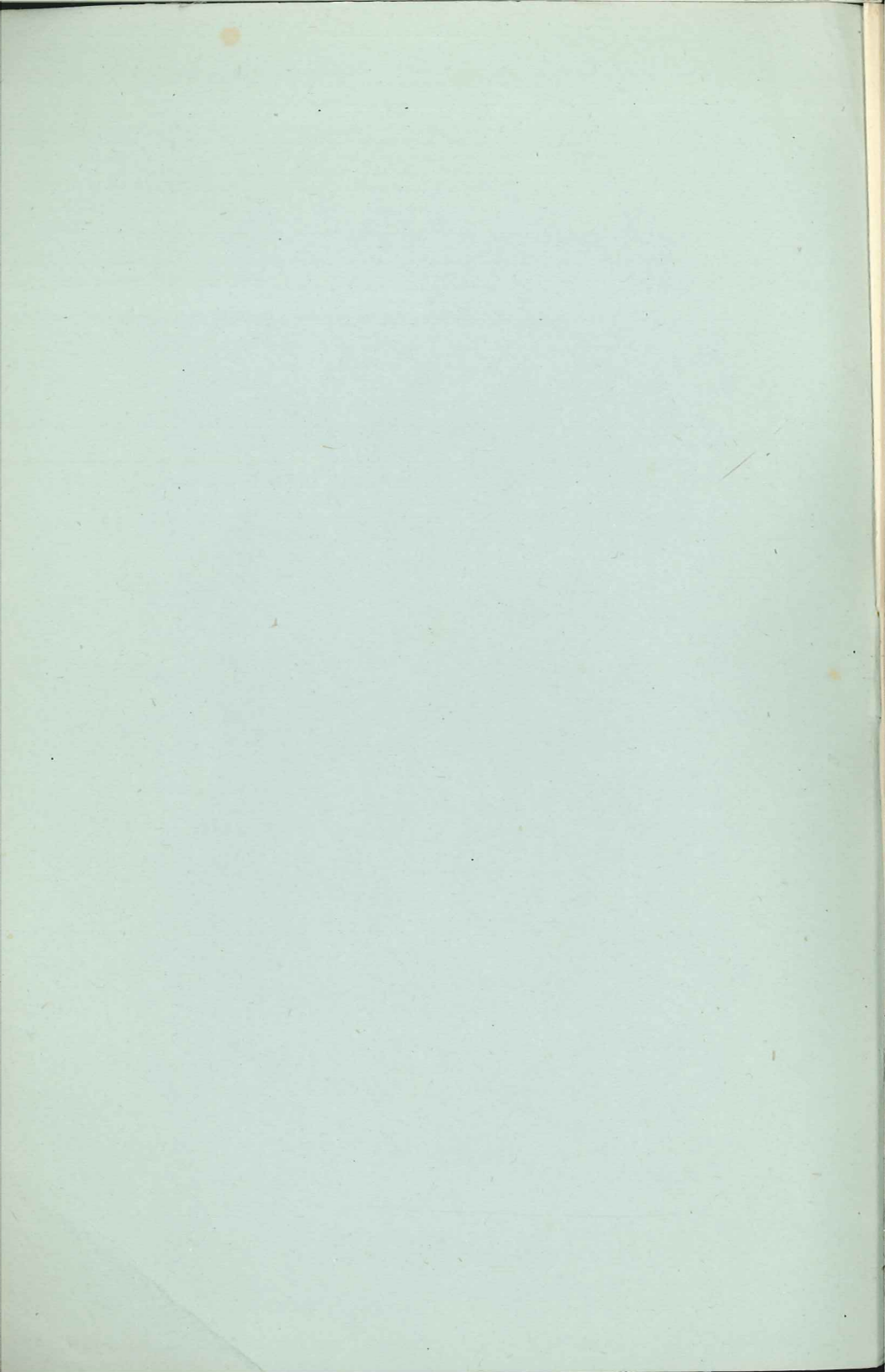
1951

OASIS



No. 1

Price 3d.



FOREWORD

"Oasis" is the first of a series of pamphlets of poetry. Our aim is to show by a representative selection of good contemporary poetry just what sort of poem has been written in the last decades. In this selection there are many styles and many moods. Poets write about everyday subjects—see if you agree with the last two lines of Louis Macneice's poem : they write about newsreels, love, religion, the futility of war ; Henry Reed makes a poem out of naming the parts of a rifle.

We should like to devote future numbers of "Oasis" to the works of other poets : and perhaps we might find enough good undergraduate poetry here to fill an issue with Cambridge writers.

Modern poetry is always said to be obscure : we hope you will read these poems and judge for yourselves.

If you enjoy this selection and are interested in modern poetry come and hear these and other poems read and ask questions tomorrow evening at the Union.

"When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver"

W. B. YEATS

For Anne Gregory

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

T. S. ELIOT

Journey of the Magi

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey :
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices :
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation ;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place ; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This : were we led all that way for
Birth or Death ? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different ; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

W. H. AUDEN

Culture

Happy the hare at morning, for she cannot read
The Hunter's waking thoughts, lucky the leaf
Unable to predict the fall, lucky indeed
The rampant suffering suffocating jelly
Burgeoning in pools, lapping the grits of the desert,
But what shall man do, who can whistle tunes by heart,
Knows to the bar when death shall cut him short like the cry of the
shearwater,
What can he do but defend himself from his knowledge?

How comely are his places of refuge and the tabernacles of his peace,
The new books upon the morning table, the lawns and the afternoon
terraces!

Here are the playing fields where he may forget his ignorance
To operate within a gentleman's agreement: twenty-two sins have
here a certain licence.

Here are the thickets where accosted lovers combatant
May warm each other with their wicked hands,
Here are the avenues for incantation and workshops for the cunning
engravers.

The galleries are full of music, the pianist is storming the keys, the
great cellist is crucified over his instrument,

That none may hear the ejaculations of the sentinels
Nor the sigh of the most numerous and the most poor; the thud
of their falling bodies

Who with their lives have banished hence the serpent and the faceless
insect.

STEPHEN SPENDER

Regum Ultima Ratio

The guns spell money's ultimate reason
In letters of lead on the spring hillside.
But the boy lying dead under the olive trees
Was too young and too silly
To have been notable to their important eye
He was better target for a kiss

When he lived tall factory hooters never summoned him
Nor did restaurant plate-glass doors revolve to wave him in
His name never appeared in the papers.
The world maintained its traditional wall
Round the dead with their gold sunk deep as a well
Whilst his life, intangible as a stock exchange rumour, drifted outside.

O too lightly he threw down his cap
One day when the breeze threw petals from the trees.
The unflowering wall sprouted with guns ;
Machine-gun anger quickly scythed the grasses ;
Flags and leaves fell from hands and branches ;
The tweed cap rotted in the nettles.

Consider his life which was valueless
In terms of employment, hotel ledgers, news files.
Consider : one bullet in ten thousand kills a man.
Ask : was so much expenditure justified
On the death of one so young and silly
Stretched under the olive trees, O world, O death ?

C. DAY LEWIS

Newsreel

Enter the dream-house, brothers and sisters, leaving
Your debts asleep, your history at the door :
This is the home for heroes, and this loving
Darkness a fur you can afford.

Fish in their tank electrically heated
Nose without envy the glass wall : for them
Clerk, spy, nurse, killer, prince, the great and the defeated,
Move in a mute day-dream.

Bathed in this common source, you gape incurious
At what your active hours have willed——
Sleep-walking on that silver wall, the furious
Sick shapes and pregnant fancies of your world.

There is the mayor opening the oyster season :
A society wedding : the autumn hats look swell :
An old crock's race, and a politician
In fishing-waders to prove that all is well.

Oh, look at the warplanes ! Screaming hysteric treble
In the long power-dive, like gannets they fall steep.
But what are they to trouble——
These silver shadows to trouble your watery, womb-deep sleep ?

See the big guns, rising, groping, erected
To plant death in your world's soft womb.
Fire-bud, smoke-blossom, iron seed projected——
Are these exotics ? They will grow nearer home :

Grow nearer home—and out of the dream-house stumbling
One night into a strangling air and the flung
Rags of children and thunder of stone niagaras tumbling,
You'll know you slept too long.

LOUIS MACNEICE

Bagpipe Music

It's no go the merrygoround, it's no go the rickshaw,
All we want is a limousine and a ticket for the peepshow.
Their knickers are made of crepe-de-chine, their shoes are made of python,
Their halls are lined with tiger rugs and their walls with heads of bison.

John MacDonald found a corpse, put it under the sofa,
Waited till it came to life and hit it with a poker,
Sold its eyes for souvenirs, sold its blood for whiskey,
Kept its bones for dumb-bells to use when he was fifty.

It's no go the Yogi-Man, it's no go Blavatsky,
All we want is a bank balance and a bit of skirt in a taxi.

Annie MacDougall went to milk, caught her foot in the heather,
Woke to hear a dance record playing of Old Vienna.
It's no go your maidenheads, it's no go your culture,
All we want is a Dunlop tyre and the devil mend the puncture.

The Laird o' Phelps spent Hogmanay declaring he was sober,
Counted his feet to prove the fact and found he had one foot over.
Mrs. Carmichael had her fifth, looked at the job with repulsion,
Said to the midwife "Take it away; I'm through with over-production."

It's no go the gossip column, it's no go the Ceilidh,
All we want is a mother's help and a sugar-stick for the baby.

Willie Murray cut his thumb, couldn't count the damage,
Took the hide of an Ayrshire cow and used it for a bandage.
His brothers caught three hundred cran when the seas were lavish,
Threw the bleeders back in the sea and went upon the parish.

It's no go the Herring Board, it's no go the Bible,
All we want is a packet of fags when our hands are idle.

It's no go the picture palace, it's no go the stadium,
It's no go the country cot with a pot of pink geraniums.
It's no go the Government grants, it's no go the elections,
Sit on your arse for fifty years and hang your hat on a pension.

It's no go my honey love, it's no go my poppet;
Work your hands from day to day, the winds will blow the profit.
The glass is falling hour by hour, the glass will fall for ever,
But if you break the bloody glass you won't hold up the weather.

ROBERT GRAVES

No More Ghosts

The partriarchal bed with four posts
Which was a harbourage of ghosts
Is hauled out from the attic glooms
And cut to wholesome furniture for wholesome rooms ;

Where they (the ghosts) confused, abused, thinned,
Forgetful how they sighed and sinned,
Cannot disturb our ordered ease
Except as summer dust tickles the nose to sneeze.

We are restored to simple days, are free
From cramps of dark necessity,
And one another recognize
By an immediate love that signals at our eyes.

No new ghost can appear. Their poor cause
Was that time freezes, and time thaws ;
But here only such loves can last
As do not ride upon the weathers of the past.

DYLAN THOMAS

Among those Killed in the Dawn Raid was a Man Aged a Hundred

When the morning was waking over the war
He put on his clothes and stepped out and he died,
The locks yawned loose and a blast blew them wide,
He dropped where he loved on the burst pavement stone
And the funeral grains of the slaughtered floor.
Tell his street on his back he stopped a sun
And the craters of his eyes grew springshoots and fire
When all the keys shot from the locks, and rang.
Dig no more for the chains of his grey-haired heart.
The heavenly ambulance drawn by a wound
Assembling waits for the spade's ring on the cage.
O keep his bones away from that common cart,
The morning is flying on the wings of his age
And a hundred storks perch on the sun's right hand.

HENRY REED

Naming of Parts

To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We have daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,
We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,
To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica
Glistening like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,
And to-day we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper ling swivel, whose use you will see,
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,
Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it
Rapidly backwards and forwards : we call this
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers :
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring : it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb : like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,
Which in our case we have not got ; and the almond-blossom
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,
For to-day we have naming of parts.

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