

PREFACE AND STATEMENT

These poems are complete. There are no scoriae or unfulfilled intentions. Every note and revision has been destroyed. There are no biographical data.

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These poems are complete in themselves. They have a domestic economy of their own and if they face outwards to the reader that is because they have first faced inwards to themselves. Every poem should be an autarchy.

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The writing was done over five years. Certain changes of mental allegiance and superficial method took place. That is all that needs to be said on the subject of schools and influences.

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To discover the hidden fealty of certain arrangements of sound in a line and certain concatenations of the analytic emotions is the "secret" of style.

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When thought, at a certain level, and with a certain intention, discovers itself to be poetry it discovers also that duty does after all exist: the duty of a public act. That duty is wholly performed by setting the pen to paper. To read what has thus been done is another thing again, and implies another order of loyalty.

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Simplicity in our time is arrived at by an ambages. There is, at this moment, no such thing as a simple poem if what is meant by that is a point-to-point straight line relation of images. If I said that this was so because on the level where the world is mental occurrence a point-to-point relation is no longer genuine I should be accused of mysticism. Yet it is so.

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Those who say: What might not X have done if he had lived? demonstrate their different way of living from the poet's way. It is a kind of truth, which I have tried to express, to say in return: All one can do in one's span of time is to uncover a set of objective allegiances. The rest is not one's concern.

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DURER: INNSBRUCK, 1495

I had often, cowed in the slumberous heavy air,
Closed my inanimate lids to find it real,
As I knew it would be, the colourful spires
And painted roofs, the high snows glimpsed at the back,
All reversed in the quiet reflecting waters—
Not knowing then that Durer perceived it too.
Now I find that once more I have shrunk
To an interloper, robber of dead men's dream,
I had read in books that art is not easy
But no one warned that the mind repeats
In its ignorance the vision of others. I am still
The black swan of trespass on alien waters.