

Complete Short Poetry

Louis Zukofsky

With a Foreword by Robert Creeley

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore and London

Copyright © 1991 Paul Zukofsky
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 701 West 40th Street,
Baltimore, Maryland 21211
The Johns Hopkins Press Ltd., London

Stanza breaks are not indicated after the last lines on the following pages:
9-18, 21, 23, 34, 41, 49, 57, 65, 82, 84-85, 88, 92, 111-12, 115, 121, 123-24,
127, 130, 134, 135-37, 144, 151, 162, 166, 212, 231, 246-52, 254-57, 260,
262-65, 270, 274, 281-93, 295, 297-300, 302-4, 308, 312-13, 316. All other
page breaks do coincide with the end of a stanza or a poem.



The paper used in this book meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Zukofsky, Louis, 1904-1978.

Complete short poetry / Louis Zukofsky.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8018-4103-8 (alk. paper)

I. Title.

PS3549.U47A6 1991

811'.52—dc20

90-36764 CIP

Foreu

I Ser
[192]

55 P
[192]

Anev
[193]

Som
[194]

Bare
[195]

I's (j
[193]

Afte
[196]

Cat
(Ga
tran
[195]

80
[197]

Gar
[197]

Ind

Foreword

The measure of Louis Zukofsky's complex and incomparable poems will be finally the one he himself has provided in his preface to *A Test of Poetry* (1948): "The test of poetry is the range of pleasure it affords as sight, sound, and intellection. This is its purpose as art." To that one may add another quotation from a crucial essay in *Prepositions* (1967), "Poetry, / For My Son When He Can Read," written in 1946:

How much what is sounded by words has to do with what is seen by them—and how much what is at once sounded and seen by them crosscuts an interplay among themselves—will naturally sustain the scientific definition of poetry we are looking for. To endure it would be compelled to integrate these functions: time, and what is seen in time (as held by a song), and an action whose words are actors of or, if you will, mimes composing steps as of a dance that at proper instants calls in the vocal cords to transform it into plain speech.

The poet's "major aim," as he says in this essay, "is not to show himself but that order that of itself will speak to all men."

"Order," then, is the defining prospect of all Zukofsky's work, but it is an order peculiarly without threat or implicit dogma. One can now recognize his situation as being, finally, far more an example of the encroaching dilemmas of Modernism than his elders, Pound, Eliot, or Joyce, who had offered its initial definitions, could either recognize or anticipate. In fact, Zukofsky is impeccably placed to be the consummate person of the period in every respect. Born in New York's Lower East Side in 1904—the year Henry James returned to visit, as Zukofsky liked to remind one—he was the brilliant son of Russian immigrant parents, neither of

whom spoke English, and he completed an M.A. at Columbia at age twenty. What engaged him centered in history and politics, what a people have been and might be, and what factors are critical to either an understanding or a practice relating. So both Henry Adams and Marx are crucial to his thinking, and as a poet his thought again and again returns to the crisis of how a world shall manage coherence, given the chaos and dereliction of its formal means.

One does well to recall even some general sense of the time, with its increasing industrialization, immigration, urban growth, political ferment and shift, a major war, a boom economy and subsequent bust, a rejection of much that the past had seemed to qualify and secure, and, most of all, a rush to the new, a secularization and flattening “humanism,” and a culminating depression as approach to the “Second World War.” The perceptive critic Bruce Comens proposes a reading of the period’s literature using “strategy” and “tactics” for context, thus to recognize that Pound, for one, moves *strategically*, presumes an authority enabling him, whereas Zukofsky, and the Williams of *Paterson*, are committed to *tactics*, to response and improvisation, and their prosody in either case is expectably far more various in its resources despite the fact that either would consider Pound, as did Eliot, “il miglior fabbro.” In fact, it is not simply that Pound was “the better craftsman” but that his initiating materials permitted such a stable target for his practice. The Pound of the *Pisan Cantos* is a very different poet indeed than the one who began this great work.

Fitting enough that one of the first poems here should be such an amalgam of technique so echoing the various habits of Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, with a collage of quoted materials, an opaque diversity of sources and worked-for difficulties, but also with a tone altogether Zukofsky’s—who hears far more intimately the accumulating past, as in lines 54 to 60, or as here holds to the complexly human:

- 238 If horses could but sing Bach, mother,—
239 Remember how I wished it once—
240 Now I kiss you who could never sing Bach,
never read Shakespeare.

Pound’s acceptance in a letter dated 1912, his relationship with Zukofsky, and the possibility of the possibility of response to the “A,” which he December 12, emerging form

As for the thing late 1 edtns. of y *Lustra* & 4 direct repl technique, than my o him why, s ble and m Didn’t like so I think, matter of s dress, but opening F and 6. But the last lir “A”’s in

He continues, those who ‘ar think so—Bill printing it in F

This “charg sistent misapp other of the C nikoff among previous auth the judgment mary: “No po of the world ar sively of dom tained and ori ble in this cer

an M.A. at Colum-
tered in history and
ight be, and what
nding or a practice
x are crucial to his
1 and again returns
e coherence, given
neans.

eneral sense of the
1, immigration, ur-
major war, a boom
n of much that the
and, most of all, a
ening "humanism,"
ch to the "Second
e Comens proposes
'strategy" and "tac-
at Pound, for one,
rity enabling him,
Paterson, are com-
visation, and their
more various in its
ld consider Pound,
it is not simply that
that his initiating
or his practice. The
nt poet indeed than

ems here should be
g the various habits
ge of quoted mate-
d worked-for diffi-
r Zukofsky's—who
ing past, as in lines
exly human:

mother,—
ice—
er sing Bach,
are.

Pound's acceptance of "Poem beginning 'The'" for *The Ex-
ile* in a letter dated August 18, 1927, began a critical relation-
ship with Zukofsky, just that Pound was a defining measure
of the possibilities of the art. Even more useful was Pound's
response to the opening sections of Zukofsky's long poem
"A," which he had begun, as he notes to Pound in a letter
December 12, 1930, before he had opportunity to see the
emerging form of the *Cantos*:

As for the history of the matter: when I started the
thing late 1927 or early 1928, I had not seen the 3 Mts.
edtns. of your *Cantos*. Had read only the early ones in
Lustra & 4, 5 & 6 in *Poems 1918-21*. . . . "The" was a
direct reply to *The Waste Land*—meant to avoid T.S.E.'s
technique, line etc (tho I see how much more lucid it is
than my own) occasional slickness, but intended to tell
him why, spiritually speaking, a wimpus was still possi-
ble and might even bear fruit of another generation.
Didn't like his Wagnerian leit motives, so *I* ended, or
so I think, by doing something more discursive, more a
matter of sequential statement—*Pope* maybe in modern
dress, but the positive getting the better of the satire in
opening First Movement, parts of two and most of 5
and 6. But on the whole, left merely with the *promise* of
the last lines *trans* from Yehoash—"shall be."

"A"'s intention was to make that *promise good*.

He continues, "When 'The' came out, the charge by (of)
those who 'are supposed to know' was *Wasteland*. I didn't
think so—Bill [Williams] said *no*, you implied (?) no (?) by
printing it in *Exile 3*, Taupin with a foreign ear has said no."

This "charge" of "influence" was characteristic of a per-
sistent misapprehension that could only read Zukofsky and
other of the Objectivists—George Oppen and Charles Rez-
nikoff among them—as an effect or consequence of such
previous authority. In retrospect, one may well agree with
the judgment Steven Helming offers in this compact sum-
mary: "No poet is in touch at so many points with so much
of the world around him; no poet has written so comprehen-
sively of domestic life; and no poet has undertaken so sus-
tained and original an effort to make political poetry possi-
ble in this century of poetic and political extremes."

Most striking is the grounding of Zukofsky's terms, their substantial reference, and always their singular wit. His resources are the quickness and range of his intelligence and his unique hearing of phonic patterns, which makes them far more than metaphoric or analogous in his work. The pace and sounding in #5 ("Ferry") of "29 Poems" is active instance:

Gleams, a green lamp
 In the fog:
 Murmur, in almost
 A dialogue . . .

These early poems, with their emphasized if ironically muted political and intellectual detail, are conscious of both their authority and ambition and the company they would hope to keep. But the innate power is immediately evident, in the character of the intelligence and in the quiet genius of the prosody. "Mantis," with its complement, "Mantis," *An Interpretation*, manages to use the sestina with all its complicating metrical demands to make vivid the condition of the poor of that harsh time, the Depression, so that, in the setting of a New York subway, this utterly unexpected and defenseless insect becomes their manifest at the close:

Fly, mantis, on the poor, arise like leaves
 The armies of the poor, strength: stone on stone
 And build the new world in your eyes, Save it!

In the commentary "*An Interpretation*," Zukofsky spells out the complex ground of his thinking and the facts addressed, to come to this definition of what he has hoped to compose: ". . . the simultaneous, / The diaphanous, historical / In one head."

Whatever the effect of Objectivism as a literary movement, its company was intensive and significant, and the poets so made public are, as the Imagists before them, both served and diminished by such title. In retrospect, the occasion seems a political contrivance sponsored by Pound with Harriet Monroe's agreement: "Wonnors will невунн cease. I have just recd. nooz from Harriet that she is puttin you at the wheel for the Spring cruise [Oct. 24, 1930]." The issue of *Poetry* in question was published February 1931 with Zukof-

sky's article, "S those now know Rakosi, Charle were also contr mon, Basil Bu Niedecker seen her first collec would be almos *Friend Tree*, wa Hamilton Fink:

Such digress a situation Zuk of his own art. to an initial bo kofsky, is very father, mother love served the the range of th engendering th puns become emphasize tha clarity of "4 O "paradise\our\

One recalls than a literary one. In the six the third sect *Poetry*—he ma tive—nature a fact, / Inextric particulars"— qualifications, object." The 1 *saying somethi sensuously an tion*"—delight making order The poetry is extraordinary Degrees," #5 heard / that w

y's terms, their
ar wit. His re-
telligence and
makes them far
ork. The pace
s" is active in-

d if ironically
iscious of both
ny they would
liately evident,
quiet genius of
, "Mantis," An
all its compli-
ndition of the
o that, in the
nexpected and
the close:

n stone
ve it!

fsky spells out
cts addressed,
d to compose:
orical / In one

iterary move-
cant, and the
re them, both
ect, the occa-
y Pound with
evunnH cease.
puttin you at
" The issue of
l with Zukof-

sky's article, "Sincerity and Objectification," and poems by those now known as the Objectivists—George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, Charles Reznikoff, and Zukofsky himself. There were also contributions from W. C. Williams, Robert McAlmon, Basil Bunting, and Kenneth Rexroth. Only Lorine Niedecker seems missing, but it would not be until 1946 that her first collection, *New Goose*, appeared, and then there would be almost twenty more years till her second book, *My Friend Tree*, was published by the Scots poet and artist, Ian Hamilton Finlay.

Such digression may be questioned and yet it makes clear a situation Zukofsky both knew and dealt with as the place of his own art. The poem "*Barely and widely*," which is *envoi* to an initial book of that title published in 1958 by Celia Zukofsky, is very effective evidence of how closely this world of father, mother, and son did hold, and how articulately its love served them. The collection *Anew* sounds throughout the range of these bonding, locating relations, the pervasive, engendering thought, and the sounds that echo through all, puns become paean. There is so much in this respect to emphasize that one must offer the evocative simplicity and clarity of "4 Other Countries" for all else one might well say: "paradise\our\speech."

One recalls that, for Zukofsky, "Objective" is far more than a literary term or even, in usual sense, a philosophic one. In the sixth movement of "A"—he quotes the lines in the third section of his essay for the Objectivist issue of *Poetry*—he makes emphatic the recurring point: "An objective—nature as creator—desire for what is objectively perfect, / Inextricably the direction historic and contemporary particulars"—which, in the essay, he expands to further qualifications, among them, "The desire for an inclusive object." The parallel with music is very clear. That way of *saying something*—"wherein the ideas present themselves sensuously and intelligently and are of no predatory intention"—delighted him as that subtlety of sounding mind, so making order an experienced form, an issue of physical body. The poetry is always a premise of sounds, as he notes in his extraordinary poem celebrating W. C. Williams, "Songs of Degrees," #5: "But to / the expanse / of his / *mind* // who heard / that word / before."

The Catullus translations are an instruction in every respect, just that translation was such an intimate and determining value for Zukofsky, meaning what it says it does, *to carry over*. How echoing that sense is if all one has come from has been so carried, literally, and one too is insistently “immigrant.” As a child he memorized large chunks of Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* in Yiddish, a fact that delighted his neighbors, the Italian bullies, who would plague him as he went to do errands and not stop till he’d recited enough to satisfy them. Punning itself is translation, a hearing of transposed meanings, by fact of sound. New York, one remembers, is the most polylingual city in the world. Translation has a very American quality even if no tradition, simply that Americans only speak English.

There is, however, a very different context for Zukofsky’s use of translation, if one contrasts it with Pound’s, for example, or almost any of the usual literary instances, such as Richmond Lattimore or Robert Graves. Zukofsky’s first and abiding purchase on the text is its *sound*—much as if one were trying to enter the physical place of language, making sounds like “they” do, trying to inhabit the gestures, pace, and density of those (“objective”) words. So these Catullus texts—which are, further, a collaboration between Celia Zukofsky and himself—manage a virtual sounding of the Latin (as reference to Catullus’s Latin in any common collection will make clear), for example, “Ille mi par esse deo videtur” becomes “He’ll hie me, par *is* he? the God divide her” (*LI/51*). The fascination is with system, but such “system” as can prove the increment of all that pertains, enters, “inclusive,” as he said. It is the uniquely human attempt to “read” the world beyond one’s own isolating proposal or simple control, so to enter into it, tenuous but explicit, from here to there and back again, from *I’s* to *eyes*.

Zukofsky’s life was spent for the most part in New York, where he felt most rooted and specific, whether it was the Lower East Side of his childhood, or Willow Street, Brooklyn, or finally on Central Park South. He taught many years at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, which may have served his abiding respect for scientific qualification but frustrated his habits of generative speculation and reflection. His wife, Celia, said of him that he loved reading Spinoza as

other men might. Wittgenstein, whether of old or new, Reznikoff were of a hermetic home, the door be projected a native, and in *A* finds four poet Francis Kynas Zukofsky’s “I and more the attempts to do so testified, s Corman, Hugh Linson. His ac collection *Th* mark for the s edge of the a *Guide to Kulch* signpost clear

In 1972 the son, just above ing at the Sta much persuas apartment wa some years, th range of wild city had precl his eightieth *80 Flowers* ar echoing of a leads, a four t each the cou translates, tra

Heart
round
bird tre
stem-se
breath
sorrow

on in every re-
nate and deter-
says it does, *to*
has come from
insistently “im-
unks of Long-
hted his neigh-
m as he went to
ough to satisfy
g of transposed
remembers, is
ation has a very
that Americans

for Zukofsky's
nd's, for exam-
tances, such as
ofsky's first and
such as if one
guage, making
gestures, pace,
these Catullus
ween Celia Zu-
ng of the Latin
non collection
se deo videtur”
od divide her”
ch “system” as
enters, “inclu-
empt to “read”
osal or simple
t, from here to

t in New York,
ther it was the
Street, Brook-
ght many years
ich may have
alification but
and reflection.
ing Spinoza as

other men might love bread, and there is a deep kinship with Wittgenstein as with Aristotle, in that the world is to think, whether of or in or with. Friends such as Williams and Reznikoff were certainly there despite the public impression of a hermetic and increasingly isolated man. The fact of home, the domestic, became a center from which all might be projected and returned to. His love of Herrick is indicative, and in *A Test of Poetry*, under the rubric “Grace,” one finds four poems of Herrick's, one each by Campion and Sir Francis Kynaston—all written between 1601 and 1648—with Zukofsky's “Little Wrists” (1948) their complement. More and more the young sought him out as a source for their own attempts to deal with an atrophied prosody, and many have so testified, such as Robert Duncan, Paul Blackburn, Cid Corman, Hugh Seidman, and the British poet Charles Tomlinson. His advice to Williams on the editing of the latter's collection *The Wedge* (1944) became a common highwater mark for the situation of his authority in and singular knowledge of the art. In like sense, Pound's earlier dedication of *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) to Bunting and Zukofsky was a useful signpost clearly so intended.

In 1972 the Zukofskys left the city to move to Port Jefferson, just above Stony Brook, where their son Paul was working at the State University of New York. No doubt that fact much persuaded them, but the increasing expense of their apartment was also a large reason. So, for the first time in some years, they were able to have a garden and also to find a range of wild flowers and herbs simply present in a way the city had precluded. Zukofsky's last work, then, a prospect for his eightieth birthday, has roots of literal kind. The poems of *80 Flowers* are so quiet, yet dense, with concentration, so echoing of all, himself included, where form follows and leads, a four times two, by fives—as eight lines, five words in each the count, no matter otherwise how much as syllable, translates, transforms, flowers to flower, in time as “thyme”:

Heart us invisibly thyme time
round rose bud fire downland
bird tread quagmire dry gill-over-the-ground
stem-square leaves-cordate earth race horsethyme
breath neighbors a mace nays
sorrow of harness pulses pent

thus fruit pod split four
one-fourth *ripens* unwithering gaping

What end can there be? He might say otherwise, it is finally quite simple. Either you love or you hate. You have your life accordingly, "the more so all have it." When we first met, I felt nearly tongue-tied because I'd spent my last dime on the subway getting out to their home on Willow Street, Brooklyn, and now had to beg another to get back. To the ten cents was added five dollars, a lunch, and an overcoat I then wore for years. Later I'd come as I could and always found the same intensive warmth and response, a recognition so dear to my own tentative resources. There is a poem of mine called "The House," which is really Louis's—he took the baggage of my language and reduced it without threat to that compact, echoing sounding: "Mud put / upon mud / lifted / to make room." I've long forgotten what "the original" said.

Our last visit was after a chance meeting up near the park again. We arranged that I come the next afternoon and so I did, by subway, to find myself having to manage the last blocks in a wild summer thunderstorm. Thus I arrived as ever, in obvious need. Celia whisked my jacket into the bathroom and hung it up on the shower curtain rod to dry, and then I was given hot coffee. But I asked for milk, and there was none. So I was given a spoonful of vanilla ice cream in place of it, then some in a bowl in case that might please. To all of which, for all, there is hardly sufficient answer ever. Louis, I love you? So say these words.

ROBERT CREELEY

I Sent Thee Late

Vast, tremulous;
Grave on grave of water-grave;

Past.

Futurity no more than duration
Of a wave's rise, fall, rebound
Against the shingles, in ever repeated mutation
Of emptied returning sound.

Poem beginning "The"

Because I have had occasion to remember, quote, paraphrase, I dedicate this poem to Anyone and Anything I have unjustifiably forgotten. Also to J. S. Bach—309,* Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*—248, 291, Max Beerbohm—245, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*—310–312, Broadway—134, Geoffrey Chaucer—1st Movement, Title, College Cheer—45, E. E. Cummings' *Is Five*—38, Dante—66, Norman Douglas' *South Wind*—14, Elijah, the Prophet—24, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *The Sacred Wood*—25–27, John Erskine—184, 185, Heinrich Heine—266, 267, 269, 316, Robert Herrick—187, 188, Horace—141, Horses—224–237, Aldous Huxley's *Those Barren Leaves*—12, 18, Henry James—2nd Movement, Title, Jewish Folk Song—191, 270–280, James Joyce—13, 20, 28, 29, D. H. Lawrence—8, 19, 133, Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*—46, 47, Modern Advertising—163, George Moore—24, Marianne Moore—22, Mussolini—74, 75, Myself—130, 142, 167, 309, Obvious—Where the Reference is Obvious, Walter Pater's *Renaissance*—165, *Peer Gynt*—281–285, Poe's *Helen*—168–182, Popular Non-Sacred Song—4, 5, 36, 37, 288, 289, Ezra Pound—15, 18, Power of the Past, Present, and Future—Where the reference is to the word Sun, E. A. Robinson's *Children of the Night*—132, Sophocles—6, Oswald Spengler—132, Max Stirner—199–202, Symbol of our Relatively Most Permanent Self, Origin and Destiny—Wherever the reference is to the word Mother, *The Bible*—1–3, 9, 313, 314, The Bolsheviki—203, 323, The French Language—31, 33, 51, 292, The King's English—166, *The Merchant of Venice*—250–265, The Yellow Menace—241–242, University Extension—70, Villon—21, Franz Werfel—68, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*—52, Yehoash—110–129, 205–223, 318–330.

*References following dashes are to lines in *Poem beginning "The."*

First Movement

- 1 The
- 2 Voice of Je
- 3
- 4 A boy's be
- 5 It's your m
- 6 Residue of
- 7 Creating o
- 8 From the c
- 9 Vide the le
- o
- 10 Books fron
- tl
- 11 Residue of
- 12 By the Tyr
- 13
- 14 But everyw
- si
- 15 The broke
- ir
- 16 Lord, lord
- tl
- 17 But why ar
- 18 And why, l
- L
- 19 Why is it
- 20 Why Stepl
- a
- 21 But why le
- 22 And why, i
- h

Poem beginning "The"

First Movement: "*And out of olde bokes, in good feith*"

- 1 The
- 2 Voice of Jesus I. Rush singing
- 3 in the wilderness
- 4 A boy's best friend is his mother,
- 5 It's your mother all the time.
- 6 Residue of Oedipus-faced wrecks
- 7 Creating out of the dead,—
- 8 From the candle flames of the souls of dead mothers
- 9 Vide the legend of thin Christ sending her
 out of the temple,—
- 10 Books from the stony heart, flames rapping
 the stone,
- 11 Residue of self-exiled men
- 12 By the Tyrrhenian.
- 13 Paris.
- 14 But everywhere only the South Wind, the
 sirocco, the broken Earth-face.
- 15 The broken Earth-face, the age demands an
 image of its life and contacts,
- 16 Lord, lord, not that we pray, are sure of
 the question,
- 17 But why are our finest always dead?
- 18 And why, Lord, this time, is it Mauberly's
 Luini in porcelain, why is it Chelifer,
- 19 Why is it Lovat who killed Kangaroo,
- 20 Why Stephen Daedalus with the cane of
 ash,
- 21 But why les neiges?
- 22 And why, if all of Mary's Observations
 have been made

23 Have not the lambs become more sapient
drinking of the spring;
24 Kerith is long dry, and the ravens that
brought the prophet bread
25 Are dust in the waste land of a raven-
winged evening.
26 And why if the waste land has been explored,
traveled over, circumscribed,
27 Are there only wrathless skeletons exhumed
new planted in its sacred wood,
28 Why—heir, long dead—Odysseus, wandering of ten years
29 Out-journeyed only by our Stephen, bibbing
of a day,
30 O why is that to Hecuba as Hecuba to he!
31 You are cra-a-zee on the subject of babies,
says she,
32 That is because somehow our authors have been
given a woman's intuition.
33 Il y a un peu trop de femme in this South Wind.
34 And on the cobblestones, bang, bang, bang,
myself like the wheels—
35 The tram passes singing
36 O do you take this life as your lawful wife,
37 I do!
38 O the Time is 5
39 I do!
40 O the Time is 5
41 I do!
42 O do you take these friends as your loves
to wive,
43 O the Time is 5
44 I do!
45 For it's the hoo-doo, the somethin' voo-doo
46 And not Kings onelie, but the wisest men
47 Graue Socrates, what says Marlowe?
48 For it was myself seemed held
49 Beating—beating—
50 Body trembling as over an hors d'oeuvres—
51

52 And the dru
53 The blind j
54 Let me be
55 Not by art
56 Not by gra
57 Not by lett
58 Do we dare
59 With Spinc
60 After living

Second

61 This is the
62 When Pete
63 Evenings, c
64 We both st
65 to
66 'Tis, 'tis lo
rc
67 Peter is pol
pe
68 Somehow, i
is
69 How t
in
70 Not the ol
71 the thi
sc
th
72 Time, time
73 Eh, what sl
74 "Il Duce: I
75 Black :
is
76 Lion-heart
la
77 the thing it
78 Goldenrod

52 And the dream ending—Dalloway! Dalloway—
53 The blind portals opening, and I awoke!

54 Let me be
55 Not by art have we lived,
56 Not by graven images forbidden to us
57 Not by letters I fancy,
58 Do we dare say
59 With Spinoza grinding lenses, Rabbaisi,
60 After living on Cathedral Parkway?

Second Movement: *International Episode*

61 This is the aftermath
62 When Peter Out and I discuss the theatre.
63 Evenings, our constitutional.
64 We both strike matches, both in unison,
65 to light one pipe, my own.
66 'Tis, 'tis love, that makes the world go
 round and love is what I dream.
67 Peter is polite and I to me am almost as
 polite as Peter.
68 Somehow, in Germany, the Jew goat-song
 is unconvincing—
69 How the brain forms its visions think-
 ing incessantly of the things,
70 Not the old Greeks anymore,—
71 the things themselves a shadow world
 scarce shifting the incessant
 thought—
72 Time, time the goat were an offering,
73 Eh, what show do we see tonight, Peter?
74 “Il Duce: I feel God deeply.”
75 Black shirts—black shirts—some power
 is so funereal.

76 Lion-heart, frate mio, and so on in two
 languages
77 the thing itself a shadow world.
78 Goldenrod

- 79 Of which he is a part,
80 Sod
81 He hurried over
82 Underfoot,
83 Make now
84 His testament of sun and sky
85 With clod
86 To root what shoot
87 It sends to run the sun,
88 The sun-sky blood.
89 My loves there is his mystery beyond
your loves.
- 90 Uncanny are the stars,
91 His slimness was as evasive
92 And his grimness was not yours,
- 93 Do you walk slowly the halls of the heavens,
94 Or saying that you do, lion-hearted not ours,
95 Hours, days, months, past from us and gone,
96 Lion-heart not looked upon, walk with the
stars.
- 97 Or have these like old men acknowledged
98 No kin but that grips of death,
99 Of being dying only to live on with them
100 Entirely theirs,
101 And so quickly grown old that we on earth like
stems raised dark
102 Feel only the lull, heave, phosphor
change, death, the
103 One follow, the other, the end?
- 104 Our candles have been buried beneath these
waters,
105 Their lights are his,
106 Ship-houses on the waters he might have lived
near.
- 107 Steady the red light and it makes no noise
whatever.
108 Damn it! they have made capital of his flesh
and bone.
- 109 What, in r
n
110 And his he
111 Like the te
112 But his eye
113 Not even :
- 114 With the l
115 May his ki
116 The Bedo
117 The expar
118 As an emb
119 Behind hi
120 Sing into
- 121 Swifter th
122 Lighter th
123 The Bedo
124 Big his he
125 Younger y
126
- 127 Some new
128 All the sta
129]
- 130 I've chang
131 How abou
132 "The Qu
133 "Hall's M
134 "Near Ibs
135 "The Pos
136 Speaking
137 my c
138 Your weig

109 What, in revenge, can dead flesh and bone
 make capital?
110 And his heart is dry
111 Like the teeth of a dead camel
112 But his eyes no longer blink
113 Not even as a blind dog's.

114 With the blue night shadows on the sand
115 May his kingdom return to him,
116 The Bedouin leap again on his *asilab*,
117 The expanse of heaven hang upon his shoulder
118 As an embroidered texture,
119 Behind him on his saddle sit the night
120 Sing into his ear:

121 Swifter than a tiger to his prey,
122 Lighter than the storm wind, dust or spray,
123 The Bedouin bears the Desert-Night,
124 Big his heart and young with life,
125 Younger yet his gay, wild wife
126 The Desert-Night.

127 Some new trappings for his steed,
128 All the stars in dowry his meed
129 From the Desert-Night.

130 I've changed my mind, Zukofsky,
131 How about some other show—
132 "The Queen of Roumania," "Tilbury,"
 "The West-Decline,"
133 "Hall's Mills," "The Happy Quetzal-
 coatl,"
134 "Near Ibsen," "Dancing with H. R. H.,"
 "Polly Wants a New Fur Coat,"
135 "The Post Office"—
136 Speaking of the post office, the following
 will handicap you for the position,
137 my dear peter,
138 Your weight less than one hundred
 twenty-five pounds,

- 139 One half of a disabled veteran, and
 probably
 140 the whole of an unknown soldier,
 141 That's indomitaegue morti for you.
- 142 Is it true what you say, Zukofsky,
 143 Sorry to say, My Peter Out.
- 144 "Tear the Codpiece Off, A Musical
 Comedy,"
 145 Likewise, "Panting for Pants,"
 146 "The Dream That Knows No Waking."

Third Movement: *In Cat Minor*

- 147 Hard, hard the cat-world.
 148 On the stream Vicissitude
 149 Our milk flows lewd.
- 150 We'll cry, we'll cry,
 151 We'll cry the more
 152 And wet the floor,
- 153 Megrow, megrow,
 154 Around around
 155 The only sound
- 156 The prowl, our prowl,
 157 Of gentlemen cats
 158 With paws like spats
- 159 Who weep the nights
 160 Till the nights are gone—
 161 —And r-r-run—the Sun!

Fourth Movement: *More "Renaissance"*

- 162 Is it the sun you're looking for,
 163 Drop in at Askforaclassic, Inc.,

- 164 Get yourse
 165 A little fro
 166 It's the tim
 167 And if you
 P
- 168 Engprof, tl
 169 Like t
 170 That, smel
 171 Throu
 172 Like c
- 173 On weary
 174 Thy g
 175 Thy heavy
 176 For th
 177 The s
- 178 Lo! from 1
 179 How
 180 Phi Beta F
 181 Profe
 182 Are no ma
- 183 Poe,
 184 Gentleme
 185 But never
- Fif
- 186 Speaking :
 187 How long
 r
- 188 Gathered
 189 Is it your
 190 A stove bu
 191 Un in hoy
 {
 192 In the fiel

164 Get yourself another century,
165 A little frost before sundown,
166 It's the times don'chewknow,
167 And if you're a Jewish boy, then be your
Plato's Philo.

168 Engprof, thy lectures were to me
169 Like those roast flitches of red boar
170 That, smelling, one is like to see
171 Through windows where the steam's galore
172 Like our own "Cellar Door."

173 On weary bott'm long wont to sit,
174 Thy graying hair, thy beaming eyes,
175 Thy heavy jowl would make me fit
176 For the Pater that was Greece.
177 The siesta that was Rome.

178 Lo! from my present—say not—itch
179 How statue-like I see thee stand
180 Phi Beta Key within thy hand!
181 Professor—from the backseats which
182 Are no man's land!

183 Poe,
184 Gentlemen, don'chewknow,
185 But never wrote an epic.

Fifth Movement: *Autobiography*

186 Speaking about epics, mother,
187 How long ago is it since you gathered
mushrooms,
188 Gathered mushrooms while you mayed.
189 Is it your mate, my father, boating.
190 A stove burns like a full moon in a desert night.
191 Un in hoyze is kalt. You think of a new
grave,
192 In the fields, flowers.

- 193 Night on the bladed grass, bayonets dewed.
 194 Is it your mate, my father, boating.
 195 Speaking about epics, mother,—
 196 Down here among the gastanks, ruts,
 cemetery-tenements—
 197 It is your Russia that is free.
 198 And I here, can I say only—
 199 “So then an egoist can never embrace
 a party
 200 Or take up with a party?
 201 Oh, yes, only he cannot let himself
 202 Be embraced or taken up by the party.”
 203 It is your Russia that is free, mother.
 204 Tell me, mother.
- 205 Winged wild geese, where lies the passage,
 206 In far away lands lies the passage.
 207 Winged wild geese, who knows the pathway?
 208 Of the winds, asking, we shall say:
 209 Wind of the South and wind of the North
 210 Where has our sun gone forth?
 211 Naked, twisted, scraggly branches,
 212 And dark, gray patches through the branches,
 213 Ducks with puffed-up, fluttering feathers
 214 On a cobalt stream.
 215 And faded grass that’s slowly swaying.
 216 A barefoot shepherd boy
 217 Striding in the mire:
 218 Swishing indifferently a peeled branch
 219 On jaded sheep.
 220 An old horse strewn with yellow leaves
 221 By the edge of the meadow
 222 Draws weakly with humid nostrils
 223 The moisture of the clouds.
 224 Horses that pass through inappreciable
 woodland,
 225 Leaves in their manes tangled, mist, autumn
 green,
 226 Lord, why not give these bright brutes—
 your good land—
 227 Turf for their feet always, years for their mien.
- 228 See how
 229 Mate pair
 230 Reared in
 231 Where lif
 232 Very muc
 233 You migh
 234 Being less
 235 Weed out
 236 Never aliv
 237 Song to y
 238 If horses c
 239 Remembe
 240 Now I kis
 241 In Manhat
 242 Up and do
 243 And why i
 244 We, on the
 245 Dawn’t yo
 246 I ask our i
 247 Naw! I thi
 248 But she ha
 249 They have
 250 If I am like
 251 Assimilatio
 252 And once t
 253 I might as

wed.

228 See how each peer lifts his head, others follow,
 229 Mate paired with mate, flanks coming full
 they crowd,
 230 Reared in your sun, Lord, escaping each hollow
 231 Where life-struck we stand, utter their praise
 aloud.

embrace

232 Very much Chance, Lord, as when you first
 made us,
 233 You might forget them, Lord, preferring what
 234 Being less lovely where sadly we fuss?
 235 Weed out these horses as tho they were not?
 236 Never alive in brute delicate trembling
 237 Song to your sun, against autumn assembling.

msself
 he party.”

age,

238 If horses could but sing Bach, mother,—
 239 Remember how I wished it once—
 240 Now I kiss you who could never sing Bach,
 never read Shakespeare.

hway?

orth

241 In Manhattan here the Chinamen are yellow
 in the face, mother,
 242 Up and down, up and down our streets they
 go yellow in the face,
 243 And why is it the representatives of your,
 my, race are always hankering for
 food, mother?
 244 We, on the other hand, eat so little.
 245 Dawn't you think Trawtsky rawthaw a
 darling,
 246 I ask our immigrant cousin querulously.
 247 Naw! I think hay is awlmawst a Tchekoff.
 248 But she has more color in her cheeks than
 the Angles—Angels—mother,—
 249 They have enough, though. We should
 get some more color, mother.
 250 If I am like them in the rest, I should
 resemble them in that, mother,
 251 Assimilation is not hard,
 252 And once the Faith's askew
 253 I might as well look Shagetz just as much
 as Jew.

umnn

—

ir mien.

254 I'll read their Donne as mine,
 255 And leopard in their spots
 256 I'll do what says their Coleridge,
 257 Twist red hot pokers into knots.
 258 The villainy they teach me I will execute
 259 And it shall go hard with them,
 260 For I'll better the instruction,
 261 Having learned, so to speak, in their
 colleges.
 262 It is engendered in the eyes
 263 With gazing fed, and fancy dies
 264 In the cradle where it lies
 265 In the cradle where it lies
 266 I, Senora, am the Son of the Respected
 Rabbi,
 267 Israel of Saragossa,
 268 Not that the Rabbis give a damn,
 269 Keine Kadish wird man sagen.

Half-dozen Movement: *Finale, and After*

270 Under the cradle the white goat stands, mother,
 271 What will the goat be saddled with, mother?
 272 Almonds, raisins
 273 What will my heart be bartering, mother,
 274 Wisdom, learning.
 275 Lullaby, lullaby, lullaby, lullaby.
 276 These are the words of the prophet, mother,
 277 Likely to save me from Tophet, mother—
 278 What will my heart be burning to, mother,
 279 Wisdom, learning.
 280 By the cat and the well, I swear, my
 Shulamite!
 281 In my faith, in my hope, and in my love.
 282 I will cradle thee, I will watch thee,
 283 Sleep and dream thou, dear my boy!
 284 (Presses his cheek against her mouth.)
 285 I must try to fare forth from here.
 286 I do not forget you,
 287 I am just gone out for to-night,

288 The Ro
 289 I am go
 290 The lea
 291 Even in

 292 Brooks

 293 Saying,

 294 And wh

 295 Appropri
 296 Ka-ty di

 297 Helen C
 298 And did
 299 But wan
 300 And sho
 301 That is,
 302 And hol

 303 Angry a
 304 Recalcit
 305 Oh, Bae
 306
 307 As usual
 308 One or t

 309 Our God
 310 Bei dein
 thee
 311 Open Se
 erra
 312 By thy n

 313 O my so
 wou
 314 I had die
 son!

- 288 The Royal Stag is abroad,
 289 I am gone out hunting,
 290 The leaves have lit by the moon.
 291 Even in their dirt, the Angles like Angels
 are fair,
 292 Brooks Nash, for instance, faisant un petit
 bruit, mais très net,
 293 Saying, He who is afraid to do that should
 be denied the privilege,
 294 And where the automobile roads with the
 gasoline shine,
 295 Appropriately the katydid—
 296 Ka-ty did Ka-ty didn't
- 297 Helen Gentile,
 298 And did one want me; no.
 299 But wanted me to take one? yes.
 300 And should I have kissed one? no.
 301 That is, embraced one first
 302 And holding closely one, then kissed one?
 yes.
 303 Angry against things' iron I ring
 304 Recalcitrant prod and kick.
 305 Oh, Baedekera Schönberg, you here
 306 dreaming of the relentlessness of motion
 307 As usual,
 308 One or two dead in the process what does it
 matter.
- 309 Our God immortal such Life as is our God,
 310 Bei dein Zauber, by thy magic I embrace
 thee,
 311 Open Sesame, Ali Baba, I, thy firefly, little
 errant star, call here,
 312 By thy magic I embrace thee.
- 313 O my son Sun, my son, my son Sun!
 would God
 314 I had died for thee, O Sun, my son, my
 son!

315 I have not forgotten you, mother,—
316 It is a lie—Aus meinen grossen leiden mach ich
die kleinen lieder,
317 Rather they are joy, against nothingness joy—
318 By the wrack we shall sing our Sun-song
319 Under our feet will crawl
320 The shadows of dead worlds,
321 We shall open our arms wide,
322 Call out of pure might—
323 Sun, you great Sun, our Comrade,
324 From eternity to eternity we remain true to you,
325 A myriad years we have been,
326 Myriad upon myriad shall be.

327 How wide our arms are,
328 How strong,
329 A myriad years we have been,
330 Myriad upon myriad shall be.

Imm
And
Imm
O w
O or
Star,
Of e
Ligh
Of t
High
Of n
Star,
Con:
Like
Ligh
We t
Here
Yet s
We s
Whe
And
And
And
Trav
Deep
Eclip
And
Eclip
And
Sing
And
We l
Invic
Rush
Char
Irrev

agon! What is
; unlike a ser-
-n! drag your
gain! A short,
e soldier who
do you know
genus *Draco*!)
expansions of
ble hind ribs.
, what of the
ge wings and
ld-thought of
agon is a du-
like a marine
s the soil up-
s clearing it.
is uncertain.
fire out of his
ounds stink.—
s driven away,
'salsms 18, 38,

Marx

And with, but without expected, pay

I have written down twenty-three
Leaving 5 and another page blank

To record a January without snow
For the delectation of the file and rank.

“Further than”—

Further than the wash-stand
three mountains in one bathroom
The mountains on the floor, sea-bed
rock, colored design; Five figures, chance
smudges, perhaps tar, in the mountains; Six
and Five figures in the waters under
and above them. Each figure
is an ordinate of which the axis
is a peak, The Whole Peak, from summit
thru base to inverted altitude, depth beneath
sea level. Only drying from the shower is
exploration possible, the chances
of world monopoly have been so carefully
seized that only on the other side of
one's bathroom nothing is foreign. Unless
charting the antarctic has something to do
with figures the heads of which are
just smudges away from the axis of abscissas
or one is merely exploring from a shower
expectant that today or tomorrow must
bring the new economic anatomization.

“Mantis”

Mantis! praying mantis! since your wings' leaves
And your terrified eyes, pins, bright, black and poor
Beg—“Look, take it up” (thoughts' torsion)! “save it!”
I who can't bear to look, cannot touch,—You—

You can—but no one sees you steadying lost
In the cars' drafts on the lit subway stone.

Praying mantis, what wind-up brought you, stone
On which you sometimes prop, prey among leaves
(Is it love's food your raised stomach prays?), lost
Here, stone holds only seats on which the poor
Ride, who rising from the news may trample you—
The shops' crowds a jam with no flies in it.

Even the newsboy who now sees knows it
No use, papers make money, makes stone, stone,
Banks, "it is harmless," he says moving on—You?
Where will he put *you*? There are no safe leaves
To put you back in here, here's news! too poor
Like all the separate poor to save the lost.

Don't light on my chest, mantis! do—you're lost,
Let the poor laugh at my fright, then see it:
My shame and theirs, you whom old Europe's poor
Call spectre, strawberry, by turns; a stone—
You point—they say—you lead lost children—leaves
Close in the paths men leave, saved, safe with you.

Killed by thorns (once men), who now will save you
Mantis? what male love bring a fly, be lost
Within your mouth, prophetess, harmless to leaves
And hands, faked flower,—the myth is: dead, bones, it
Was assembled, apes wing in wind: On stone,
Mantis, you will die, touch, beg, of the poor.

Android, loving beggar, dive to the poor
As your love would even without head to you,
Graze like machined wheels, green, from off this stone
And preying on each terrified chest, lost
Say, I am old as the globe, the moon, it
Is my old shoe, yours, be free as the leaves.

Fly, mantis, on the poor, arise like leaves
The armies of the poor, strength: stone on stone
And build the new world in your eyes, Save it!

Mantis! praying m
Incipit V
le parole
almeno l
the words . . .
at least their subst

at first were
"The mantis open
It had been lost ir
It steadied against
It looked up—
Begging eyes—

It flew at my ches

—The ur
of the cr

No one would be
By its ungainlines:
Having seen the t

Having seen the t
There would be n

But *all* that was ha
The mantis itself
The transitions w

Thoughts'—two o
Six thoughts' refle
All immediate, no

"Mantis," An Interpretation

*or Nomina sunt consequentia rerum,
names are sequent to the things named*

Mantis! praying mantis! since your wings' leaves

Incipit Vita Nova

le parole

almeno la loro sentenza

the words . . .

at least their substance

at first were

"The mantis opened its body

It had been lost in the subway

It steadied against the drafts

It looked up—

Begging eyes—

It flew at my chest"

—The ungainliness

of the creature needs stating.

No one would be struck merely

By its ungainliness,

Having seen the thing happen.

Having seen the thing happen,

There would be no intention 'to write it up,'

But *all* that was happening,

The mantis itself only an incident, *compelling any writing*

The transitions were perforce omitted.

Thoughts'—two or three or five or

Six thoughts' reflection (pulse's witness) of what was happening

All immediate, not moved by any transition.

Feeling this, what should be the form
Which the ungainliness already suggested
Should take?

—Description—lightly—ungainliness
With a grace unrelated to its surroundings.

Grace there is perhaps
In the visual sense, not in the movement of
“eyes, pins, bright, black and poor.”

Or considering more than the isolation
Of one wrenched line,

Consider:
“(thoughts’ torsion)”
la battaglia delli diversi pensieri . . .
the battle of diverse thoughts—
The actual twisting
Of many and diverse thoughts

What form should *that* take?
—The first words that came into mind
“The mantis opened its body—”
Which might deserve the trope:
the feeling of the original which is a permanence
?

Or the feeling accompanying the first poor 27 words’ inception
(the original which is a permanence
?),
That this thoughts’ torsion
Is really a sestina
Carrying subconsciously
Many intellectual and sensual properties of the
forgetting and remembering Head
One human’s intuitive Head

Dante
In
Surrea
R

A twisted shoe by a
“To the short day ar

The sestina, then, th
Of the lines’ winding
Since continuous in

Perhaps goes back cr
Inevitable recurrence
Where the spaces of
But a movement,
With vision in the li

What is most signific
Perhaps is that C—ar
Used the “form”—nc
Stuffing like upholste
For parlor polish,
And our time takes c
For their blindness ar

Again: as an experime
As a force, one would

One feels in fact inev
About the coincidenc
About the growing of
Which is the situatio
With the fact of the s
Which together fatall
To twist themselves a
To record not a sestir
Nor even a mantis.

Is the poem then, a sestina
Or not a sestina?

The word sestina has been
Taken out of the original title. It is no use (killing oneself?)

—Our world will not stand it,
the implications of a too regular form.

Hard to convince even one likely to show interest in the matter
That this regularity to which 'write it up' means not a damn

(Millet in a Dali canvas, Circe in E's Cantos)
Whatever seeming modelling after the event,
649 years, say, after Dante's first canzone,
If it came back immediately as the only
Form that will include the most pertinent subject of our day—
The poor—
Cannot mean merely implied comparison, unreality
Usually interpreted as falsity.

Too much time cannot be saved
Saying:
The mantis might have heaped up upon itself a
Grave of verse,
But the facts are not a symbol.

There is the difference between that
And a fact (the mantis in the subway)
And all the other facts the mantis sets going about it.

No human being wishes to become
An insect for the sake of a symbol.

But the mantis *can start*
History etc.
The mantis situation remains its situation,
Enough worth if the emotions can equate it,

"I think" of the m
"I think" of other
The quotes set rej
Into movement.

Repulsion—
Since one, present
Will even touch th

but carefully.

The mantis, then,
Is a small incident
Which is the poor
The poor's separa
Bringing self-disg

The mantis is less

There should be t
Only for a "mover

An accident in the
Of many and diver
i.e. nerves, glandul

For example—
line 1—entomology
line 9—biology
lines 10 and 11—the

grou
of th
brair
line 12—pun, fact,
lines 13 to 18—the

news
"sub
tion,'
Indep
pape
bank
pove.

"I think" of the mantis
"I think" of other things—
The quotes set repulsion
Into movement.

Repulsion—
Since one, present, won't touch the mantis,
Will even touch the poor—

but carefully.

The mantis, then,
Is a small incident of one's physical vision
Which is the poor's helplessness
The poor's separateness
Bringing self-disgust.

The mantis is less ungainly than that.

There should be to-day no use for a description of it
Only for a "movement" emphasizing its use, since it's been around,

An accident in the twisting
Of many and diverse "thoughts"
i.e. nerves, glandular facilities, electrical cranial charges

For example—

line 1—entomology

line 9—biology

lines 10 and 11—the even rhythm of riding under-
ground, and the sudden jolt are also
of these nerves, glandular facilities,
brain's charges

line 12—pun, fact, banality

lines 13 to 18—the economics of the very poor—the
newsboy—unable to think beyond
"subsistence still permits competi-
tion," banking, *The Wisconsin Elkhorn
Independent*—"Rags make paper,
paper makes money, money makes
banks, banks make loans, loans make
poverty, poverty makes rags."

lines 22 to 24—Provence myth
lines 25 to 29—Melanesian self-extinction myth
line 33—airships
lines 35 and 36—creation myth (Melanesia), residue of
it in our emotions no matter if fetched
from the moon, as against l. 25 to 29.

and naturally the coda which is the
only thing that can sum up the
jumble of order in the lines weaving
“thoughts,” pulsations, running commentary, one upon the other,
itself a jumble of order
as far as poetic
sequence is concerned:

the mantis
the poor’s strength
the new world.

39—“in your eyes”
the original shock still persisting—

So that the invoked collective
Does not subdue the senses’ awareness,
The longing for touch to an idea, or
To a use function of the material:
The original emotion remaining,
like the collective,
Unprompted, real, as propaganda.

The voice exhorting, trusting what one hears
Will exhort others, is the imposed sensuality of an age
When both propaganda and sensuality are necessary against—
“—we have been left with nothing
just a few little unimportant ships
and barges” (British Admiralty even in 1920)

or jelly for the Pope

la mia nemica, madonna la pieta
my enemy, my lady pity,

36—“like leaves”
The Head remembers
remembers

la calcina pietra
the calcined stone

But it remembers
the poor
than
com’huom pietra
as one should hide

Nor is the coincidence
Of the last four lines
Symbolism,
But the simultaneous
The diaphanous, light
In one head.

The six blank
29th, 1933, volume
1934 with so
collection through
the book, not
their subject

36—"like leaves"

The Head remembering these words exactly in the way it
remembers

la calcina pietra
the calcined stone.

But it remembers even more constantly
the poor
than
com'huom pietra sott' erba
as one should hide a stone in grass.

Nor is the coincidence
Of the last four lines
Symbolism,
But the simultaneous,
The diaphanous, historical
In one head.

November 4, 1934
New York

NOTE

The six blank pages intended by Song 29, written January 29th, 1933, were filled during 1933 and the early months of 1934 with songs 11, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28. Added to the original collection their number is not included in, or for, the title of the book, namely *55 Poems*. They are dedicated rather by their subjects.