

**1920**

**E. P. ODE POUR L'ELECTION DE SON SEPULCHRE**

**From Hugh Selwyn Mauberley**

**Ezra Pound**

**Pound, Ezra (1885-1972) - Controversial American poet, editor, and critic who had a major influence on 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. After making hundreds of broadcasts for the Italian Fascist regime, he was tried for treason, judged insane, and held in a mental hospital for over ten years. E. P. Ode Pour L'Election de Son Sepulchre (1920) - The opening of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," Pound's farewell to London and the English literary scene. Opening line: For three years, out of key with his time, ...**

**EPODE****I**

FOR three years, out of key with his time,  
 He strove to resuscitate the dead art  
 Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"  
 In the old sense. Wrong from the start

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born  
 In a half savage country, out of date;  
 Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;  
 Capaneus; trout for factitious bait;

Idmen gar toi panth, os eni Troie  
 Caught in the unstopped ear;  
 Giving the rocks small lee-way  
 The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,  
 He fished by obstinate isles;  
 Observed the elegance of Circe's hair  
 Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Unaffected by "the march of events,"  
 He passed from men's memory in l'an trentuniesme  
 De son eage; the case presents  
 No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.

**II**

THE age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage,  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries  
Of the inward gaze;  
Better mendacities  
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,  
Made with no loss of time,  
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster  
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.

### III

THE tea-rose tea-gown, etc.  
 Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
 The pianola "replaces"  
 Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,  
 Phallic and ambrosial  
 Made way for macerations;  
 Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,  
 Sage Heracleitus says;  
 But a tawdry cheapness  
 Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty  
 Defects- after Samothrace;  
 We see to kalon  
 Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,  
 Nor the saint's vision.  
 We have the press for wafer;  
 Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.  
 Free of Pisistratus,  
 We choose a knave or an eunuch  
 To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,  
 tin andra, tin eroa, tina theon,  
 What god, man, or hero  
 Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

## IV

THESE fought in any case,  
and some believing,  
pro domo, in any case...

Some quick to arm,  
some for adventure,  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter,  
in imagination, learning later...  
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;

Died some, pro patria,  
non "dulce" non "et decor" ...  
walked eye-deep in hell  
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
came home, home to a lie,  
home to many deceits,  
home to old lies and new infamy;  
usury age-old and age-thick  
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.  
Young blood and high blood,  
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in the old days,  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies.

**V**

THERE died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
For a botched civilization,  
Charm, smiling at the good mouth,  
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,  
For a few thousand battered books.

**THE END**