CONTENTS

Essay on Rime 1

Trial of a Poet 77

Afterword 105
ESSAY ON RIME
TO MY WIFE
FOREWORD

1
THE CONFUSION IN PROSODY

2
THE CONFUSION IN LANGUAGE

3
THE CONFUSION IN BELIEF

NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
foreword

This is a tract on the treble confusion
In modern rime. The premise that our verse
Is in decline has not, I am convinced,
Been honestly attacked or well defended.
Critics in particular have minced matters
By acquiring all the authority to talk.
I ask you not to balk at my presumption
But with a certain reasonable kindness
Toward the subject to attempt this study.
I think it is high time that everybody
With a true love of rime assert his views.

In the mid-century of our art we leave
The park behind and rest beside the zoo
Of rarities. Very fortunate for us
That monsters of their own peculiarities
Perish. Yet they remain. As visitors
It is our privilege to stare at the adept
Keepers and the odd assortment of the kept.

Some chimeras are real, some counterfeit.
White unicorns are drinking from the brook;
Bellowing from its cage the anthropophagus
Rushes at us. These creatures, certainly,
Deserve the status of actualities. But look,
What is that perpendicular snake, that woman
With hot eyes gleaming in her viscera?
The question is one of language. No conception
Too far removed from literal position
Can keep its body. Ideas are no more words
Than phoenixes are birds. The metaphysician
Deals with ideas as words, the poet with things,
For in the poet’s mind the phoenix sings.
Now whether the egg of modern criticism
Precedes the squawking chicken of semantics
Is a scholar's quiz, but insofar as Meaning
Has tried to adopt Poetics, the plot thickens.
But can the science of definition relate to
Poetry, even obliquely? To science belongs
The isolation of knowledge, to art belongs
The isolation of beauty; nor is it likely
That even in this aviary can we mate two
Creatures of such opposite feather. The owl
Has many thoughts, the woodlark only songs.

Perhaps Lucretius felt that through the means
Of language highly charged, more could be said
Of his philosophy than prose could prove;
His form is rare but not considered specious.
Horace and Pope, this pair may be adduced
As poets who argued in the voice of rime
And argued well. But poets prefer to roost
In arbors rather than the tree of knowledge.
That bard expelled from Socrates' Republic
Is held sweet to the world; for understand
That dialectic is the foe of poetry.

If, then, I am accused of paradox
In forcing argument to the cast of rime,
My only answer is that criticism
Has charted poetry into dangerous narrows
And dashed its own brains out upon the rocks
Of absolute meaning; that this essay is given
In protest to the semantic muse, a pharos
Perhaps to dialectics but to poetry
A siren of the Homeric cut. To use
Language emotionally and not as number
Is my intention: my hope is to infuse
Criticism with pleasure, sense with clarity.
One verse of Shakespeare's is a matter for
A Vatican of wonder and research.
I cannot take the scholar's perch or view
The present field like critics, ex cathedra.
My aim is to suggest, not to pronounce
Sentence, or trounce the brothers of my trade;
My wish is but to call a rose a rose
And not a trope; my only rationale
To answer homemade questions and not those
Put by poetics old and new. I trust
I have not bit off more than I can chew.

This essay deals with three major confusions:
In Prosody, in Language, and in Belief,
Each part discussing five aspects of rime
As follows. Under Prosody: the first,
Its English application; second, three
Important studies; its forms and chaos third;
Its metric fourth; and fifth and last its cults.
Next under Language: first its idiom,
General and personal; second, personality
And style; its grammar third; rhetoric fourth;
And fifth, translations and false dialects.
Finally, under confusion in Belief
These headings: first, the failure in belief;
Second, the new and substitute beliefs;
Personal systems third; our dialectic
And criticism fourth; and fifth and last,
The dead hand and exhaustion of our rime.