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Translations

Ezra Pound

Charlotte Ward

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Translations · *Ezra Pound*

Edited by Charlotte Ward

The nine translations printed here, all previously unpublished, and all of poems from the Middle Ages, are collected in the Pound archive at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. The total collection of unpublished translations there numbers twenty-six and will be brought out later on in a special edition, with the originals on the facing page, by New Directions and The University of Iowa's Windhover Press.

What we offer here, without the originals, is a sampling of Pound's attention to work in Old English, Provençal, Italian, and Middle High German, and a representation of the continuity of that work from 1905 to the early thirties.

The poem in Old English is a portion of an Anglo-Saxon Charm that is interesting to place beside Pound's famous, and famously disputed "Seafarer." The charm is more closely translated. Provençal is represented by a poem of Bertran de Born, a famous stirrer-up of strife, according to Dante, and by two by Daniel. The Born translation does not keep the elaborate rhyme of the original, as Pound generally did when translating from the Provençal, though a few of the rhymes are maintained in their exact places. The two Daniel poems do carry out the intricate rhyme-schemes of the Provençal exactly, with feminine rhyme in the first case, and as a sestina in the second.

Pound's *Translations* (New Directions, 1963) carries a completely different version of the first of these poems (p. 149) and a partial alternate version of the second (p. 425), by which one may sense something of the energy of Pound's apprenticeship, of his not being content with a single version of a poem that he admired, with a single experiment in its lyric pattern. As a matter of fact, in the case of Daniel, whom Pound loved, three poems in the larger collection exist in two translated versions each and several others have whole or partial alternative versions in *Translations*.

The remaining poems include work by Cavalcanti, another of Pound's favorite poets, a sonnet that is not among the thirty-five in *Translations,* and an exchange of lyrics between Cavalcanti and Alfani. Our selection concludes with two short lyrics by von der Vogelweide that sample Pound's later interest in Middle High German.

We are grateful to James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Beinecke Library of Yale for our being able to offer this selection.