

Classic Poetry Series

Thomas Ernest Hulme
- poems -

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Thomas Ernest Hulme(1883 - 1917)

T.E. Hulme published six poems before his death. He called them his 'Complete Poetical Works'.

The son of prosperous parents, Hulme developed early interests in debate, and was known by his school debating society as 'the Whip'. His provocative, enthusiastic behaviour got him ejected on more than one occasion from Cambridge University, where he read mathematics but did not finish a degree. On theatre visits, he would shout at the actors; once, this led to a brawl with the police, and a weekend in prison. He kept a brass knuckleduster for use in the bedroom.

A man accredited with influencing Ezra Pound, Hulme is often seen as a pioneer of modernism. Member of the Second Poets' Club, which also included Ezra Pound and F. S. Flint, he was one of the first critics to write about modern painting and sculpture. One of his biographers, Robert Ferguson (The Short Sharp Life of TE Hulme) calls his style that 'of overhearing someone in the actual process of thinking'. Ian Sansom describes his words and ideas as 'most often a defence of the obvious: people are bad; poems don't need to rhyme; and art is not imitation. You always get the feeling when reading him that he's coming at things from first principles.'

Hulme's various writings include critical essays and translations. He taught English in Brussels for a time. His essays were edited posthumously by Sir Herbert Read, in *Speculations* (1924) and *Notes on Language and Style* (1929).

T.E. Hulme was shot in 1917 at the age of 34, manning a gun on the Belgian coast.

Autumn

A touch of cold in the Autumn night --

I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

Thomas Ernest Hulme

The Embankment

(The fantasia of a fallen gentleman on a cold, bitter night.)

Once, in finesse of fiddles found I ecstasy,

In the flash of gold heels on the hard pavement.

Now see I

That warmth's the very stuff of poesy.

Oh, God, make small

The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,

That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie.

Thomas Ernest Hulme