

Summoned by Bells

*The art of letters will come to an end before A.D. 2000...
I shall survive as a curiosity.*

EZRA POUND

O Zeppelins! O Zeppelins!
prayed poet E.P.
any Boche gets 60 pence
to bust this campanolatry!

Doubles, triples, caters, cinques
for corpse or Christmas joys
for him, or anyone who thinks,
may be 'foul nuisance' and mere noise.

Carillons can interfere
and ruin concentration.
I've had it wrecked, my rhythmic ear,
by the new faith of the nation.

So sympathise with E.P.'s plight.
This moment now it's hard to hold
this rhythm in my head and write
while those bloody bells are tolled.

St Mary Abbot's, they're passe.
What gets into my skull
any time of night or day
are the new bells of John Bull,

The new calls to the nation:
Securi-curi-curi-cori!
Join the fight against inflation!
Double-Chubb your door!

'Beat Inflation' adverts call.
Invest in stronger locks!
Display for all on your front wall
the crime-deterrent box.

Almost every day one goes
and the new faith that it rings
is vested in new videos
and the sacredness of things.

I got done once. No piercing peal
alerted neighbourhood or force
but then there's nothing here to steal
bar 'a few battered books', of course.

The poor sneak thief, all he could do
he had so little time to act,
was grab a meagre coin or two
and my bag there ready packed.

What bothers me perhaps the most
is I never heard the thief,
being obsessively engrossed
in rhymes of social grief.

In haste behind the garden wall
he unzipped my bag. Bad luck!
One glance told him that his haul
was 50 copies of one book!

Poems! Poems! All by me!
He dropped the lot and ran
(and who would buy hot poetry
from a poor illiterate man?)

deeply pissed by what he'd found,
dumped books and bag unzipped.
He'd've even ditched an Ezra Pound
Cantos manuscript.

I got my books, he went scot-free,
no summons, gaol or fines.
I used him for such poetry
this alarm leaves in these lines

on 'a botched civilisation'
E.P. helped to rebotch
where bells toll for a nation
that's one great Neighbourhood Watch.