Book XIV

Poems by

John Hewitt

January 1937

14th January.

I love the cool democracy of frost.
No thing's too mean to fur his accolade:
the common ground alike with lettered fence
bears the white magic of his innocence.
With hand whose gestures count what's lost
no cost
he binds his jewels gray on leaf and blade.

I saw a pigeon with a frost-grey wing
a silk-sheen body like the frost on grass:
but when I moved to reach him he was gone
like feather-edge of frost before the sun
when we are wakened by the sting
of spring
while whip-lash branch binds where the white touch was.

18th February

Sonnet: with a Knitted Pullover for
the International Column:
Ruby speaks: —

This, with the urgent least of gratitude
for one I do not know and have not seen
ragged unwasht and bearded who has stood
cold on the guarded spanish hills between
my comfortable dream of liberty
and steel shod jackboot trampling my desire
the crocus tended and the apple tree,
the statue smasht, the books flung on the fire.

This I have made while yet I live at peace
rent for my pleasure tax upon my time
ungrudged and willing now my patient skill
as one might turn house a gift for crime
for debt of more than pity find release —
the nights are bitter on that spanish hill.

20th Feby.

Set out this spring on a pitiful journey
who knows where for no name appears
scribbled across the ticket's warning
with crush and thrust were we volunteers?

What for luggage? a small case only
courage and sox, a book and a pipe.
Make the book last by reading it slowly,
a razor blade and a stick of soap.

For if I forget it would be romantic
which must be avoided wherever I go
omit the antic frantic corybantic
cut snowballs out even if there's snow.

X

20th Feby.

What is the choice that the year must offer
for one awake in his land and head
emotions erosion he must suffer
Love's arteries harden til stiff and dead,

or take his turn with grunt proceedings
when chance has set him in front or behind
may see perhaps the rescue speeding
or the close-up kiss and the final hand:

groke out angry at queen and poodle
barge into beggar with rush down steps
curse himself that a velvet cuddle
could not assuage with its sticky lips.

Thrust at, stabbed by each moments pity
dragged by skirts til courage in rags
finds his philosophy trumped like putty
at mouth of hunger or flesh of legs:

his
with only hope and of sheer salvation
a tense terris vow to a screamed crew
twitchet nostril hurt - and a class education
clearing his pitiful spirit in two.
splitting

20th February
revised in March.

Phalanx. Revised July & March 1939

This is the season men in lanes may say
light lasts a cockstride longer everyday,
-and tho the sky's grey apron bellies snow
-and few buds show
along the turning twigs, blackliffit with frost;
yet at this gate -and entrance of the spring
I halt to make my sober reckoning
what may be gained before the year is lost.

Now while I watch the hail strike past my face
hail falls on faces in another place
when men with swollen fingers dare not blow
for fear they show
the crawling scent where lies the stinted trench
and on the splintered trees no bud appears
nor will until men move in wiser years
and the wind comes without the chloride stench.

No spring for Spain. No spring for me until
the Nazi bombers vanish over the hill
pursued forever from our weary eyes
out of the skies.
and men can learn to live once again
slow and repetitive in word and thought
born weaned dead loved begot and misbegot
warm laughing women, hearty passionate men.

To let this be, to bring again the life
unregimented lazy talkative,
to build a world where one might catch a glance
-and stop to dance
glad of the surety of the smile or touch
there will be found no lie of tongue or heart
where no one chides the man who walks apart-
because they know that silence makes them rich:

To bring this life? To it by frightened prayer
to doubtful father who may not be there

a worried fault in magics old and stale
that always fail?
Not there. The negro screaming in the night
is mobbed with ghosts, ghostgods uncountable
streaks gibbering phantomgods from death's cold hell.
All gods retreat into the infinite.

Can art make certain justice comes to men?
Art can but dance no matter where the time.
This man had skill to chisel and to break
great stones awake
as lechers kings whip cracked him to his best;
and this caught music from the thunder once
at bidding of a driveling halfwit prince:
the hand that drew this was a fool's at last.

Not these. Then give us hope of influence
walk pensively within your garden fence
and set the paths in order tend with care
the blossoms there.

Be happy to achieve a thoughtful shape
for bones and pulses of your family:
prune your tall fancies like a fruiting tree
and bid the wise thought bulge like drowsy grape.

Well then and well. But if a roar shend come?
Who knows what trumpet or demanding drum?
The fenc't field can no more than bramble hedge
turn back war's edge.
There still may smoke your house against the sky.
The flowerbed dug not with the fork or spade
but the harsh craft of mortar and grenade
or trench to let the maimed in safety lie.

These fail us all. Art Quality and Prayer:
they have no blessing for the beamstabbed air.
I at this gate and ambush of the spring
pause wondering
if when red autumn rapes the windowed tree
you that I love shall stand by me and turn,

hand's life in mine, to watch spring's promise burn
and coil across the twilight quietly.

To win the life my aching senses need
I must be bondsman to a narrow creed.
I must strip off my fancies and desires
like worsnot tyres
and ride upon the rims that jolt and hurt.
I must surrender the attempted grace
the uncertain gestures of the dancer's grace
for razor mind, skilled eye and hand alert.

Instead of as before from bush or bird
obtaining beauty's retrospective word
I must attend, before the order's done
make order one
with patterned action triggered on a hair.
I must become no more the man I was
vain at a trifle eager for applause
an epigram or attitude my care.

Then courage first and caution: in reserve
that love of laughter which must ever serve
to keep me wise when life the little thing
breaks leak and wing
upon the smooth and old suntethered stone,
for in the strict occasions of delight
always my impulse urges me stretch out
the warm hand's mercy ere I go alone.

17th March.

II Sonnet

Because I lend my pen to any cause
that grips the flying tails of my intent
the naked act for which my breath was meant
stands by untaskt. The season slowly draws
new birds to peck among th' overtaken haws
new green to break unsullied innocent;
but my bleak mind's a wrestle to present
time's slum thick pities and a system's flaws

What wisdom this? Shall rhetoric nature
from malnutrition, from the threat of war
achieving (a) shape and sound that may endure
among the orbs of song a lesser star
or shall I end improvident and poor
who had been rich in truth oracular.

Tonight I think of dates
that hero of my youth:
to face the arctic night
was kinship with the truth.

The years ascore and five
have blown across the world:
the banner of his sacrifice
is taken down and furled.

To bravery at need
becomes a harder thing:
Dimitrov laughing in the dock
at Goering's blustering,

or Ossietsky who
had easily gone free
now broken coughs his way to death
out of captivity.

17th March

X

O How can I survive
a toppling world's decay
just the mere threat of life
with war on any day

at worst the drums collapse
before the fascist mob
salute with hand a
salute upon my lips
-at menace of pistol club

at best achieved success
for workers' hope and cause
enduring the repress-
-ion of their bestial laws;

& lose in either case
the world of nurture known
the individual grace
the right to go alone.

O how can I survive
whose heart is gagg'd down
freedom from the hive
the poet's discipline.
heart's own

17th March.

Farewell Enniskillen farewell for awhile
Goodbye Ballynure and the sweet Brown Knowe
The ould' orange flute must learn a new tune
-and Bard of Armagh take a bow.

for the places we head for and the way
will need new songs to keep the heart alive
hard marching songs in strict mechanic time
for we must move together to survive.

Spanish Place Names 1st April

1 X Names that were once
emblazoned on the banners of our wars
hung now with tarnished wreaths
in gloom above the oaken stalls

Now you become
new words on the flaps and lips of men
who live for no harsh empire's tinsel trumpets
but for a world set free.

—

2 X With chance and change of war
Spain leaves our thought;
we turn again
to the kind thrusting
and the fat thrush.

—

3 Caught in the terrible doom
I sit and turn my verse —
rabbit transfixt
by fascist's ferret stare.

—

4 With hope capsized,
the final pennant gone down,
I go upon my business
as if nothing had occurred
-and do not start when I catch
the stiff glare
of drowning men.

5 The power runs out on sand
where was a roaring skate
that coiled and ground the shapely hills
now comes
in this thin trickling vesicle of pity.

1st April

When days draw out and I come home to tea
with tasks whilst old grief is waiting there.
The nights of light and fire spell poetry
I wring no music from the spring chill air

for all my strength is in the words of those
who moved apart and wove of quietness
old sarabands of thought in flickering rows
that have the strength and mercy still to bless

1st April

Sigurd

As I listened-in with the children on a snatch-at bowl of rest-
I heard far voices crying of the terror of Atli's quest
I remembered the leaping phrases of the matchless story told
and the bearded Norseman's poem of the buried Nibelung gold
the famous sword of Sigmund & the horsemen at the gate
the hiss of the coiling serpents & Gunnar's terrible fate

Hereat I fell adreaming of the joy and the craft we miss
intent on the difficult lyric - and the coarse analysis:
for none now sings of the heroes with the skill of the wizard spell;
we are nesht in an iron circle and bound in a lonely hell.

O give us the ballad-maker and the cunning mouth of song;
there are tales more worth the telling than the moments of sedentate

[wrong

1st April

And so on All Fools' day
my thought begins to shew
that slumbered like a seed in clay
in the warm dark below

For all I say and do
until my thought runs dry
whether the hazel's leaf-arras
against a lovely sky

a whistle in the wind
& still approach of rain
no other music in my mind
save what is sung for Lent,

give wisdom courage power
that I in turn may give
a lasting shape to my flower
lest love is fugitive

with no impatient thought
if spring come soon or late
I have done all I ought.
I can lean upon a gate
and wait

Things Seen

12 ab

1 An old man on a spring evening
at an open window
playing chess
with his grandson

---

2 A man bending over a bin on the sidewalk 13 ab
hunting and scrabbling for treasure
a shoe a comb a piece of cloth
over his head
a thrush singing on his usual branch.

---

3 an Indian bagman 13K
with a case of silks
standing bewildered
not knowing which way to go
behind him
a gable lettered
surreptitiously and seditiously in white
with Up the Rebels.

13
Home bred daffodils
growing too tall
for the proportions of their bowl.
Just a hint
of Swinburne's centenary in that.

13K.
a thrush listening
a daffodil slipping off its green case
a chestnut bud burst
and I worry about Bilboa
or myself

13K
She said it was a cocksparrow
and I was surprised
never having noticed
that sparrows are as various as men
for all I knew
it might have been a hensparrow
or even not a sparrow at all.

Sonnets. Bilbao Blockade

So they must cry for bread, and having none,
moan in the stifling shelters quaking air
the little children, changelings of despair
the frightened woman shouting for her son
the broken man, the gentle praying nun . . .
Yet safe at anchor from the rebel flare
the laden vessels ride, forbid to dare
the threatening braggart with his perjured guns.

Fondly Rad remembered Nelson's fame,
the blind eyes courage for a lesser task,
not these, the stealing gestures of a game
nor this void drivel from a painted mask.
What succor is there for a nation's shame?
Th' abyssinian first, and now the Basque.

—

1814.

X Gallery Piece X

Milo the athlete, bullockeater, strong,
denying age, remembering his youth,
the seven Pythian crowns, the greater six
Olympic laurels, striding thro the wood
broke twig that neared his face with savage crack
griffe-like and there and lost a sapling by,
dared up to clober by a bigger branch
that slipt his hold he stormed afeast an oak,
rock rootlesse, clove by parting right and left.
But he was old, the true asserting back
caught hands together in the trunk rejoind:
Post prise was useless. He was rich and old,
hung like a lackey at a whipping post,
wood wake trayer, shook the creeking tree,
sank into pity for his storied fame,
cursed luck that let him trust the pillars wh
ate his wise master and his fellow learners
hurried to safety from the cracking roof

and now left him alone in the darkening wood . .

Then with the night soft-footed stole his dread,
the barbed hides breathed nearer, woke to shout,
startling a bird engaged the circling vultures,
was hard and naked darkness . . .

I will set
his nightbag so against the coiled root.
repeat the muscles rhythm in twisted bough . . .
Why paint poor Milo? For a customer.
I know a lord will loose the knotted strings
for a small hand such to deck his wall.
And in the labor I shall get relief
for the last theresis clawing at my days.
I find that common. My sharp sympathy
began with pity for his strength in ape
dragged downward to a bloody screaming thing
by oaks at his, but caught alike to him
I'll take my struggle in the colors of his.

And in the making half forget my sorrow
for as the hand moves surely, and the heart
rejoices for the forms that are revealed
I lose the self's nerved pities in delight.
For my Olympic crowns go seek the walls
of the small chapel by the city gate.
Men gape at them and rank my name with those
that made Siena an enchanted place.
If this survive, this warping painted board
prey to the worm and beetle, prey to dust,
I think that men will see the truth of it
and pity me my stinted grasp of days
and lose their pity in the urgent line,
the abundant life of color in the shades

And when we broke the door down I went in
saw there and there the painted phantasies
the whispering lips of decadent disgrace
the lewd impostures of the secret Jews
struck hate into glass and canvas, with a face

tore ragged edge across a nativity
and ordered all to flames. My glance alert-
caught sight of Sir. J. this tortured thing he brought
a dirty kennel. Sir sure by a Aryan,
with strength and the hunt of life in its crackled face.
Well wipe it Sir, and nail it to your wall
the fit place for its skill, a certain skill,
I know Sir you do rightly disallow
the Leaders as no craft for eager men
would let the lonebred women play with it
in the long long waiting for the child.
But here in this there's something speaks to me,
the cruelty and strength. Your weary eyes
weary from statecraft cares, may find a peace
and after peace him once again to mastery
with the sharp vision.

A groaning servant pleaded,
I pushed him back - and hurried up the stairs.
The doors was bolted. I could hear inside
the tiny dictator storm and shout like mad.
A boot and shoulder broke the gilded lock.
He crouch and cried, Sir left to swaying legs.
I grid and missed. A picture tumbled down
I must have cut the cord with wicket-
and hit him on the head. It was a scream:
the silly bugger rubbing his battered skull
and cursing and crying and begging for a chance
to cut and run. The orders were of course
to bring him in for trial. He tried to escape.
I had to shoot him. and I am not sorry
for I remembered John and the way they left him
and you yourself have bitter memories..
A trial might have been better. Still it's over...
I took the picture home as a souvenir
It ought to go by rights to the gallery
with large appropriate label under it
The Subject? Labour caught - the cleft stick
"The Worker strives for mastery!"

In this suspended life
this stationary gloom
the statue with the knife
the silence in the room . .

Who shall be first to speak
who first to stir and yawn
for til you are awake
there is no chance of dawn .

—

X

What things will bear my thinking on
yet leave me gay and proud?
Ashamed at foolishness begun
to catch the gaping crowd –

the flashy word, the posture tried,
the hurt face turned away
the merry lie, the man denied,
the mean content of day;

those seldom spoken vanities
that work upon my walk
the dream of faces round my knees
that sway the way I talk

the sense of power to heal and show
in succour I am strong
master by the ear that seeks to know

a songbird by its song

the fumbling craft exposed beside
the lines that lead and live
the effort harasses the tide
in one mind's ~~rumble~~ dribbled rhyme

Yet this I claim for what it's worth
and that's enough to save
the laughing heart I got at birth
until I reach my grave:

a face to love a life to share
the chance and change of day
that - with a stanza here and there
will keep me proud and gay.

X

I loved the seasons, sought in each
recurring metaphors for speech,
was wise with frost and midge and bird
finding their safe prediction good.

But for myself, the tiring mind
the eye with repetition blind,
the dulling touch, the fading sense
betraying my high eloquence
I have no wisdom, dare not say
where I may be on such a day
or such a year when swift and midge
shall exercise their privilege.

And till from salt and stone and tree
that richer knowledge come to me
the secret of that mystery
break bright and sudden on the brain

I must abide th' uncertain pain
the doubt surprised, the freckled stings,
the carpet lunacy of things,
of having a philosophy
and watching it go slipping by.

—

22nd April

I have no ghosts. My dead do not exist.
my grandfather reading the paper, my grandmother
fumbling in cupboards, John with his bag of clubs
standing idly his left hand licked by the dog
or walking rapidly talking of Mark Twain.

These are flat images flickering in the mind
with focus narrowing widening nearly lost.
They are not repeating these acts on another plane
and when they did them they were not shadows of things
but suffering creatures moving with joy and pain
They survive now only in the brittle thoughts
of a dwindling group of people. If I could
gather the scattered colours and shapes and words
and make a mannikin of them and name it John
there wouldn't be much of him then, who in one breath
was far more living than any man I know.
took a sharper shape

The winter evenings reading and asking questions

while my grandfather stroked his tasseled cap
and dealt with the matter, had surely spun a cable
of contact on no merely physical level.
I knew his mind and mocked him and loved him well:
he knew my rash opinions and jeered at them.

Yet he is dead, and has not spoken to me
or even shifted a glass of water on a table.
I even forget the particular sounds of his voice.

Died first the senses active, dying again
the senses in memory, touch and hearing are gone:
only a listless eye remembers his face

2814

Shall these quaint symbols of our manners tonight
the sculptured head naive, the lighted sphere,
the formal landskip to perfection wrought,
the supercilious portrait of a sneer,
the abstract rug, the undecorated chair
survive to mock us, casting thro an age
of shouting streets and cheap economy
or shattered by a gale of fascist rage
be broken shards of bitter memory?

Having survived
the pulpit angers of flashcheeked men
hells threat nomercy save the broken will
fluted to God's sweet tenor in a shirt

and the precarious courtesies of kings
starchamber nether killeting of wrong
the insolent lord
the small squires croft and meadow
the fisted shout
we slant slowly now
down the log rails and concrete
naked to
the interim report, the experts lie
and the ambiguous average.

4th Sonnet:

The third spring now leaps sunward into leaf
lake with the melted snow, delayed by frost
that shred across the landskip of our grief
with flooded slate so hardly to be crossed.

On this green crest we stand to see once more
new summer reaching garths of rich increase
the full flowers vigor and the bursting core
slow with the gestures of a harvest peace;

and all that wealth glimpst, that rejoicing gain
looked to a piercing sweetness by the threat
not of conceivable incidence of pain
to limit or break this ache of regret
but from stark risk in what man's folly's made,
the warning siren and the hand grenade.

Betrays a moment into petulance
at skill misjudged, at ignorance of work
let comfort come in reassuring glance
at twig or blossom of maturing earth.

The apple tree goes this predicted scope
repeated the colours of its destiny:
no implications of fatalistic hope
can urge or rein the nature of a tree.

The oak has come before the ash
let man's old knowledge prove us sure
The Tray is tumbled stone and ash
the' insurgent nettles still endure

and the our world of work and grace
be broken in a flail of flame
still a the shell packt marketplace
the cuckoo'll come to call his name

Chrysanthemums against the threat of death,
dress a evening in the failing light
a crumbling cliff's reward to shortened breath
with the remembered dignity of sight.

Here no reckoning thrust for permanence
the artist makes his sleep with to attain —
what's poetry but a word across the fence
of gladioli on the chance of rain.

Stiff in the untried vesture I
make conflict with the screaming flesh
salt in the tides of time

find comfort in an espalier christ
nailed rusting to a wall
the ivy thrusts apart

spring sap's resurgence shakes
his delicate blossom body in the wind
to be junked solid later.

Let this stung innocence die
and drain to cider

Give me circumstance that will avoid
the tumbled apple's bruise.

12th June.

X

This then my country, not parliament,
but boulder stiele, cragging harsh and bare,
not the round bellied meadow indolent
or the lead gestes of the loving share.

My stock, if lead's a measure, otherwise
legged ample acres, lent with sage growth;
cockeye for manifest of the skies
and by the compost thrusting made their oath.

But by the westward gust were plucked a flump
across two waters to another ground,
there set about familiar tasks of dump
and furrow till the flaw again was found.

Lettered on page the way they came and went,
my restless fathers, tapes a tidal curve,
the shapes of history, rise or fall percent

remarks the motive for the leap or swerve:

no then was not such, but decision made;
a man upon a gate or by a fire,
tired of his ailing father or his trade
or {lost for the white} limbs of his desire.
{eager for the}

So back and forth until the growing thing
that rooted us to earth's juice pumping flow,
the hidden light that swells the loins with spring,
and warmed the chill hearts thro' th' untrodden snow,

the growing thing was shattered, broken clean.
There is no seed or croft to know my hand.
No sod responds. Thought-wanders stare & lean
across the white as leather of my land.

Tho a thing be proven and true
and the colors familiarly worn
yet a man must adventure the new
for the sake of a hope unborn

The colors came expectedly, the whin
blazing in Antrim hawthorn Juschia broom
flagging their arrogant joys and trailing by
til Down no more was a sheaf of bundled stories
of Patrie and de Courcy but delight's
surprise of scent and betrayal of reason
so gay they lifted the troubled mind above
the rape of justice and Guernica's flame.

I cursed awhile my contradicting thought
the heart divided and allegiance split
roared loud for succor instant to be brought
and moaned no louder for the lack of it

But always gaping for the fissured stride
expectant half at ease and half in dread
the weary body of my thought divide
one leaf to life a husk the other dead.

It was not so. Alternate voices heard
the one I wanted harsh not tutored yet
the lyric note that lilts of bird
defying my entreaty to forget

X Hay. 2715.

Already summer crested, the decline
the surf of blossom fails, the high green tide
hangs lulled at full. The sullen midnights' line
of silver light - has its precarious hour
a weariness now drowses on the flower
that into seed and apple has not died

The swallows that were urgent in the eaves
turn wing less deftly. Now shall I cease to see
untutored fledglings flusters in the leaves.
only the hay cut wet and laid in rows
achieves that rich and aromatic close
the least demands for all mortality.

My rash mind humbled sadly into sense
sets flares of warning up when ear or eye
prompts thought or gesture of magnificence
in answer to the humor of the sky
or matches shame with colored prolixity.

Rebuke accepted I more circumspect
walk in the light of ages grave and wise
allowance made for each assured defect
aware my witness for the most part lies
and all my acts conditional replies.

Yet in the gaps between my studied thought
a duster, maybe, drying on a line
or lamp's blind shadow for an instant caught
unleashes phrase or jeer not wholly mine
that wakes me to an older discipline.

Reciprocity

28th.

Greeting a man familiar at his task
drill furrow, ditch redug or broken earth
I make the sound determined by my mask
& match the sound dictated by his birth

Yet He knows my motion gauging thence
the hour and moment of the passing day
now sorted safe in his experience
and with his weather wisdom laid away

He does not know how much I must depend
for the fresh reassurance of my breath
on all the worked rites he must attend
that use and beauty may survive my death.

[no poems in July]

1st August

51

Cuckoo-Spit

I plucked a green stem with a globe of froth
and ran to ask my grandmother its name.
Throw it away child. That is Cuckoospit...
I'd heard the cuckoo in the tangled grass
behind the house but had not seen him fly.
I wondered how his spit fell from the sky.
and why on grass? Why not on stone or tree,
or flat flat passing or a honey's nose?

I can remember wondering .. the place
a white dust road near where I first had seen
a nest with scaldies... and so long ago
my grandmother is dead my mother grey.

walking a grass today I remember it.

X

3rd August

Dawn at Longfall.

I shall indeed remember such a dawn:
the rent cloud glowing in three separate wounds
the grey light slowly smoking over the dew
birds just awing awake surprised began
their melody increasing with the light
til, eerstes leyht, it was too loud to hear:
the new wind woken also in the reeds
stirring for passage taking sudden flight
and shaking trees against the hidden sky
til life resumed and sun and song involved
the secret spider and the field of corn.

3rd August.

X

Slate

The scratcht slate dial by no sledow markt
with date and name of sober eloquence
William M'Adam 1826 . . .
Slate easily broken, scord a crusht to dust
by tanner keel wheel or a falling brick
keeps dry a million houses street by street
skins leaf by leaf a land for eager just
lies now on cubboard top the sun with off

How slate more wisely used than its last purpose
presents forgotten strength and grace of face.

3rd.

The joint the flint the ammonite
the fecten crystal and the quern
these please and tease the restless sight
while fancy meticles shape in turn.

Out, scattered here they still endure
the incidence of frost and rain
each in its shape a strength secure
from love's erosion, file of pain

Of forms that flowered when earth grew cool
and blossomed — fantastic grace
the crystal still is beautiful
the flint can show a lovely face.

Things laid down as life went on
by quiet creatures in the dark
the ammonites the merry son

The fecten is the patriarch.

When men found will to master need
and gnaped the sky and springs relent
they prayed to God, they sowed the seed,
they left a joint, they left a quern

And we for all our boasted pride
our insolence of hand & eye
what shape of ours shall still abide
to indifferent favours of the sky.

3-4th Aug

Dreaming of Edward Thomas' Wiltshireman
who loved the hills since the 'ickneild way began
and kind it naming barrow lane ad brook
with cider speed not drawn from any book
tho Jane caught me that in autumn lane
some such brown fellow was the traveller
who raised a hast & ong left the word
apt as sinister comment of a bird,
who standing gaping mid the whirr of spring
first called the circled mound the Giants' Ring
ad where three roads met, turning at a bow
fa his direction, muttered "Headless Cross",
ad ohen a horseman splashed him once again
tho remarked "This is the Trodden Lane
and after as he sheathed his bloody sword
said "No name better now the Slaughterford"
and as I guess when outwith dykegun + pike
two hundred years ahead, behind a dyke
crouching, to watch the Yeomen fling a rope
over a high limb near the quarry slope
whereon tho beside him a the corn
"That fairy thorn is now the Hanging thorn";
and seeing justice done & Lete enthroned
despite the brave hearts that would have stood
he turned his back on me ad strode away
down that road left he called the Greyhams' Path

Inserted in "Red Hand"

9th day

A man should dig a little square of ground
once in a twelvemonth that his senses hold
wherever his calling or his ~~scope~~ craft be found
the comfortable excellence of mould.

The touch of cloths of rich magnificence
is most when fingers know not the caress
of black earth pouring. By this reference
the removed hand can measure qualities.

The nostrils catch the rancours of decay
that trembles the taffet & vigors new.
The clouded eye resolves the colors clay
keeps native, and the travels' barren hue.

All senses joys. The earth can close again
but on green garment but the men will know
its hands are out to catch the drifted rain,
to break its hail, or liquidate the snow:

and in good time when he is tired and old
will rock him safe from pity or desire
No man who goes remembering the mould
can yield to lure of grace or fears of fire.

X

9th Aug

I went my way

the warm rain in my face
beaded my lashes, sat upon my brow
too soft to thin into the dun ground
turned grey to darker grey the dusty path
and shone upon the stones
Then ceast.

The clouded clouds drew back.

Then took
reconsidered.

And in steady wave on wave
the great heat came, the heat that throbs the ears
with jungle thunder and the sound of drums.

The whole earth's head to the feathery rain
and took him as that girl the shower of gold
and lay full seeded, warm, and wellcontent,
Then with great sighing to the kissing heat
gave back in mist what had been taken in rain

breathed in her lover's gentleness and strength
and now exhaled new vigors of her own.

The heat touched depths the rain had barely reached
and swept back heavy with new qualities
like the full glory of an answering chord
or the alternation of a well charged rune.

X

Sitting

Remembering smells and scents of ledge and house
the currant bush at dewfall, or the thorn,
the long cornfields in June, the smell of apples,
the warm wind heavy with hay and sunburnt rush,
rain on my coat, cut grass, and chisled teak,
the gritty air of the metro, and french tobacco,
the friendly pipesmoke in the bookstacked room,
the drugstore fresh in the Athenian august,
the vague unpleasant fug, the shopgirl's scent,
the tang of nansweat and the milk gone sour.
I remember them with apocryphal knight for each
yet each is personal to me. I am not sure
of beans in June near Rathlin or many skies
or seatrack drifting Kat long crooked street
or the smell of Corken Kat a pub beside the docks
~~Kan as for brief his minutes long app~~

~~Yet one shall not be elemental to all.~~

63

I know in my mind it sets no thought away
that is not lost soon in a quiet awareness
of growth and lushness and fecundity
of rich decay and riven strife to life

O Joy of steaming dung in trong gold heat
wreath in the sun to arabesques beyond
the stinted gesture of my sensebound wit.

9th Aug

Stopt at a crossing by a horse and hearse
I fretted at this insolence of death
this morning passage staid my unpatheatic
but I who stood last was next to curse.

and with me gathered by the damned slow
more restless fretting for their little cares
caught on the kerb protested, unaware
they hoisted up their naked selves for show.

Frisk, trembled by diversion from desire,
the parcel to deliver, hat to buy,
the friend to meet, the meal left hurriedly
for larger aim; the chair beside the fire.

Yet what most stirs the tender impotent
to harsh remonder even thrust aside
by trivial aims triviality denied
at was left bare, of death's last gapped event.

9th Aug

Of gentle things the thought
too often is denied
a cobweb caught
is knocked aside:

and only stars with dew
we see the spiders' house
each time as new
rebuke for us:

The mind intent a need
walks wisely in the sun
the winged seed
spins and is gone.

I'll trade before I'm done
my dreamd Jerusalem
for stitchwort on
its hairspring stem.

10th Aug

X

Atomy.

I know my reckless hand with bitten nails
chapped
straight with red blains & callous on the palm
is shape of shadow and a chance result
of whirling charges and countercharges of death
The tree I see
sucked the mud
is what has happened when sun struck the ground
the grass blade a device for making green
out of the colourless air
But that yon hill, the hill I always remember
when there are no hills
hill I have walked on, walked in haze of heat,
with the first whin & with the whin in spring
~~on heathery or chalky cold with snow~~ —
— but that yon hill is a precarious leaf
of small electric forms the mind rejects
and shies in its myriad galaxies of chance
I must deny.

So I am observant

67

~~and minded like a loaded diode of rae~~
~~I laugh at science Keek to your theories.~~
for me the truest thing is that old hill,
was there before I whimpered and will be
long after my name is scatted from the stone.

I met a man once at the Chapel Brae
who said to my romantic rhetoric
I only see there hills these ancient hills . . .

1014

That rain & heat with no bodies for their forms
should have the magic to shake the plastic earth
into a hawthorn or rose is a miracle

I marvel at the apple reddening, growing,
turning a rounder side to the beckoning sun,
life in it working its way self justified;
but the secret lies in the bud as beyond my grasp:

just the flat flanks of the pod, then the swelling out;
then the long bud heavy on the nervous stem;
the secret lies in the bud growing there unseen.

The curled child in the womb is no fuller of terror

I saw the stars for the first time tonight
since windy April shook them in a tree.
In May intent upon the thickening leaves,
in June's light nights of smoke & merry talk
and bed at daybreak, and in Sept July
with handfuls of kisses they were forgotten:
but now the Plow, the Wain, Orion's Belt,
stab their sharp splinters in the eager eyes,
and drive the wise perspectives to the heart,
of earth's end & the destinies of man:
the angry moment takes its trivial place
unseen, working in the galaxies;
& the small man annoyed & fierce
mixt with the smoke of kingdoms disappears

What rises up against a teeming sky
but the gay carol & the clear brave song?
Let what I say be counterpointed with
starlight, as bright if the words be true.

A Group of Audenesques.

I

To love the physician
insists on division.
The hand is steady
that makes the incision
and love is ready
the song being ended
to leave it so.
Let news then offended
in bitterness go.

II

The song being ended
with stride of dark
along the white arc
whence the music descended
in silence we turn

too sorry to learn
that the silence after
is part of the song.

III

O Love is the task
from self to other
for two is awake
where one is asleep
with father or mother
the task is not made:
in silence we stand,
in silence afraid
unable to touch
more than the hand
that exile is such.

But love to lovers
or mother

to child
the harsh divisions
reconciled.

IV

From me to you
as time to time
no act can make
the jay heart break
for each is known
to manners of bone
and least of kind
has nothing kind.

Nor you to me
unfaithful be.
Identity
has made no one
who has been two

for I with you
in slant of sun
one shadow throw

And love shall prove
that love is love
whatever else
the lewd lip spells.

1315

5lk

Sonnet

I saw the stars above my apple tree
familiar constellations rich in name
cold steady hearts not restless hearts of flame
but cool in their remote austerity;
the dismal traffic of man's policy,
of children crops, the script of Britain's shame
seemed the solid flimsy counters of a game
and all was well between the stars and me

Tho you were far, asleep or not asleep,
beneath a roof I know not, in a place
I have not yet made mine by right of step
I knew the lettered future still would keep
our hearts secure, our love its steady grace.
The stars assent. Who then can work us woe?

1411

Triolet.

I'll dig awhile in the garden
then afterwards take a walk

By no one's leave or pardon
I'll dig awhile in the garden.

Before my arteries harden
I'll weed that cursed path ——
I'll dig awhile in the garden
then take a beautiful walk

+

10th August

After a week of weary sun on dust,
the green drained from its stiff unpainted stem,
the coat unbuttoned, and the sunburnt skin,
the privet hedge, and the shadowed walk,
I woke this morning to a world of wind,
hearing it first, then sighted in the curtains
slamming a door unused, prancing in:

without went glad, cool face uplifted happy,
breath cleaner deeper and new ecstacy
a cloud cartwheeling and the flowing grasses
combed, lovely all flowers lively and awake.

Thought put a hyphen to surprise itself
I said "This is the spring come back again"
all time's a lie I am not grown so old.
I can recapture joy with this marigold
Kate's riches new color with the fresh(ness of its) wind

and has gone back to beauty from withering
and light step lifted let the thought pervade
my heart's old load of trouble.

Even so
the leaves have a dry rustle in this wind.

Down Eminence

I stood upon a little hill in Down
with August poised upon its mellow prime;
the passing shower had left me in the sun,
but thrown cool scarves of shade on other hills,
from Castlewellan with its fence of spires
along the sharp edge to the crest of Croob.
The cotton clouds were billowed sails and bales,
with blue's whole range bowland him in light
The landskip spelt its colour pattern out;
the grazing parkt with moving cattle black
and brown, the rich potato rips of green,
the lighter corn with squares of cherlock gold,
the grey stone hedges, lines of dark trees,
the gash of quarry with its clay red wound,
and caught between green slopes the little lough
{ Longisland Lough Island reevey blue as the bit of the sky,
with one white house against a narrow field,
the new stacks thatcht but hardly weathered yet,

and gulls that rose and settled with slow cry
on the low marish places to the right,
and one rook cruising in the middle air.

I lost the ache of self, my heart gone out
into the shapes among the dykes of stone,
the gulls wing, pecking at the horses' feet.
I was in all and yet included all
that arc and span of earth was but projected
from the staid images within my mind
– like God on chaos dreaming forth a world –
It had not been before me and world end
when my will wisht. I could control its end.
Then as I stood a cry from one behind,
emerging from the sanctuaries' cool gloom,
smote sudden frenzy on my lulling sense
– Here by this hill, well walkt from raging beast,
one hunted gasping with the terrible word
of Patrick hailed with his murdered God
to north here by the green mouth of the Quoyle.
Why must another God break in my dream?

Across the misted fields the air was cold
Autumn was on us with his weary stride
since yesterday the world was tired and old
at open gate I stood awhile and sighed

Older a year, approaching thirty now,
soon man mature, too soon the crest of prime,
then the white hair thrust backward from the brow
while the stiff fingers fumble with a rime:

the gnawing of the heart at hope's delay,
the skill misjudged, the eloquence gone stale,
the dull procession of the common day,
the building of the dream a safer scale;

a son or daughter to misunderstand
to break the heart for either; both are vain:
not mine the hand to guide a child; my hand
that knows no other discipline than pain:

the talking from us of each cherished friend,
the wisdom flown and courage each had meant;
the boring story yawned at ere its end
by youth's compelled attention evident;

the slatted fabric of the wrinkled slate
lurched down upon the ocean waters of despair:
just bugle notes of blessing heard too late
when I am bitter and no longer care

There will be you: in that the strength I'll have
must warm its fists at: hoarding every flame,
and in return I offer you a grave
where chiselled letters link us name by name.

Yet that a man can heal the gap of self
and in another's senses find release,
despite the dusty binding on the shelf,
achieves a peace beyond the poets' cold fleece.

1915

X

Mourne Mountains

But these are not my hills: they are too high
They have not been since ice slipt slowly over
about them face beneath the sky.
They are too harsh for me to be their lover.

The broad stone winking with the flattened stream,
the sheer place barren, and the tireless peak,
not even stark against the sun's last gleam
can I find comfort in them I may speak:

for they are from a world beyond my reach
not the warm human world of broken earth,
the gathered flints along the raised beach,
the druids' altar, and the baked clay hearth.

I do not fear a bare land but a high
the curlew screaming moors have no affright,
the bogbrown huntsman thrusting hurriedly
can flash no terror in the blackest night.

But the cold summit carried by the rain
smothered by cloud or bannered fair with snow
has all the high sublimities of pain
I leave for braver hearts than mine to know.

Skeffers

1914

A man walks here attended by his dog
walks slowly with slow words of quiet ape:
not me from Hilltown to the Grassey Bog
lets foolish heart flap cockerel in rape.

I have seen men at fair to sell and buy.
I think now of a little crowd of men
about a horse and shouting angrily
just closed upon luckpenny arbitrage.

And as the air was raw with scuds of hail
and the brown road was streaming mud & dung
these men were warmed with anger than with ale
and spoke their coarse minds out with bitter tongue.

Eager to walk and fearing lest a blow
should call the first a stick to make reply
I mused a breast a loved a lip of toe
bonnie as shape of life or twitch of eye.

Yet gaping out beyond the thrusting crowd
I saw a slow man move with heavy feet,
turn ulster back some green, as slow as proud
he led his dog unheeding cross the street.

1914

Vale

O let me not leave life
selfconsciously
as schoolboy kisses mother in the train
his round face
fat with chocolate and advice:

but rather
as a dog with tail away
alert and eager
for more remarkable lamps.

X

Ode

Sing on and climb the sky with ropes of gold
threads
O skylark sing. Lift up my troubled heart.
soar
You are not mortal. I grow slow and old
Your theme is ageless. ~~I am growing old~~

2 Here few renewing days glut sense with sound
That when I seek the cold home underground
Tho' color dies the song will not depart —
But fool! Too well I know
The song goes with the color. All must go.

But let me brood not on those songless days
when ever the thin rain rilling down the stone
the blind shakes that traffic moved's cold,
~~a thousand-stitched creature threading racked~~ maze
are
so heard not passing. Let me rather ~~taste~~ turn
to the trill rifling sky, and eager learn
all beak and feather teach to blood and bone
so that in ripeness I
~~accept~~ composedly accept my oaken sky.

When I am dead your song will still be heard
in this light immortality you move
Not you or you who in this springgale dared
the spinning skyscape, but the ideal who
sang clear for Shelley in the Italian blue
and last year on this hill alone I love
made of that day a song
~~sorrow~~
outlasting autumn's ~~grief and~~ winter's woe.

High in your flight I lose the day of time
an timeless with you wear one of ~~joy~~
Rome is not built, Dan Chaucer rakes no rime,
creation glitters new and clean in leaf,
secure above the coiling winds of grief
no feather vext with pity or thought of Troy
nor need for lest maid dealt
a shrewd heart be made with poisoned breath

Yet not secure. The frail human wit
can soar but briefly and ere you descend

the clash of finite as of infinite
hurls me aghast the upward rushing earth.
Back then to the small hope my narrow heart
finds home as fire for us a cherished friend
for now mortality
bares talon and rears pinion over me.

I hear the song but faintly now and far
It leaves me as I go, (the echoes fail
the cadence fail);
that pulsing ounce of feathers is no more
to fill the skies forever & then please.
The grace that passes is the more grace?
Not so. The shrillest memory grows stale:
even the charitable mould
chokes the creaset lying lips, the thick tongues that scold.

Peerless am I. No rival speeds and bright
arrows of music at the heart of death;
No other bird. But the broken light
long silence over. Troubled and alone,
I trip a bracken, strike blind foot a stone,
lash eye a cobweb, catch a frightened breath;
then by worn pathways come
down the hushed hillside to familiar home.

1914

Lost Music

While song of bird persists I am content
but in the silence after I am vext
that the high word of joy its magic meant
seems but the gray print of a faded text.

Then sorrow comes, and, twinning it, despair
that the song ended is forever gone,
and never more across the mist scarred air
twittering prelude shall break the babbling rapture of the dawn.

Suppose the skylark like the auk should die,
like kiwi's shrivelled wing lose strength of song

and ignorant men survive to praise the cry
of owl or gull in harsh unfathered tongue?

And in that dreamed-of flight my desolate heart
has pities them amid my fits of rage
that life grows fonder in its gentler part
despite the voiced vaunted achievements of the age.

Then sudden fancy that for all I know
the songs I hear are but diminish'd cries
and that my dark word sound but as the crow
to one who lived before the years of ice!

1915

Autumnal

'Tis early dark. The lamps are lit.
A cold wind stirs the thinning trees.
Here in this lonely gloom I sit
and nurse stale philosophies

how autumn counts its labored store,
and winter's broom but clears the way
for spring's insurgent green once more,
and sunshine of a summer day.

My wit insists the truth of this,
would warm my heart grudge no salute
to the tiny egg, the chrysalis,
the seed within the fallen fruit.

But heart remembers spring by spring,
the promise broken or deferred,
the early-less exciting wing,
the dawdling joy of bud and bird.

Each year's a death. I grieve to see
the acceleration of the cold;
the leaves but touch the shivering tree
with a green light and I am old.

1914

X Wind from the Orchards

West southwest a strong wind is flowing
I sniff and lose and sniff again.
Over the land of my fathers blowing,
it caught the sweetness of fruit as rain

O friendly wind I have not forgotten
the shape of apple, the color of plum
they lie in the orchards bruised and rotten
while children are hungry and I am dumb.

Turn again that broken forever
grim in the earth their bones are laid
tell them I stand on the harsh endeavor
that the skill they had shall not be betrayed

—

1914.

Excluded Items.

I give my thought and find my thought again
in green and gold of passing season's pride
yet all the while I am dissatisfied
with gentle disgressions on the rain
or leaden massing on the mountainside

for when the ~~symbol~~ core imagination ~~core~~ fancy bares
the thought and object both are reconciled
I find no phrase wherein the fancy's picture's fold
of crumpled canton on the café stairs,
or sallow woman by with her fifth child.

Absence

Not since the first day that we lit our fire
in the new warden of the room we planned
and for the bare ruins of our desire
descried the prospect of our promist land
have we so long been parted.

I have gone
thrice over water on my careful trade
and thrice have stood to see the naked dawn
break on the hills we love and there have made
the dedication of myself anew
to this my native ground of smoke and tree
and to the shape of life I share with you,
comrade and comfort of my urgency.

Last night, tonight tomorrow still apart
but not between me beats a sundering flood
this stormy moon dalerocket from lonely heart
to lonely heart still tides the mingled blood.

The moon's bright ring of green and gold;
one star below a bank of cloud:
I shall remember who I old.
Remembering I shall be proud

that when storm rockt the harvest care,
and threatend flood on the land,
I took my harvest from the air
and bestackt my corn with merry hand.

Now that the flooding sea is gone
and I have combed with care the drifted wrack
for little shells your eye may brighten on
I wonder will that flow come back
The long withdrawal of the ebbing tide
has moaned such desolation in my heart
I dread to trudge this barren strand
with tedious peering eye
and vainly scrabbling hand
till in a miser's poverty I die

I should be satisfied
once having found some grain the ocean brought
in laboring afar
til each shake bears the signature of Henry Lee
that marks them surely mine
and leave them set
and canvas free

in crystal cabinet.

But for that delicate task
that tortured artistry I do not ask
rather I am content once having known
the talked crust upon the pitted bone
to gently abide
the slow invasion of the tide
the patience and generosity
of the repetitive sea.

No word will come
the ebb is here
gasping I lie and dumb
in a strange atmosphere

Yet patiently
I must remain
til the unhurrying sea
brings life home again.

22nd

Here for a sunday moment rest-
-ored harried mind no more possest-
-ed flight of days or of years
but soothed by the cool drift of rain
well comforted by hum of bees
and wind in orchestrated trees.

—

22nd

People are too noisy and too loud
they tear across my listening
with chatter, ~~catcall~~ or raucous salutation
sometimes they sing.

I have painfully to become adjusted
anew each time
to the ~~fly~~ bluebottle in the geranium
and the bees under the lime.

/

X

2 3rd

Let peace be on me with a soothing hand
here at the high noon and the prime of day
let no hurt creature cry across the land
but restful dreaming pass above his prey.

Let not my drowsy fancy move beyond
the sparrow in the ivy spilling rain
the meadowsweet nesting above the pond
the glittering apples in the sunlit lane.

Be still unresting murmur of the sea
or for unbidding on the streamlet flow
I must not break from my still revelry
until some thundering bee shall rock this rose.

31st 103

First Draft for an Elegy

Let me make my amends
Tumilson Laughran Beattie and O'neill
men from this town who died for liberty
not Irish liberty, or the freedom of
familiar hills, our task is rich in such
our future big with exploit and event
but the liberty of people everywhere.

These died in Spain.

Madrid forever is a sacred name
madrid forever

I have sat here, have written careful verses
I have spoken at meetings shouting thro the smoke
I have sat here thinking of madrid

-and while I sat there men were standing to

crawling on stones or choking in the dust
thirsty bearded prostrate sweating wounded
lying in the charge quiet in surprise attack
loading and firing marching waiting weary

I did not know any of them. I cannot remember
if I have spoken many of them.

Perhaps
O'Neill sat near me on a crowded tram
or Langhan stood nearby at a football match,
or Tumilson sold me papers at a meeting
maybe I slept and asked a light from Beattie
may the future forge me a touchstone for knowing heroes.

more likely if there'd been much bravery
in my mind and heart the courage in them had leapt
into a sudden flame and made me aware

So I sit here and write pedantic verses
while four men are dead for liberty in Spain
who must have held shoulders with me or shouted with me

I shall never think of liberty or Spain
without a thought of Tumilson or Beattie
O'Neill and Langhan. and in weak moments
I shall call their names aloud when talk is eager
and surely remember them till I too am dead

Reading the Poets

31st

I read one man and I said
this does not try my thoughts.
The shade of the woods is dead
No wisp of the sun is caught.

I read another man
I said: These thoughts are his.
The craggy road he ran
Left not my villages.

I took another book
and knew the age like
more naked without a cloak
Of the stride of my belief.

—

Poems in September

1st

The golfers are approaching the final tee
The set is nearly finished. the stumps are drawn
next year perhaps or next year
we shall strike our form, be at our best

Yet maybe the Yorkers
a man in Woodstock locketed his dice
and went home for his gun.

/

The Lane

q 1k.

The house was curtained neat, the hedges clipt,
the byres and barns bright white against the sun,
commended in our passing down the lane —
Good careful folk live there, wise thrifty folk;
but not the niggard thrift of the slow peasant. —

Then down the lane, nettles on either side,
the long docks near them, poison and antidote,
the tufted knapweed and the boggy grass;
cool lane that holds a narrow spire of snow
when the hills bare open and the wet trees black.
The lane grows slavy, squelches to a stream,
with little clouds of mud in the deeper parts
we rouse in passing. Not one stepping stone.
The water running out of the tangled grass
into the tangled grass, with the smudge of oil
blue at its roots; uncertain of direction,
half following the path, half counter to it,
veering at ruts and lying shallow pools
in trampled places: for the lane goes down
to ford the brook above the waterfall;
now foaming stream against ice-polisht rocks;
to left, the cleft props make in, to the right,
the hiss and uproar of the waterfall

I like the lane because I remember the snow,
remember the props, and a drop that spluttered across.
It is like it enough to love it if it were dry,
but the care of stepping, the attentive eye
fixt on the feet distracts the free mind's joy
from richer matters of wonder and scathe.
So I walk in silence next, till safe on stone
I scrape the worst mud off, and turn back
why didn't they do something about the lane.

Mirror

I am the mirror I remember all
all I have seen lies buried drowned in me
caught rigid like the shells and colored stones
and only stirring into movement when
light ruffles at my surface into features
then for awhile the hands and tentacles
spire, flick and shake before collapsing back
into the timeless colors (images of depth) image of my depths.

The calm man with disaster at twelve o'clock
carefully knots his tie with unconscious twist
the anxious bride arranges her negligée,
the singing woman brushes sparks from her hair
older will strain her face for streaks of grey,
the lobby child exploring squashes nose
against the coolest surface in his world,
the young man passing catches a graven mouth,
the old man glimpses a face (chin) forgotten for years....
I am the mirror. I have not forgotten.

Tuan

I'd read but late of the pagan who never died
but ran from shape to shape unsatisfied
outliving it' adventurous kings with whom he came
to give this westernmost island a friendly name
I'd wondered too often some draughty union ward
a floating trunk remembered a shield and a sword
and sung got scared looks, hard words and mockery
for each torn tattered rag of golden memory.

So when the next bearded beggar hammered my door
the leaping and curving shakes of the stag and the boar
the hawk and the salmon's steady poise and fall
were well within my fancy's beck and call.
His demanding arrogant mien and his insolent talk
were harsh with the prosaic memories of the hawk
and while I gaped in silence at him there
the frozen eyes of the salmon returned my dreaming stare
but I gave him a bite and a bit for his bag
because of the lonely grace of the nervous stag

Sonnet ✱ / The Descent

We slipt and slithered down the treethick hill
caught branch that snappt, was light, a cast away,
set heel on withered leaf secure in clay
that sledded us precipitate until
hand grasspt a tussock on a rocky sill
and we dropt heights we would not dare in day
groping with face twig whippt in leaf dark clay
dislodged a stone that bounded and was still

With bleeding shins, tired nerves wrenckt in fright
hands out and sliding with the uncertain moss
we thrust thro the last thicket and were free

Then safe on grass we {marvelled at / turned to scan} the height
when sudden from the treetops beat across
the shining sky — a heron leisurely.
A leisured heron in the cloudless sky

—

There was a time a man might shape his days
into an arabesque of excellence
include the skill of gesture and the phrase
and take no thought for war's impertinence
Let Europe thunder with a people free
or men be kings or be no longer kings
they did not vex the lonely quality
of his remote and wise imaginings
But this I fly the dark and shrieking street
and face a quiet acre of delight
the bomber's shadow furrows at my feet
or breaks the surface of my careful night.

The war is on and till all bugles cease
I shall not dare to make a separate peace.

—

✓

mocked by the petting thought of permanence
the sick desire to leave a shape or sound
that will survive when I am ordered hence
and just cold comfort bedded underground
-and how whatever I leave is left to chance
event of bomb or gradual decay
a fascist shock or the gay advance
of lefty people and a vivid day

Yet knowing hope a frail and brittle thing
I set my skill against what things abide
the brooding mountain and recurring spring
-and need no more to my urgent pride
save in the scores across my windowpane
of the transitory diamond of the rain

—

To Freud's Analysis

Walking in spring with careful tread
across a meadow lush and green
ringed round with ash trees, pollarded
and curving valleys in between

You and a friend and I were there
what words we spoke I do not know
remembering that lightblue air
and those piled pearly clouds of snow

Beyond our meadow stood a house
with tall elms branching leaf a rest-
a stakeproofed haystack remains
with long grass shooting from its crest.

. . . . . .

A sudden roar we stopt to see
a heavy plane from out the sun
grow large and larger steadily

its body bright vermilion

At once we three (two) (danger) flight and fall
split second, telegraphic
we shook wide sleeves with warning call
a goggled man leaned out and laughed.

What words we cried I do not know
I only know I was aware
of the red engine throbbing slow
ahead at the stiff claws in the air

The goggled laughing man withdrew
the shadow swept across our stride
we broke into a run but knew
we could not stay the suicide

The slow plane struck the topmost tree
as with inevitable aim
then tumbled, wreathed lazily

with no red sign of spurting flame.

When we were thirty yards away
a man climbed out unhelmeted
dressed in pajama suit of grey
with cuffs and epaulettes of red

I saw him carry in his hand
a shabby little leather case
I shouted out bid him stand
and speak his tongue and show his face

I ran and climbed through gap and vent
and found within the cockpit's dark
three writhing things malevolent
gross idiot infants lolling stark

Their heads were slanted, flat, and square
they gibbered with lewd gesturing
with warty lids and scabby hair

1912

Last Load

X.

Today we carted home the last brown sheaf
and hookt the scythe aginst the dry barn wall
the yellow borders on the chestnut leaf
the beech leafs yellow all.

Tomorrow we must bring the apples in,
they are as red as they shall ever be;
already birdlips eager to begin
have eaten {two or three / many a tree}
some tasted

and in the garden all the roses done
the sun slants gently where it once stray told
a withered goldenrod and snapdragon
and tarnisht marigold.

---

and arm like plucked and twitching wisp.

sick at the sight of embryo
like these that sprawled a shred & cried
I crost the ground like one who goes
to void his terror in the tide

I kept the track, that haunted place
and groveling at the babbling stream
saved the water in my face
the subtle texture of a dream

1914

Vigil

The restless day with changing skies is ended
with threatening cloud and streak of blue & gold
the task-work done indifferently attended
and fair skies glitter naked in the cold.

When the mind's bookkeeping journeying is over
to the safe haven fair adventure come
Here are about you head a breast of lovers
This is your place and here you are at home

2nd

2nd 121

In haste along the curving road
Kate skirts the little loch with care
just wakened to the morning air
we sat, the small car's silent crowd

and as we passed from bay to bay
and naked rock and kelpe and tide
the houseboat painted gaudily
the yacht already underway

we gasped surprise at swan and swan
sedate a golden wave and proud
for there was fifty in a crowd
and twenty floating further on.

The is a bobbing diving crew
the dunlin busy close to shore
til startled by the engine's roar

a redshank darted into view

But far from there upon a stone
a lonely heron dignified
surveyed the island hummocked tide
as tho' it were for him alone.

What those who sat in it no word say
I did not know. The thought of man
as here a dunlin redshank swan
delighted me 'til close of day

We crost the creaking bridge and took the lane,
a maze of threading streams just after rain
that ran their brown against the limestone's white,
and climbed the slow hill in the evening light.
The mounded wealth of whin, the hawthorn blaze
in scattered shower on lower branch and stone,
some trees new green, bright glittering in the air,
with stiff twigs budding slowly here and there
told of a late spring (slowly) beside the sea
where we (by-ass) with old familiarity
no longer heard the cuckoo well conceald
coy in the young corn of the narrow field.

At lane's sharp turn (turn) we caught a creek (cliff). Ten twenty yards away
we glimpst a farm dog well into a hollow
as stood to watch the darting curve of swallow
or flit of light dayed bat from mossy well.
The from the door a woman came to call

some creature by the cry she used to come
from the now darkling uplands safely home.

We reached her just as she a tottering lamb
black mouthed and bleating. "Poor thing lost in the
of the great snow last march ..... an orphan child
would bruise me one heart less!" the woman smiled
and picked her up. The little creature sucked
a big red finger

We knew the road must have been very deep
snow bad enough in town.

We had to keep
indoors for two whole days except for going
out to the front. When it had finished snowing
our first care was the sheep, and the to clear
a footway to the road. a fortnight near
before we could account for all the flock
we lost at least a dozen of the flock
a great brize randy ram and seven ewes

But William Todd beyond the Stonyfield knows
lost more nor that. And further back there were
right decent folk are round for many a year ...

Poems in October

Elegy

I passed a man today and suddenly remembered
the gist of years
I remembered his cousin Hugh Joyce
that red haired lad:
a natural cricketer, free hitting and full of strokes
and a good bowler
& his own way gifted
over the qualities of many.
A exhuberant lad
a raconteur stuff with conceit,
dead now these eight or nine years.

He never amounted to much
for all his natural talent
There's nothing left to remember him by
for his skill was in a most fleeting thing
His brothers have married and gone their ways

his mother died before him
his father walks with a younger wife
I can't think that he is missed.

And yet
Life seems a cockeyed performance —

a lad with an eye like a hawk
has a rod pressed into the socket now:
might have gone far, done much, been very happy
died unfulfilled at twenty of tuberculosis
might even have been a famous cricketer
and remembered for forty years —

What does it matter anyway?

Drumnasole

We found a rock beyond the touch of spray
and crouched to take in wonder at the fall.
The fernlons hiss shut out the day
so we were in a cave of pale green light
cold as a well.
Before, a dripping bay of fernsilled wall
down which there curled and fell
wide jets of yellow foam that broke in white
on mossy stones, and cupped in narrow ledge
staggered a yard and took a curving leak
into the heathrown pool a fathom deep
ruffle the boulder angled edge
with pink thrum bubbles like the pink of beer.
The troubled mind lulled quiet by the roar
lost present sense of memory and fear
till I forgot the load on generation bore

The Wayward Leaf.

I stood to watch the crumpled leaf's decline
the launch uncertain then the drift and fall
and pensive grew at this preposterous sign
sad at the sure mortality of all
that leads not on
despite the staying hand, the warning call

But cased with facts' immitigable flaw
him stirs to enjoy the leaves' last dance.
There is no
for sorrow lessens when we sense to know
How
all things are interwoven, safe from chance,
Heaven in Spain, this twig, ~~the~~ my petty's glance.

To launch this leaf, to spell the secret cause
why just this leaf should break at just this day
wound sum the whirling fabric of the laws
that keep the cruising comets on their lonely way
and bid some new revolt and some new pray.
Hasheme

become in comfort of philosophy
I watched the young bud thrust aside the leaf
thought of the hidden magic of the kiss
that sets Spring's promise joy against our grief
the frosted summer, and the tilted sheaf.

Then like a sparrowhawk into my sky
there moved a fancy with a shadowed wing
who knows who knows if this be not a lie
and only brief Spring her school Spring,
and now these reach, Earth's tilt work as such they?

This leaf falls unregarded meaningless
and in a crazy maze all matters move
insatable to banish or to bless
and unresponsive to our love or love;
in vain we vex us with the seas itself.

Sonnet ✓

Ulsterman Speaks

Far back the [starting] leaping Briton in fancy
the sallow Roman with his bannered host
the fair head plaited in the Saxon way
the [beakt ship] [long-ship] [touching] [ringing] terror of the coast.
Then the dark Keltic christian with his cross
the red beast flying from a broken slain
the English trader plowing white and moss
the fierce Scot praying in the thin grey rain.

These stir and mingle, leaping in my blood
and what I am is only what they were
of good or mad, or that when they were good
as basis only in my brief despair.

Kelt, Saxon, Briton, Roman, Dane, and Scot—
time and this island tied a crazy knot.

Solidarity for Ever

Surprisedly
I came upon a bunch of strikers —
apprentices engineers
some with skullcaps pushed well back
some their hair overgrown
and one incredibly today in his long overalls
some with shining faces
and several with the smears of dirty oil
that all boys love.

They were trudging steadfastly
in a irregular crowd
whilst from another foundry
beside the apprentices there.

My heart leapt up,
I wanted to cheer, to salute them,
to give some sign I knew

that youth was on the march . . . . .

(Red China's Vanguards with the flaming star
are moving too)

and tomorrow or the next day
we'll be stepping together.

But I wasn't at all sure
they'd know why my fist was clenched.

✓

184-

Among the holly trees of Drumnasole
when the outthrust leaf the light is blue
from rock to rock into the rippled bowl
the laced foam leaps dizzily askew.

The garlic odour's lazy on the air;
the channelled grass blades are rain diamonded.
Rain puddled stones, with flint splits here & there,
lie tumbled in the burnen river bed,

for there the stream falls sudden out of sight
not to be found again, unless you look
far down the glen, and in a broader light
there whins & valleys for a narrow brook

& love's high cataract breaks on my heart
does lovely things of sheer abandoned glee
that awhile, a secret sun apart,
returns diminish sighing quietly.

—

184-

Calf.

The warm dragged teats still drum into the pail
the split hooves falter then step back in place
the brown cow lows and whisks a lazy tail
a red hand wipes the hair from Jenny's face.

The gate is heaved now, the handle falls
loud on the rim of buckets one by one
and 'sukie sukie sukie' Jenny calls
as her mother did as she has ever done.

—

No poems in November.

7th Dec

The gulls that pass me overhead
and turn and lead the heart away
to where the drowsy sea is spredd
untroubled in a summer day

at noon were wet the shafes of light
that flasht the sunshine brighter still
the newly fallen snow is white.
The gulls are grey agenst the hill.

How shall a man defend his house
agenst the season of despair
when outer barns are ruinous
beyond the gestures of his care?

Is it enough to smash the fence
and heap the splinters on the fire
exclude the weather's violence
from the frail embers of desire?

and hope that spring with healing sun
will wipe the misted windowpane
before the last green plank is done
and cold lies clutcht the fevered brain?

7th Dec

The stars are bright. The Plow wheels round.
Orion's Belt swings bravely yet.
A man who's sodded underground
can have no joy and no regret.

8th

Analect.

I heard a small bird piping in the frost.
and
what thought what principle could keep him warm
control the compass that he be not lost
-and hold him poised against the highest storm.

Then I remembered that wise Chinaman
who said Three hundred odes the scholars praise
for all their varies shakes off wisdom can
~~for shakely truth and wisdom~~ can
be shortly reckond in a single phrase —

With purpose unadverted.
Sage and bird,
I know your wisdom: but I also know
how I salute the midnight's magic word,
yet hear my sentence in the first cockcrow.

I tried not to miss you
doing unaccustomed things
punching the pillows
and looking for the bin
polishing the mirrors
and clearing a path
yet in all that I did
the want of your knowledge
so I shut myself
of the shapes and symbols
was content awhile
in a flurried race
but it was not for long
when I lifted my toothbrush
for there was a gap
and no voice sang

was busy all day
in a clumsy way
and making my bed
where you keep the bread
and dusting the grate
thro the snow to the gate
and all that I tried
pokt fun at my pride
in my lonely thought
the frost had brought
and forgot you quite
with the fading light
and your memory came back
from the rack
where your brush used to be
or called me to tea.

You go from me that you may come again
bearing new tidings from a world forgot
for I intent upon the word and pen
an ignorant skill-less in the artifice of men,
dismiss useless
ignore the potter & admire the pot.

But you, my wit's best wife other self, with active sense
done give wisdom proud by eager wealth
who draw no more from thought's cold violence
than stoats or blue jays stump along the fence
stiff in the clumsy attitudes of death.

Bring life to me, bring life, the leaping thing
the shape elusive and the moving grace
that from your wisdom I gain strength to sing
not the predicted advent of the spring
but the swift moments of an April face.

12 IV

There be some men I hate
abstractedly afar
since chance of birth or fate
has shaft us as we are

the men who draw their price
out of the ignorant
luck lets it now suffice
then wealth is not my want

But any living man
has but to speak me fair
and what small love I can
I give him as my share.

12 IV

This is the dread of death
that we must die alone
not that the road's unknown

for when by chance I go
to unfamiliar town
there surely
there is always one

to laugh at my surprise
and mitigate dismay
throughout the anxious day.

For friendly look or word,
stranger in street or train,
I have not sought in vain

This is the dread of death that we must die alone
not that the road's unknown.

Men at the corner leaning
waiting for nothing
leaning the crumpled corpse of despair
watching without comment
mongrels coupling in the gutter
or the messenger boy loitering
and oblivious of the rain
darkening their jackets

There stands a man who rivetted
the plates against a liner's side
or cat-foot strode the gantries spread
among the falls above the tide.

He stood to watch the ship go down
the long slip to the lapping sea
and spoke the names of high renown
that told the world his mastery.

Now they return the ship be made
the voyage ended profit done
his sailing tape has long been laid:
not his a trade to teach a son.

His son must go learn his bread
by prising loose and breaking down
the plates his father rivetted
upon a hull of high renown.

The Ballad of the Ten Men of "the Annagher".

O ten men of "the Annagher"
went out to sea one day
and nine men of "the Annagher"
were drowned in Bangor Bay.
There is a church in Bangor Town
where you may kneel and pray
for nine dead men, for nine drowned men
who sank in Bangor Bay.

A rich man built the church for praise
he was so meek and kind
the ten men of "the Annagher"
were never in his mind
they only made the cask wherewith
he could be meek and kind

He was too busy being kind
to grudge the fishes food
a cargo earns a profit but
insurance is as good

I leave now that kindly man
will speak to God and pray
mercy for the souls of those
who sank in Bangor Bay.

O ten men of "the Annagher"
went out to sea one day
and nine men of "the Annagher"
were drowned in Bangor Bay

Armorial Device 22nd.

Who fetters this strange wolf in rage
and set the seahorse answering
with billowed ship and silver bell
secure on targe from rust or ape
a gnomic phrase enscrolled well
that figures some forgotten thing?

The wolf with lions in his heart
is bound. The seahorse is not bound
but in it's oppressive element
on this inhospitable ground
he bays a crude & curling feint
who crested were magnificent.

This seahorse cleft beyond the flood
untamed but gentle, wild and shy
what harness drags his salted blood
that year and year twixt shore and shore
his hitters come in vain to cry
yet he turns seaward nevermore?

No war betwixt this wolf & horse
this chance encounter makes them kin
and while their timbers hold their course
and small bell makes no silver din
they shall observe a discipline
by wiser art than herald's force.

What ship or bell shall signify,
there is no man who may declare
But ring the bell or hoist the sail
lack
and wolf shall beat on horse and tear
and writhing horse shall moan and cry
until the dark blood cease to drink

2320

Sonnet.

Disaster has not spoken. Yet again
the time I have no heart in has returned
with little odds in me. I have not learned
new wisdom thro the purchase of new pain
thro incidence of twilight and of rain
and days' grey mocking echoes there has burned
no sporting torch of joy I might have earned
by work or chance to make the causeway plain.

But older only, with constricted shape
to forge out the attitudes I need
forbid the consolations of the dream
in impotence I curse my day and rape.
By horror's shock would willingly be freed
just short of woe, or judgments' bleak for gleam.

2320

after the eroded furrows of the frost
-and the red sun upon the snow bright peak
the periodic delight of indrawn breath
with long plumed vapors curling back a toast
as if each word we dangerously speak
were a arrogant adventure over death,
the rain now, and the mist, a warmer air
stifling with odor of the thawing heap
of rotten leaves - where the dragged fork lays bare
the grass is pale a jaundice in its sleep.

Inscription for a Copy of 'Gulliver'.

When from your shelf this book you lift
to read or at the pictures look
please to remember Doctor Swift
who wrote this sad & merry book

He was an Irishman like you
and lived awhile near Tordanstown
He loved the Lough when it was blue
and liked to look across to Down.

It is our hope when you are big
like him you'll work for brotherhood
also you may not wear a wig
or write a story quite so good.

Two Inscriptions for Gift Books.

Here is a fairy story by
a Frenchman with a merry eye
we hope in time when you're his size
you'll be as happy and as wise.

—

Here are some rimes by Eleanor
for them you'll learn to write no more
or may be draw like Gwendolen
for better than the most of men
if neither, take it, learn by heart —
that is perhaps the better part.

Unskilled at number, & insensitive
to music's interplay of tone with tone
because the tangles with wherewith I live
prefer the colors to the noisy dream

Left life shut out, I go from day to day
eager for frost on cabbage, light on cloud
who might have dared to say some stoke way,
heart's lonely tune solo, choral crowd.

In bleak midwinter walking with a friend
Christ's carols sung without the carded snow
the formal revels at a dismal end
expecting no delight, unspeaking, slow
I trod on wet black leaves among the trees
and thro rain heavy grasses by a stream
the flat land's gray and shadowy silences
swelled round me like a dream beyond a dream.

That curling way along the mounded edge
would never straighten out into a thought
but curved like fancy lost in tangled sedge
or bind weed knotted, or in nettle caught.

So laggy mind in sick captivity
spilt raindrop, snatched at twig but could not stir
til wonder flashed its rescue & the eye
with all joy's color in a Kingfisher

29-30 IX

Trapped in a corner you may croon your blues
like a sick nigger seduced by your fear
bite nails in office waiting for the news
to be decoded from the stalactites,
or throw your pretty darts against despair

I'll go my way. It is required of me
I make appeal with all my evidence
against the mandate of mortality
and with the grace notes of my eloquence
salute all men of skill as mastery.

30 IX

~~And lean behind~~
And hear the echo of my feet
limp behind me down the street . .

O weary my feet with roads
across the world.

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August	~~31~~ 38	686 (1228 988)
September	12	255 (1600)
October	7	134
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[17 - 219 2300] 1953

✠ from 11 am 19th Aug to 1 PM 20th Aug I wrote 190 lines.

Total [122] poems [1,991] lines.
for 1937