



Book XV

Poems by

John Hewitt

January 1938 to March 1939.

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4<sup>th</sup> Jan'y.

O lonely finch on leafless thorn  
you gapt at me before you started  
remarking someone also born  
to move beneath a sky forlorn  
alone and weary hearted.

So when you took your darting way  
and I resumed my labor :  
no more alone this winter day  
my withered heart was bright and gay  
I knew I had a neighbor.



## \* New Northman (Winter)

X  
From the Chinese of Wang Li Hsi (Shelley Wang) a poem composed this morning on a visit to the Mourne Mountains, and translated in the evening.

The Mourne Mountains like a team of bears  
tumbling into the sea  
the embroidered fields like a monk's patcht cloak  
spreading their skirts to every door  
the peasants leisurely allowing the chickens  
and dogs to wander at will  
the bare trees standing silent  
entangle the stranger's dream.

An adaptation of a Chinese poem  
(anon & early) without a verb  
spoken by Shelley Wang.

Withered tree,  
aged ivy, sombre bird,  
old road, small bridge, flowing water,

Katcht House, skinny horse —  
a man in a lonely place \*

[lit\* a corner of the universe]



13th Jan'y.

a translation of a Chinese poem on a bowl  
from the literal English by Shelley Wang.

I walkt along the winding East Lake.  
There were ten li of equal statur'd willows:  
The little islands float in space  
a long cloud leand upon the water  
flowers spread their perfumes  
wild fowl stir'd in the lake

So I tied my boat to a tree  
as the shadow of night cover'd all.

15th Jan'y

The Storm: a poem in the Chinese  
manner.

The gate is swirping by one hinge  
twigs are scatter'd on the pavement  
the wither'd chrysanthemums have daub'd  
themselves with mud  
the lake has a feathery edge  
the old grasses have a dry sound  
and I think of my friend Wang Li Hsi  
on a ship, going home.



Sonnet 1.38

Aware this morning of the quickening choir  
 voices new tuned that had mislaid their song  
 familiar voices bolder now and strong  
 that in the bleaker days had seemed to tire  
 I thought of how last night around the fire  
 they sat, my friends, in disputation long  
 over the stark realities of wrong  
 and the vague limits of approved desire.

The questions asked, the phrases that replied,  
<sup>so fundamental</sup> all <sup>so</sup> conclusive in the fading light  
 flung by the cooling embers on the wall,  
 were less than withered leaves now in my stride  
 when sudden robin staying in his flight  
 steadied on a twig and gave a welcome call.

X

The Servant man.

I'd said at breakfast "We could do with help:  
 I must find out if every one's bestoked  
 down in the village". "You're over late for that,"  
 and Jean grumbled on: "You should ha' thought before".

When I came in from the byre a man was there,  
 standing at the pump in a creeshy coat;  
 James Galt his name. He'd worked across the Glen  
 for several years: he'd fallen out with them  
 -and begged a chance to start.

I knew him sober and a steady worker.  
 'twas no concern of mine why he had left.  
 The corn was ripe now and a deal to do,  
 and help was scarce enough. I started him.

The forenoon of that day we cleared a field,  
 then after dinner went across the loanin  
 to give my neighbor Andrew Scott a hand



We did right well and got his long field cut  
by six o'clock. I latched the machine  
close by the hedge and turned to look for Galt.  
He was not there. I called to Andrew Scott.  
He shouted that he'd seen James working hard  
a while ago but had lost sight of him.  
I cursed the loafer. That was why he left.  
So he'd a fancy now to tread no stricter  
than he was used with. Stopping sharp at six  
as if he wrought in some town factory.

At home I asked my wife if she had seen him.  
She had not since the time he left with me.  
We blamed each other for engaging him.  
We took him in when he had been thrown out  
by wiser people. Now this was our thanks.  
He'd never left another rake for me.  
I never had a name for driving men  
but now this made it hard to keep that name.  
There was the horse and reaper to put in

9  
He might ha' done that. I'd not ask for more.

I put the horse in, spread the tarpaulin sheet  
over the reaper in a sheltered corner,  
and took a turn to look at the corn we'd cut.  
It was a cold night after a warm day,  
a little wind was stirring in the elms,  
and all the crows were nested safe at home,  
when I came to the gate and opened it.

I started sudden. In the fading light  
I saw long rows of stooks where there were none  
when we left off for dinner. I went in.  
At first I could see no one in that light,  
then I came on him, stooping steadily,  
down in the narrow corner by the barn.  
I shouted to him. "James Galt. Do ye hear?  
It's nearly dark and time that ye were done."  
Then, when I came to him, he straightened up  
and smiled a slow wise smile. "I doubt ye misst me



from Andrew Scott's long field "By God I did  
I thought yed left at six to learn me how  
to treat a servant man with decency  
and I was angry at your insolence  
But now James Galt, I do not ask for this.  
I work no man or beast as long as this  
I never had a name for driving folk"  
He smiled again, looked at the heavy sky  
"It's goin' to rain the night or tomorrow for sure  
Are ye game to see the stockin' til its end?  
Come on"

We did. and just before we'd <sup>finished</sup> done  
the big drops fell upon my lands and face.

X

For the Twelfth of July 1937 and those  
who were with me then.

to

I remember a small pub  
on the borders of Tyrone  
where the country turns suddenly untamable  
with roads over steep hills  
and bogs round corners

I remember the walk over the bog  
the black ooze warm between the toes  
and the purple stains on the mouth  
the moths that rose hostling  
when we fumbled for berries with slippery fingers

I remember a small pub  
and the inquisitive girl behind the bar  
and the strong Irish whiskey over the smoking turf  
-and the bawdy talk



and the rain on the road outside

Will that great head drowsy

nodding over a glass

not so in a dugout?

and that left hand stretch for a shining pint  
twitch and stiffen in a tangle of wire?

They were not bad people

and do not deserve such an end.

What was then to assert the nightingale  
or mark on bark or ~~coil~~<sup>whirl</sup> of curling snail  
at six on Sunday of a certain week?

Not this or this a man strains tongue to speak:

the glitter caught by no eye but his own

Let the thrush's gaze, intent on shell and stone,  
if smash for good, the creature has no share,  
if void and rotten, who shall know to care?

I heard bells jangling for an ended world . . .

What little wind there was caught smoke and coiled  
a thinning smudge against a sunset sky;  
no stars as yet: two homing rooks passed urgently:  
a chortling stardling also late and lost  
rustled the heavy current back and cross  
before my waiting face upon the dew.

I heard bells jangle for a perished day:

from no eye but my own light drips away.



26th March

2-38 Sonnet: On Train for Edinburgh  
to Glasgow.

Far snow on slopes and blackfoot lambs at play  
in the wide fields about the slow ewe's knees;  
the plow earth red against black leafless trees  
blown east by leaning winds that whistle away  
on languent smoke in curling scarves of grey  
over brown barns and stone dark cottages;  
then, sudden sore of slap, of dry disease,  
in topless cankers of a land's decay.

Where men cut turf the moor grows again;  
earth hallowed heals herself with swathes of green:  
but quarries gape thro' blossomed whin of spring;

and till man ends, or time breeds wiser men  
this world will shrink to blacked space between  
sunflash on snow - as oil-bound seagull's wing.

29 15 15

Coronach.

Pipes that cried thro' the dreams of my boyhood  
out of the bindings with golden names  
calling the broadswords over the border  
summoning clansmen to give or to war  
where is the music now crying and crying  
over the lochs and glens in the twilight  
as the brown frowns of the dead broken rivers  
Pibroch of Donald Lochaber no more.

What are ye shrunk to? What is your measure?  
Will the great music come ever again?  
Till alba's free will the echoes clamour  
or is it but silence and ebbing of light?  
I wake from my dream of your gilded bindings  
I walkt your ways with a listening ear  
and lo! the shade of a striding piper  
outside a pub on a Saturday night.



29th

Three shapes of being - this and this and this  
that cumber in the grass are undefined  
the white faced lad with the rucksack  
saying goodbye

to his boogie-riddled father  
the crowd of deafmutes at the football match  
telling their joy  
when the centreforward scored with a leap and a nod  
the pregnant woman darting for a tram  
to the prenatal clinic  
Make your quotation. I slide by life.

29th March '17

In the <sup>{grey}</sup> dark city where the restless dead  
beckon and bow in every corner's gust  
where any hour a pale queen's delicate tread  
makes wistful music on the printless dust,

I walked among the shadows crying hail  
to shape of poet and to passionate knight:  
they paused to speak, then stood, afraid to fail,  
(<sup>turning to glance</sup> became a dance of) leaves against the light.

I turned my face as I walked among a crowd  
where skill men shouted charges for the time  
but my dread heart went slowly with the proud  
who have no anger and who live in rhyme.

I turned my touch to Compassion  
 and fingers thro his books of ayres:  
 the griefs of his orphanion,  
 his madrigals remitt despair's  
 mood not at all, or scarce could move,  
 my eager thought was so possess'd  
 by such complexities of love  
 no tremble in your gentle breast.

Spring quarrels with my sullen blood.  
 The ecstatic pain of waking bud  
 that pricklet before with no response  
 now stabs me like the bladed bronze  
 for when green shreds before my eyes  
 I stop and tremble with surprise  
 it does not tense and shrink as jade  
 for horror of the world we've made.



30<sup>th</sup>

X  
I cross a labor plot of ground  
where cunning men with spade and graft  
this weary years of skill have found  
the comfort of recurring shape.

I break the sods of my slow mind  
with tools that some old master wrought  
yet when the <sup>yield</sup> grain is cut I find  
a harvest alien to my thought.

31<sup>st</sup> 21

Come live with me and we shall prove  
the fabled ecstasies of love  
let some run counter to the law  
and sleep in lorries or on straw  
but we shall on a ry sprung bed  
make merry with your maidenhead  
and dawn shall wake the radio  
with Seigel Syrup's Silver Show  
and we shall early learn to live  
with sedative and laxative  
There will be shows and bright reviews  
with someone else to read the news  
And cabaret and premiere  
shall marvel at your drene bright hair  
Then you shall dance & I shall sip  
in the wide syllables of swirp  
I garbo by Goss, a Galalao,  
you, lovely as a corset ad.



X  
Sonnet 3-38.

If I make quittance of myself and die  
 by poison'd air or poison I'll have lost  
 such vast conjunctions of the earth and sky  
 my doubtful comfort is not worth the cost  
 And yet I would not die at bating word  
 from any haggard. How then to survive  
 when the least shrapnel splinters down my sword  
 and only cats and cripples are alive?

Or is health valid in a shattered time  
 for such as I who cannot build anew,  
 save in the trembling scaffold of a ruin  
 that April's first bright roadside whistles thro?

So vain my fancy. Henceforth let it be  
 I live my life with quiet urgency.

The great Tang hat  
 the round sun bowl  
 the little horse in jade  
 the hundred geese deft written on a scroll  
 the squat  
 di Po in porcelain  
 that seem'd by cunning made  
 remote beyond the accidents of pain  
 and integral with being: these are packed  
 and hurried for the city not yet sacked  
 and threat of cloud high plane  
 Surely there is a Raven in some hill  
 beyond the random shot  
 where they may still  
 year after season'd year  
 abide the ebbing of this flood of fear



II

And yet  
it were a clumsy treason to forget  
the very town that shreds these for our eyes.  
was where small rascals with slick sophistries  
wove the last act  
of lies  
over a nation's crime  
and the proud lion of Judah was dismembered.

And from that time  
the reverent masters loose about the earth  
have tongues to threaten beauty & excellence  
and men's laughing hopes are murdered at their birth,  
the hoarse soothsayer dumbs kind eloquence  
and wisdom is outnumbered.

27  
Time tables the agenda. Shall we take  
the minutes of the last as being read -  
later will be occasions when the mind  
looming at ease can shred its dreaming fingers  
over the gratifying surfaces

To business now.

The secretary's report

Mr. Chairman ladies and gentlemen  
since last we met in session our work has  
suffered defect on this front and on this  
hides high in attic biting impotent nails  
or limps to friendly druggist for iodine  
cursing the stamping boot that clatters last  
giving reluctant salute to competitors.  
Our agent's weekly schedules are to hand  
save in three instances where other means

announce a murder and two suicides.  
Our best branch lags behind being concerned  
with epidemic sabotage and schism  
The younger group to whom we signified  
unanimous approval are hardly pressed  
make urgent application for supplies  
demanding action. We'll return to that.  
The sunrise section find inconvenient  
this regular reporting back for advice  
and have gone on adapting the code of rules  
to their peculiar problems but assure us  
of unabated hope and some success.  
Questions will be taken at the close

We pass to the next business on the list

The resolution on democracy  
will be taken by show of hands  
I declare it carried.

Resolutions numbers two and three

would any present care to move the second?

I find the proposer absent. Then the next?

Will no one? That perhaps is just as well

they carry contentions matter. I might add

a stricter chairman would declare 'em both  
grossly out of order. They ask for action.

The proposers ought to realize by now

we cannot act on hands as tied we are  
need I remind you merely advisory.

but I have no desire to stifle discussion

the open forum of the open mind

If there is nothing else we can adjourn.....



X

5th April

Wacht and awake into a morning world  
among the glass bright jets of air and sun  
so early up that sunlight still was cold  
and thought made easy circles of the dawn  
hills raised green shoulders winking us away  
smoke stringing into space out of a house  
called out its comfort to a friendly sky  
I sudden knew myself as generous  
large aimable gestures of my mind  
saluted tree as stone as spire and fence  
considerate of cobwebs lauring round  
included all for blessing good at once

615 29

Here in this quiet place  
was at this lonely hour  
my face a dumbstone face  
I realise my power

Its strength to pity and love  
to awaken joy with a word  
the mere assertions prove  
my wisdom overheard

But with another face  
distraction clears the hour  
there is no magic place  
I have no occult power.

X  
X

7th

The three swans broke the water with a splash  
dragging black feet and stretching urgent necks  
beating great shining wings and flapping clear  
to gleam and flash their silver in the sky  
march tumbled, grey and blowing near to rain

I feared to marvel hearing in the wind  
the whistle of their flight. They headed straight  
across the curve and hollows of my path  
for the lead level of the upper lake  
that slips forever on its flat wet stones.

When they were lost I fumbled with my thought  
They are not lovely. Feather balanced skill  
is beautiful to see but this mere instinct  
this natural motion and form is a lesser thing.  
I do not praise the stone for being stone.

31

I think then so remembering a poem  
as the high phrase that left beyond the brush  
of whirring wings into a quiet sky  
beyond life's screaming hands and drumming feet.

They feed on little fishes, hatch and die  
fly so about the business of their breath  
no cumulance of wisdom landed on  
They are lovely only in the dreamslight mind

So ran my thought, the scotchier arguments  
clipping into their pieces, my intellect  
proud in its disillusion, proud and poor.

But sudden beat of pinions again  
I raised my solemn face. After the three  
came whistling down the long start of the land  
bright in the troubled air and shadowless  
and I rejoice in the wide angle pattern  
my heart plucked <sup>from its</sup> out of grief and set a flame  
with something out of time and out of space.



8-9th

Now as the old year spins, the graceless trees  
that flaunted naked in the barren days  
shagled their bare wrists with frosty stars,  
as wore the lavish gold of a drunken moon,  
that wayward lecher basking on girls,  
do on coy dresses of a flickering green  
and flutter their maiden pleasure to the wind  
forgetting he will rape their coloured prime  
caught in the gay hypocrisy of spring  
that frees the fact-torn mind from memory  
of dead leaves on the ledges and the sharp  
tom end of branch wrenched off vindictively  
or monstrous fungi in the untrodden park  
white with the leper's scurf of sure decay.

8<sup>5</sup>-9<sup>33</sup>th

The flowering current first born of the hedge  
is like that other firstborn prodigal  
and squanders scent and color wantoning  
with new winds blowing from unfamiliar airts.  
while yet the Hawthorn hardly hides in green  
the wrack and knotted travail of the year  
and whin makes ready for a gaudy prime  
rhetorical on hills and far seen escapes  
the foolish current with smell unresolved  
into round memories of undoubted joy  
cannot attain the lyric quality  
of damson blossom and of apple blossom  
that gives blithe earnest of the bodied fruit.



I strike the square match, watch a fan of flame  
spread tongue a bowl, and curl the yellow shreds,  
draw breath expectant, blow a plume of gray  
and see the red glow settle under ash.

Then move sedate once more responsible  
and fensive measured being seen as one  
to whom a life gives wisdom and degree

## X Turnley's Tower

I mounted slow the hollow stair  
and sat awhile in Turnley's Tower  
thinking of that eccentric man  
whose dreams died in a foolish son  
that litigation batten on.

Francis Turnley on orient shores  
made a fortune in five years  
that took him fifty near to spend  
over eighty thousand pound  
buying here and buying there  
in his passionate character  
one estate at Drumnasole  
the other here at Cuskendall  
In eighteen forty five he died  
at Richmond Lodge in Holywood.



He made his roads, he built a school  
at Carnlough. He longed to rule  
over land and men and beast  
like a mandarin of the east.  
He ordered this and ordered that,  
fanatic and deliberate;  
suggesting even there should be  
a proselytic society  
of servant girls who'd hire out  
to Papist farmers round about  
and win them by their works and faith  
over to the <sup>Reformation</sup> younger faith.

Then he made fantastic will,  
left the House at Drumnasole  
as a Haven for the insane  
under charge of clergyman,  
now in wiser circumstance  
who had been afflicted once.

37  
Then he ordered they should write  
on a rock in all men's sight  
where the basalt slabs outcrop  
Craig-a-Tinnel's heather top  
in the English and the Greek  
what the famous Matthew spoke  
"when he sent the folk away  
he when went up the hill to pray,  
alone when evening was come".

But now the hill he loved is dumb  
save for the cry of passing gull  
or pewit crying at night fall

There is no lettered rock or stone  
where Christ or Turnley stood alone  
contested will and foolish son  
with one thing now the tally's done.

He built this tower a perfect square



rising to forty feet or near  
in the Newtown of the Glens  
where MacDonnell's loaded once,  
stipulated garrison

of a solitary man,  
armed with bayonet and gun  
with a pike and with a brace  
of fine pistols in a case,  
for the place did then decide  
on one Daniel MacBride  
if he undertook to ring  
the bell at nine each evening

Dead for ninety seven years  
all his passionate desires.

No high kempen dent'd with clay  
shall make turbulent the day.

Sun shall pass and moon shall rise  
in the transitory skies,  
and the rain shall rot the stone,

sand shall wear the edges down;  
tho Turnleys live at Drumnasole  
none prays for Francis <sup>now at all</sup> Turnley's soul

I have been to Drumnasole,  
stood beneath the waterfall,  
climb'd the cliff the waters leap,  
fern hung ledge and mossy step  
to the hazels at the top,  
follow'd close the twisted course  
to its misty apt mountain source,  
leas't from hazels up to bracken  
cross stone fences into which  
til bog cotton tufts begin,  
and I say no waterfall  
can be a man's memorial.

A mountain ean. He thought of that.  
They cheated him by law's debate.

And in this very place I sit,



the strict command he left is broke.  
They ring the bell at nine o'clock  
if they remember or are free  
from any great activity  
like buying fish or washing clothes.

And none but I now seems to muse  
on that violent eager heart  
who dream'd the carver's, mason's art,  
should keep his name awhile in mind  
when he was dry bones in the ground,  
who always thought high places were  
fulfilment of his character,  
text cut in rock or rock like tower.

The little foxes gather round a house where someone lies  
with bottles on the table and his friends about the bed;  
and when the heart goes out of him the night is full of cries,  
yet none can say what still they have to tell when he is dead.

A man I knew lay down to die and from the county's bounds,  
from hill and wood they mustered in their hundreds <sup>to</sup> the house;  
and when we bore the body to the chapel in the grounds  
we tripp'd on darting creatures they were there so numerous.

Tonight as I came by this way three foxes ran across  
my startled step, and vanished in the brambles by the dyke  
By noon tomorrow you (will hear) 'll get word of <sup>some poor creature's</sup> ~~some one's~~ loss  
You hear them? I could sleep here on a sofa if you like ...



I glimpse a passing girl and bane her with my eyes,  
 search for the pouting breast and fondle the strong thighs,  
 possess her so that instant as all things fall away  
 the involutions of my will, the complicated day;  
 not coward unfulfilled bound to a niggard time  
 who beds with laughing queers born of a dreaming rime,  
 but one who chaste and passionate follows a rounded life  
 who wakes with love at dawn, whose mistress is his wife.  
 What dark ancestral lust stirs so within my heart  
 that at a passing face my leaping pulses start?

I gaze upon my hand with bitten nails  
 the torn stigmata of anxiety  
 Slowly the fingers close. The fist is clenched  
 in the small tensions of my purposes  
 I gaze and <sup>marvel</sup> wonder at the knuckled shape.

So little fists are clenched knuckled in the eyes  
 at joy's disaster. So when anger stands  
 afraid to strike but waiting the unlocket  
 at the <sup>last drubble</sup> subsidence of the grains of hope ...

So in Spain

This is salute for justice.

So in Spain

a lorry passing, roaring change of gears,  
 hauling its load along a sheltered street  
 is greeted by the fists of women and boys  
 met by the weary fists of riflemen



one  
I think of Frank at Albacete now  
I never liked him much, he was too rash  
his denting face repelled me and his lust  
his talkative analysis of love -  
I think of Frank at Albacete now  
and clench my fist across the interval

then of another  
I think (of Hughie Hunter) stammering  
tongue as shy returning my remark.  
Remembered in a crowd of solemn men  
who stood to hear mercy and justice named  
For what it's worth my fist gives you salute!  
wherever you may be in that vast war.

I think of Murray and his dark brown eyes  
recall the smoky room with dusty beams  
my fervoration as your quiet rebuke  
Remember too we met in Clerkenwell  
you grasping handlebars about to go  
hauling a moment, passing time of day

45  
laughing and asking for the boys at home . . .

And so Ben Murray here for what it's worth  
my clenched fist gives salute to your Jan grave.

---

5-9-15<sup>th</sup>

I said I would not make a poem again  
about a tree until peace came to Spain  
The war drags on. Gernika, Teruel,  
Lerida are new synonyms for hell;  
and that unbuffed effane barks day by day  
licks back the clenched hands that would thrust away,  
till all seems slowly ebbing now and silent  
that was heartbreaking and magnificent.  
The spring again wakes in the orchard trees,  
and larks scale back to their old melodies.  
I watch for the first swallow. What I wrote  
was then a moment's honesty of thought.  
The war in Spain was not yet true for me.

I make this poem of an apple tree  
later in leaf than plum but promising  
the sterling-bibbed fruit when <sup>light is</sup> days are long;  
for who dares tell what chance is left for me  
to make a poem of another tree.

15<sup>th</sup> . 47

I walk home in the sunbright afternoon,  
the new leaves flashing in the vigorous trees;  
the thought of grim Spain beaten to her knees,  
the thought that you are dead is a day pale moon.

A boy darts past with fist of promises.  
Dog looks at dog thro fence and goes his way,  
and women pushing brans have much to say  
to women basket-lade with messages



15-16th

The younger brothers of my early friends  
at whom we jeered because they still wore curls  
are wandering of their cars or playing golf  
have grown mustaches & walk out with girls

The elder sisters of my early friends  
who all were married only yesterday  
are living now <sup>beyond the terminus</sup> in villas or estates  
their sons wear blazers and their daughters play.

I sometimes stop and ask my early friends  
in tears if their luck is out or in  
and as they reach their hats down from the racks  
I notice how their hair is getting thin

16th

I can remember September days  
the young men marching the recruits going home  
I can remember kissing little girls  
in gable shadows, being in by nine  
whistling something of swallows followed home  
Then Omaha delivered in a voice  
harsh with the fretting troubles of my sex  
some years of chantey's Rio Billy Boy  
and then the lonely cherist swung low  
and walking over heaven in golden shoes

But now when I am working by myself  
I'm sometimes startled by the row I make  
a hesitant shot at the 'International  
trailing off to a hymn that's close at hand  
in the torn album of my memory



18th

X  
Sonnet: 4-38 Vacation

I have gone back into another time,  
 have spent two days admiring lamb and gorse,  
 pied wagtail nodding, slow man mixing lime  
 with lurching harrow tied to joggling horse;  
 watcht-dreaming ducks, and black calf newly born  
 carried behind thin cow down narrow lane;  
 have learned wind's habit from the slant of storm,  
 and talked with farmers on the chance of rain:  
 flung stones at sticks, skinned flat stones on the sea;  
 leant over brook to gaze at stickleback;  
 concerned myself with rook's economy;  
 and followed grateful sheep well nibbled track;  
 and shared a small boy's wonder at a nest  
 with five eggs warm yet from the robin's breast.

20th

## Saxophone

a Jewboy with the black crumpled hair  
 cries into the saxophone  
 the grief of ghetto years  
 the boot against the door  
 the spittle on the cuff  
 the lonely candle of the exiled student  
 the millionaire  
 wearing his rings his mistress or his rubens  
 the commercial traveller  
 picking the scented card from his vest pocket  
 the greasy little man leaning over the steering rail  
 the bearded man  
 talking to the rabbi in the street  
 Once a clear bright tone -  
 Spinoza  
 working thro a newly polished lens.  
 But now and then the trumpets blow  
 against Jericho!



18.19.20th

Crowd in an austin, breathe each others' breath;  
to have the window down would mean your death:  
oblivious watch a magic world spin by:  
These, only these, can catch your greasy eye,  
the weak shaft like the lady, and the lamb  
the rose hung cottage, the converted tram,  
the hustler on the boarding screaming shrill  
the benefits of some fantastic pill  
that banishes unmentionable ill:  
pause to admire a golfer's careful putt  
or buy pink toffee at a haunted hut

21st

57

X

Let this last lyric of a passing day  
cry its slow fading way  
into some crevice of your lonely mind.  
Remote and strange remember that its art  
once held the heartbreak of another heart  
whose world went dumb and blind

The time should crumble and the world should break,  
disaster overtake  
the friendly gestured hand, the gentle word;  
yet love and pity shall endure to be  
the first green beacon on the barren tree,  
-and the first wakened bird.

To rid my mind of lumbered grief  
 of fate of China fate of Spain  
 I went intent on bud and leaf  
 my small world wider to a lane

I stop to hear the hooting bees  
 and knew their quest as sycamore  
 and hazel alder of the trees  
 I never had been sure before

Counted the harebell, violet,  
 hennip and catkin vetch and whin  
 The blackthorn shook its petals yet  
 such was the year's indiscipline

That in among the crowded green  
 the ash wings budded darkly brown  
 as where white candles should have been

the sticky chestnut leaves hung down

and all at once fanatic thought  
 remembered Brin's lancet phrase.  
 Development concretely taught  
 the inequalities of these.



## Oasis.

Sheer from the sea we scrambled over chalk  
flat tilted loads of limestone starting sheer  
the green between bracken and primroses  
cresting within yolk yellow in the sun

Behind above to parapet the sky  
now blue with tufted white flung out and scutched  
a toothed edge of basalt pinnacles

leaning against hills' slant a shortened breath  
and dazzled by the incandescent of light  
we lurched and slithered in the flowing air  
til topping cone of sods and mossy stones  
we stood erect between the sky and sea  
and caught the sudden wonder of the sight.

Before us swept a hollow gently scooped  
from chalk shelf curving to scree battressed cliff

fields tilld for corn, fields grazing lazy kine  
riggs for potatoes rising to the left,  
where someone wearing red was laboring  
at the green margin of a narrow strip,  
-and out beyond, a man in straining horse  
comb'd slope with harrow over rutted earth.

High on the right hand, sentinel'd by trees,  
slate roofs and thatch sent three trails of smoke  
against the boulder litter'd mountainside,  
where shifting goats almost invisible  
moo'd forward nibbling to no prompting cry.  
In one green square sheep tugged & flanked by lambs  
stood latent and full'ill'd.

Then too our ears  
with raky jolt and stirring brown eyes  
a low red cart creakt slowly in between  
two winding walls of black iron curtained stone.

Breck held and heightened at the circumstance  
we turned and smiling to each other gave



a mute salute of dream near realised  
and on the brink of utterance.

Slowly then

we slid and stumbled down the cone of sods  
leaving a little world we dare not break  
and could not enter to its gentleness

Over the fence I saw a blossomy bough  
of cherry angled with its crooked twigs  
as thought of Kunisada Hiroshige  
But thought stopt short - punctured by present sense  
of newsreels of mangled lorry loads  
- little chinese huddling in the gutter,  
sucking their fingers wearing paper hats  
the grave calm student with the flashing glasses  
and the exact quotation - the ickshaw man  
the shoy man punting the boat, the farmer sowing  
the season's rice, the woman washing clothes  
these have their jaws turned to the menacing sky  
for the dragon wings roar over showering death -  
the scholar's arm's flung - with the thief's head  
the potter's knuckles stick to the farmer's ribs -  
"If man could ever achieve the single eye  
the unimpeded vision, the thing itself" -  
"I hesitate and wonder" would he be happier?  
or is on heartbreak narrow of an joy?"



An reading G. K. C.'s "Ballad of the White Horse"

I thought of Gilbert Chesterton  
and the White Horse on the Hill  
and how the Viking Jang broke  
as the gilded brows went up in smoke  
when Alfred shouted "Kill"

I thought of that fat and friendly man  
whose wars were taken and then  
who met as famed rhetorical knaves  
and shielded himself with a paradox  
building heaven out of a baby's black

Sonnet 5.38

Here in this quiet afternoon of May  
when butterflies and blossoms make no noise,  
a dark bee drones and roves his plundered way  
to where white barns like unimagin'd Troys.  
A small wind stirs the glittering ash-bough's lace,  
and sun on wallflower and on honesty  
shows undimmed love from beetle's face.  
A blackbird in my neighbor's apple-tree  
flutes a low ripple, listens for reply,  
then darts into the ivy of the well:  
no smudge save thumbnail moon breaks blue of sky:  
the cherry lets its last-gay petal fall.  
The year breathes gently, pausing when she stude,  
her hail-checkt hopes of March well satisfied.



1915

I may achieve much, make a snare of words  
 for hush of waiting heart or flight of birds  
 that other men in days remote from these  
 can murmur over for their spirits' peace  
 and find a moment's joy remembering  
 a certain heart's delight or shape of wing  
 that caught their glance or fancy one June day.  
 Suppose this stall's attained what more to say?  
 The man who wrote was anxious, deaf at his  
 shrewd to avoid predictable replies;  
 at least to be admired, was prone to boast  
 gestures of which he did not reckon the cost;  
 lazy and flightless in a narrow age  
 found satisfaction in a spirit of rage,  
 condoned his lethargy  
 thank't heaven he was not an Otterman  
 | approved their hopes, in practice was too proud  
 | to risk his lyrics for the ranting crowd  
 | his highest dream to legislate a school  
 | could find no estimate would let his rule.

1915

63

The what I yet may see be unsurpass'd  
 and halbes look at truth I dare not dream  
 alone defeated I shall squat at least  
 by the salt margin of an unroot stream.

Tho I shed laughter to identify  
 my health and hope with health and hope of men  
 and strive to make my cry include their cry  
 my mocking voice returns to me again.

I may but touch, contact to break away  
 I am no flint to spark and set alight  
 deceived by the companionship of day  
 to trackless desert of the endless night



The fir transplanted  
 watched for a year with anxious eye and hand  
 already trusts green tips of fresher power  
 to show the roots have struck  
 and tap the well of life below the world

Even in the doubtful days  
 of twig's retrenchment calling in of sap  
 looked no less lovely in the evening sky  
 when sunset rounded the hills  
 or when stars came between the stiff dead spines

Shall I then dread a span of shouting days  
 even if I miss one spring?

Sonnet 6.38

Caught in a wedge of rocking teams and cars  
 that looted comfortable arrogance  
 boys shouting shrilly of averted wars  
 and huxters craving queues of patient glance  
 a man strode anxious dragging footy bit  
 as the brown stallion with the long white nose  
 battered the roadway with stark itching feet  
 swung sideways like a schooner tugging loose

Then I remembered from the whinny bridge  
 pausing with you to watch the sleek mass run  
 to toss mane tassels head above the ledge  
 and whinny to the passing stallion  
 as proud boy trotted him across the ditch  
 and foolish foal lay kicking in the sun.

Not walking further than the tightened leash  
 we drug our hearts with songs of gipsy love  
 drag cheek to cheek close marauded as soon  
at cowboy lyric in a stiff bald shirt  
 or stub jagend in twilight leavy with  
 old broken chentays of tall ghostly ships.

When will the true song blossom from the deed  
 the moving hand beget the lifted voice  
 rejoicing in the senses satisfied?

There still are gestures beggared for a song  
 and intervals of breath no song can seal

✓ Prelude to a Long Poem

As men before they lay foundation stone  
 lay first a casket in the patient ground  
 with shining coins and parchment letters clear  
 of listed names remote and briefly known  
 wrapped in a magazine or newspaper  
 Hoping before time ends they may be found  
 so I have shaft in reature of my speech  
 these trinkets to tie up and thrust from sight  
 that other men may find a quaint delight  
 in figuring what's implicate in each  
 and maybe from these ashes spurt a flame  
 to brighten the dark passages they came  
 into their nellow prime of trunk and light.



26-3105.

The horsetails, stiff with jointed memories  
of swampy ages in a world of rain  
harsh to the loam can offer no replies  
when in the cinders desert of a lane  
interrogation trends upon surprise

Anacronistic in a time remote

from the green rooms of drowsy luxuriance  
when warty leathers monsters swim and float  
intent on life without a backward glance

Perhaps, thoughts prompted ready, our poor earth  
with ravening men and dirty anxious lives  
cruising among new planets still survives  
to bear a tattered story of decay  
and warning when stars tremble with the birth  
of shining creatures of a merry day.

26-3105<sup>15</sup>

69

✓  
The frequent comorake is inhabitant  
of some remoter world beyond my sky  
will come with every leafy spring to haunt  
my world's dim edge with hoarse foreboding cry

Altho I have not heard him since last year  
it is because his world but crosses here  
the turning wheel I tread: and when he gone  
the same conjunctions of both time and space  
will spin him crying best the selfsame place  
where other men turn weary to the dawn



## ✓ Sonnet 7.38.

I would achieve an immortality  
 not of this tedious mind, this troubled bone,  
 that cries for peace and whimpers finding none  
 to match the careless beauty of a tree  
 for, thought resolved by autumn's herbage  
 excepts the breaking of the skeleton  
 nor that my name and features should be known  
 when bangles make tomorrow history;

rather the immortality of song  
 not scribbled in an ink gone brown with rust  
 but clear from implicated right or wrong  
 such as strings' wandering listener takes on trust  
 sure of the blackbirds call familiar long  
 but not if last year's singer <sup>lies in</sup> goes to dust.

## The Clock

The season jangle shakes beneath my heel  
 a new moon frosts the lonely jaw of stone  
 but the log husses heavy with the rain  
 and the air dies to space remote and cool  
 that time's stiff fingers stroke  
 but do not strike.

Thought stales flaws and jades from book to book  
 the tongue into dry upon the bitter lips  
 in contemplation of distracted shapes  
 you can but sit in gloom to stalk the clock  
 If I forget the key  
 time too will die.



1515  
Lyric (Exercise in intermed verse or  
essence)

At daybreak when the waking birds begin  
you hear each singer staking out his claim,  
over the clover bank, the mound of which  
the cuckoo deems his name

In every stirring lyric bravely made  
I have marked out the circle of my heart -  
the nervous curve thought skirts at speed afraid  
the safe and shaded part.

15  
But this is not the June that I desired  
already early summer of my day  
whose spring was gay with green and richly fired  
with touch of when in memorable way

The eager blossoms should have died to fruit  
the promise should have left the strifling stream  
and the slow noon with mountain shrouded foot  
should wear no more the bustle of a dream

21st

✓ Sonnet 8.38

light lasted longest on this very day  
here on the sunny upland of the year  
the night by fresh west bournight and blown clear  
grows nothing darker than a starless grey  
Eavesdropping bats flits its enatic way  
and concrete sleepless in the meadow near  
defines the lonely marches of my year  
with loose complaint, reiterate dismay.

All things to ripeness turn, to fruit and seed,  
to apple reddening and full petal'd rose  
retreating safe to winter's stark repose  
save I whose pelted efforts cry in need  
for tilt of sheaves upon my barren land  
to quell with comfort troubled hearts' demand.

75  
24th

Behind my plate glass I have screamed my year  
my own voice echoes dully in my ear  
better be silent crystallise for good  
into a comfortable attitude  
and later be removed to fill a case  
as representative museum piece.



## First Passage of "October"

This October first-cried at chill of sponge  
 before day imperceptibly grew light  
 over the wet slates of the autumn world  
 high in a wide room with a gusty jet  
 of burning gas beside a brass-railed bed  
 a heavy child his mother had been by  
 since the long summer when she sat to gaze  
 across the shining lough assured a boy  
 was stirring in her. His first memory  
 was muffled dream of rest upon her breasts  
 whence he was taken soon since they began  
 to swell and hurt and offer curdled milk  
 years after in a drawer he found the punch  
 a strange glass angled with a rubber bulb.  
 His sister met the nurse upon the stairs  
 and sobbed with disappointment at the news  
 she wanted a small sister for her games  
 and found a male redundant when scheme.

No poems were written  
 during July or August 1938.

September

3 Translations from the Poems of Shelley Wang.  
Canton

Sudden the sky is dark with metal birds  
the warning bell has roused the town awake.  
How civilised the world! A single bomb  
can smash a thousand lives. A sea of houses  
raised by a million hands left ruinous  
in a split minute; bodies scattered careless —  
a child with gaping chest, his eyes appealing;  
a legless woman dying with a sigh.

The metal birds swing off triumphantly.  
The city is left silent. Terra lingers  
in the sad crying of the evening wind.

A man with bowed head leans against a door  
hugging a folded mat, and speaking his grief.  
Pointing with trembling fingers to his burden,  
he murmurs low: "In this ... what was ... my wife"  
He spreads the dripping mat. There is scattered flesh.

This wrong's far deeper than the Eastern Ocean  
far higher than the Kuenlun mountains.

Let men be shamed if this be still permitted.



## The Guerrillas

As quicksilver in each crevice  
trickles fills and overflows  
so the partisans surprising  
make an end of savage foes

With their naked hands unweaponed  
they must struggle. 'Tis the will  
of a thousand rising wall-like  
to defend both stream and hill.

In the day but common people  
masters by a little band  
in the night their endless horses  
ravage out across the land,  
beats a slaughter of invaders  
as men kill the hog or fowl,  
with bare hands at first, then later

dipping in the robbers' bowl

- raiding barnacks seizing rifles  
where a chimney spins its smoke  
no need now for them to forage  
welcomed by its friendly folk.

Women children scour & gather  
all report of eye and ear  
old men and sickly tinker  
with the thin electric wire,

then the sturdy men descending  
tear the rails up. Suddenly  
each is vanished to his village.  
Not a shape or face to see.

On a day the Coatsome soldiers  
land demanding women came  
"They must each be handed over

ere this evening is come.

If they be not then the yellow  
sand will clot with bloody stain  
None here left but crying spectres  
blowing with the wind and rain."

Old and young, who can abide it?  
Women moaning wish to die.  
Suddenly up starts a party  
of guerrillas with a cry

"Hush! Be silent. Make no chatter  
For we have a subtle plan"  
~~And the dread is lost in laughter~~  
Then they changed to women's fashion  
Finding gowns for every man.

And the dread is lost in laughter,  
all the bitterness is gone

83  
as they shape the painted eyebrow  
to a crescent like the moon;

and before the mirror moving  
deck each head with corymb flowers.  
Then the maidens swaying gently  
trip towards their paramours.

Crazed with lust and drink the soldiers  
wallow stupidly like swine  
till at dawn each corpse lies reeking  
spattered with the blood and wine.

Then the people eager shouting  
gather in a den place  
to the brave guerrillas pledging  
life and service all their days.



## Farewell to Ulster.

Oh Irieve no more my dear young couple  
but strive thrust forward urgent to your goal.  
You are parting only from a stranger.  
To your own fair lake a mountain give your strength.

The five days' friendship was like the water in the lake  
under a sky as high as the loch is deep.

Early each morning you left for work  
Each evening you talked untiredly till dawn.

Day after day your wife gave me tea and meals.  
She was afraid that I did not like Indian tea.  
So she bought green tea to comfort an Eastern stranger.  
Altho' this was not Chinese either  
the hospitality itself is fragrant.

I am glad that you two mingle so easily  
merging together agreed, on books & politics

85  
You do not lock your love in a ivory tower  
but both devote your strength to the common people.

I shall not forget the meeting of the literary club,  
the small lights staking in the little room;  
that other day's meeting  
voicing the war of righteousness,  
the indignation's thunder like a mountain falling;  
yesterday's brief meeting with students,  
the interest light in young eyes.

An impersonal sense of justice is distilled  
from the hot fivers of indignation and pity  
which makes me forget for a moment  
that I am in a foreign country.

Last night we crowded round your fireside's glow,  
the wind and the rain beating upon the house.  
A man described the smooth lake  
in a poem he made for me, the stranger.



Another song folksong for a long time  
Jack had translated the poem\*  
wherein I lightly sketch the mountainous landscape  
in newly minted phrases  
and read it slowly in a nervous voice.

I dared not shatter your tranquility  
with report of the pain we have suffered.

My grief! I have not come here  
for love of natural beauty.

In the Far East the pitiful fire burns on,  
and peaks of flame are leaping in the night.  
Earth and heaven tremble with bombers and tanks,  
and the hungry vultures or the wild dogs  
raven the littered corpses:  
while millions of heroic women and men  
- care not if their bodies be battered to dust  
by the merciless guns

\* See page 2 ("The Moune Mountains")

so that by sacrifice they win back the high name.

I do not come appealing to your government  
like Shan crying in Chin's court,  
nor for the lake or hills I longed to see.  
My desire is to unite with millions of common people  
like you, who, I believe, are not isolated  
and pledge ourselves not to share the world with the robbers.

| The only well rounded peace is the will of the people.

My sorrow! I am leaving  
my two young friends are sad.  
I gradually they grow dimmer  
farther and farther away to my hain borne eyes.  
The iron wheels on my heart are turning, turning.

Come, let us make the best of our frail power  
to speed the slow pace of the universe.  
We must use it even if our energy



is only a knife for killing a chicken or bull

This fasting! What matter if we live or die?  
Our sympathy, our energy, our love  
will be together forever.

---

21<sup>89</sup>  
September

Sonnet 9.38

During this silence, innocent of song,  
concerned with faces, places, shapes of stone,  
things thrusting hands out eager to be known,  
things true in distance proving to be wrong  
on close sensation, I have lost the long  
with drawl of the sap, the undertone  
of leaf's wheat. The heedless rise has blown  
unmarked, unneeded is the looking strong.

I turn today then from the studied mask,  
the attitude commended, phrase essays,  
the imminent insistence of the task,  
because the hard red berries of the law  
report an older, an austerer law  
a season older, suddenly afraid.

---

23<sup>rd</sup> October

✓ Sonnet 10-38

Constructed in my thought, involved by time  
in the relentless architectural plan  
reared first in knotted wits of crazy man,  
and now piled, brick by brick, to wall and dome  
on little nations that have lost their name,  
I lose the old response by which I move  
to tree and reason that aforesaid gave  
my troubled mind the texture of a dream,

when spent leaf crisp in sonnet or in song  
brought ~~back~~ back the pulse & shape of vanished day -  
after a sudden harvest, riches afloat  
and just thick'd blossom blown to speckled fruit  
I gaze on branches where the last leaves hang  
and empty hearted turn my face away.

23<sup>rd</sup> October. 91

Sonnet 11-38

In this reluctant autumn of the year  
abroad in colored woods observe the leaf  
limp with decay, as hieroglyph of grief  
that freedom shone thus swiftly disappear  
from half the world; that time should lurch us near  
the winter of despair; for spring, too brief,  
left summer with no strength for our relief  
against the fading light and gathering fear.

I dared before to dream that summer's pride  
our eager hopes of plenitude should bless,  
that autumn, scorning death should branch a bare  
her bursting clusters ~~on~~ on the mountainside  
of liberty and love and happiness  
like blackberries for anyone to share.



25<sup>th</sup> Oct

Sonnet 12-38

The future narrows to a choice of shirt,  
a set of phrases, way of raising head:  
no use now for the gentle spirit hurt  
that stops surprised and tries to understand;

No time to stalk the sleek though unaware,  
but time to wait for work, or with a crowd  
when some late megalomaniac takes the air  
in open not a miserably proud,

or here an attic office tottering rail  
for knock on door or telegram delayed  
the doubtful messenger who must not fail  
the decent friend who has to be betrayed.

How shall I nurture senses slowly fed  
on sun and leather with this bitter bread?

25<sup>th</sup> Oct 93

Sonnet 13-38

How many like us bred on chest and thought,  
the eye delighted by each angled sail,  
who dreamed a lull of refuge had been wrought  
for windless center in the rising gale,

now drift and swim, tho' the naked spars  
hang out no flag's allegiance, east or west;  
the compass shatters, and the map of stars  
a maze of queries hardly even guessed.

As here we lurch and there, obedient  
to no strict head, but servant of each gust,  
we curse and grudge the quiet voyage spent  
on rigging's crystals and the entic dust.

We should have nestled, threatened with this gloom,  
the wind's intent, not patterns of the spume.



26th Oct.

Sonnet 14-38

Despondent at reported violence;  
The rubber club, the comrade way laid,  
The sniper on the housetop, the immense  
shamefast relief when Benesh was betrayed,  
all art gone barren crazily afraid,  
or over complicated for the sense,  
the wells of wisdom choked, the heart dismayed  
that finds no comfort in time's evidence,

I can but turn from man's crass enterprise  
that mocks his hope with its distorting pain  
while yet there lags a respite from the dark,  
to gaze with free unimplicated eyes  
at mud daubed mariposa or mesh of rain  
that runs like resin down the rough elm's bark.

26th Oct.

95

Sonnet 15-38

Here in a quiet corner of the gloom  
far from the immediate terror glaring high  
the tear streaked faces lifted to the sky  
to watch the long beam track the approaching doom,  
the nervous whisper in the guarded room  
reporting facts that fall implacably  
the cautious gesture warning of the spy  
the club and scuffle and the plundered home,

here where afar we only know of this  
we sit to wait the footstep coming near  
already fling the cards down, will not play  
surrender effort, leave no more to say  
who should have given joy her parting kiss  
and loaded rifles in the face of fear



26th Oct

Sonnet 16-38

I ~~heard~~ <sup>learn</sup> of <sup>one</sup> London painted brown, bear,  
and leaping boar, upon the shadowed wall:  
Their bones bespeak them skilful, swift and tall:  
men write large books to prove them dark or fair:  
till, lost in willing wonder, unaware  
of time's cold flux, I seem to hear the call  
The hunter makes returning & the small  
girl's laughter finding pretty shells to wear.

Yet while I read and dream and half regret  
The bitter dark that quenches their little light  
our epoch closes, and this very day  
a once great nation's word is overset  
her statesmen hector, herber her away  
and art and freedom pass into the night

27th Oct. 97

Sonnet 17-38

The slanted sunlight in the withered tree  
Kindles a sudden brazier of gold  
Noon hurries breathless and the day grows old:  
shadow and sun merge imperceptibly.  
The hill once gorse clothed now is bare and free,  
that showed her ragged scarps in leather fold,  
now looms immense a dark in twilight's cold  
and autumn horses in high majesty.

Here on this quiet day I face in doubt  
The trees I know & love the friendly hill  
with nest & bush familiar as my fist  
and wonder long before the whin is out  
what exile landscape I shall see  
until  
the hill itself is lost in falling mist.



31st October

Sonnet 18.38

Tonight returning, find a little moon,  
calf moon, remote & lost in lonely space,  
my fumble for my penny, glad no glass  
prevented the old magic I have known  
when on the sheaves of Dipswell, or when on  
the thick July leaves in an Irish place  
I have lived in the older light, before the cross  
bound me in worship of the blood dark sun.

I love that older light, the green flesh cold,  
the pale face lifted, and far back the cry  
breaking across the edges of the world.

O moon my crescent, what astrology  
can mesh my steps within the light you give  
who sweat beneath a sky I do not love?

31st Oct 99

Sonnet 19.38

On this all Hallow's Eve the bengal light,  
the small volcano spitting blue & red,  
the roaring tufted wheel fire diamonded,  
make this the gay salute to winter's night.

The guttering rocket falling out of sight,  
the door banged & the blackfaced wench fled,  
heedless of those who call them in to bed,  
bring back my lost youth from time's bitter flight.

I steal again, a lad with squirt & match,  
to blister faint round some unguarded latch,  
then sudden wake, remembering, with shame,  
that wise old land whence first these playthings came,  
where stanteyd soldiers torch the tinder thatch,  
and shattered towers storm heaven with leaping flames.



31st Oct.

Sonnet 20 - 38

It is all Saints' Eve. Tomorrow they will pray  
in twilight cloisters for the souls of those  
who out of night magnificently rose  
unnamed, unnumbered, into Heaven's day.  
And I who walk a stricter, colder way,  
who, early in my thought deciding, chose  
instead of Janey's lyric facts' slow prose,  
must half regret the words I cannot say.

All Hallow's Eve. If thought has any power  
beyond provid limits, let love's mercy fall  
on those who went in Spain's defeated Rome,  
from Liverpool, Provence, and Dougal,  
and by the river ford, the splintered tree,  
died for the dream men call democracy.

Poems in November

15 167  
405 15.

Traveller: a mosaic

I

Speak now if ever O my wandering man  
walking the decks or strolling down the train  
wanting the bell impatient to begin.

I might put formal queries to provoke  
set formal speeches that ignore the clock,  
and let the match drop on the pipe unsmoked:

but better let you speak in your own way,  
half overheard, asides that slip away  
a corner of the damp cloth from the clay.

Speak now if ever O my wandering man

II

Not you, the albatross, on joany wing,  
with only mileage for your journeying,  
nor you, the merlin, circling over stones



littered with splintered bones and bloody feathers;  
or even starting flying from the cold  
harsh Swedish winter to a warmer place,  
like tide of air, like tide predictable  
tied to the shape of twig, your line foretold  
like tracks of steps across the frosted grass

Speak now if ever I shall listen well.

### III

But keep the shells and pebbles in your pocket  
I shall not remark the knife you whittle with.

Say boss was yah ever on the Pacific?

Say didja

didja ever see the Hawaian ships?

My god <sup>boss</sup> ~~man~~ dere's boats for yah Not like dis

Bands playing on every deck

from morning till nearly mornin

Yah just go in an dance the way yah are

when yah feel dat way  
in yer pajamas or drest up in a tux  
Hot-ells det's what dey are Hot-ells  
an de soivice? Boy.

When I was in Rangoon a year ago  
a man came up an sed is yer name Thomson  
I ask yah? Was my name Thomson? Christ.

O albatross I did not cry to you  
with only spume of seas on your tedious span  
Speak now if ever o my wandering man.

### IV

I've just been to Aberdeen to bury an uncle  
now I come over to Ireland for a niece's wedding  
She said it woudnt be right with me not there  
my family are all travellers by nature  
my wife too, Her father had his own ship.  
For me I like the trip to Rensay as back  
on a fine day, in sure for preference.



I have a brother in the naval reserve.

He was called up in October.

○ starting saddle away to another hat.

my fathers came from a little village in Poland  
most of our dead were left by the Elbe and the Rhine

50 I should like to get to Jerusalem before I die  
but it doesn't seem likely now.

We go each year to dig the Scotch potatoes  
and sleep in huts. There was a fire last year.

America not to be good. But is not now.

My elder brother came back with an American wife  
my father a mother moved to the end of the house.

I once was a joiner's helth in Winnipeg  
before the slump came. Six months on the job  
and I was the old hand.

I went to Barrow once to find a job  
but that was before the war.

not these my wanderers speaking, never these  
blown like a feather, floating like a stick  
compelled and driven ebbing flowing going  
hart of a graph's curve in economy  
cysters & figures swelling not changing its total.

## V

Sometimes Ulysses, sunning on the porch,  
will shade his glance for unfamiliar sail,  
with seaman's eye assess her cut & rig,  
hazard her port and cargo; then, at length,  
<sup>stark</sup> {review} sink back in his rich lethargy of thought,  
the islands haast, the many colored seas,  
the hills - and trees, <sup>the stooping</sup> <sup>witches</sup> ~~dark-lives~~ ~~murdered~~ spells,  
recall the dead lad & his cairn of stones,  
and growing petulant demand the boy,  
repeatedly in his high thinning voice,  
bring staff & lead him shadway to the steps  
to talk with the old men among the nets.



At the moment

VI

We usually call that country <sup>now</sup> the Northwest  
Its name is changed so often its hard to remember...  
about three times a year

The Border Region, Soviets, Special Territory -  
Shensi, Kansu, Ning-shia. There's our hope  
a new man is emerging a new hard type.

The troops began the march a hour before dawn

I followed mounted on a shaggy pony  
a caught them up a less'd 'em a rode on  
to camp at nightfall by a little lake

between tall sides of loess, the yellow earth -

Before I was right asleep the troops arrived  
weary a bit but laughing. It was 50 miles  
with mostly bundles of rags and straw for shoes  
I'll say the Eighth Route Army boys are tough

They find a village eating maize, well say,  
they must eat millet, must be no better off.

A charge that from the old provincial armies  
swathing across a province like a scythe

over a field a leaving only stubble  
the people before em little hares in the corn.  
A new man is emerging, a better man

hard in his mind a body, ~~strong as steel~~...  
hard as kind

Small boys from all over China come thousands of miles  
100. to join the devil's brigades a grow to be men  
new men

I want to go back thro Mongolia

The chief town there was only huts & tents  
but now its steel and concrete.

A man I met in Moscow had been there

He says they're the best airmen in the East

They keep formation and their aim's superb.

O Phoenix here is your nest. The flames begin -  
Han Sung Manchur Republic twip by twip  
smoke up in bitter incense

or Polo launchy, stick curved quill in pot,  
I trust ledger from him, with brown clever hands  
feel belt a wallet, a take up once more  
the tale of Kublai to the obsequious clerk.



VII

The lorry before us got halfway across  
 then disappeared in a spinning cloud of sand  
 we parked & waited til the dust died down  
 before it rightly settled a man came out  
 holding bloody hands to his face and swaying.  
 Then the air cleared except for <sup>infrequent</sup> spouts of shells  
 dropping, some duds, on both sides of the road  
 The captain asked me to try to bring it in.  
 About 60 yards I guess <sup>holes</sup> and shells <sup>abround</sup>  
 with little cover  
 so I went walking on the softer ground  
 slowly & ready to flop at the <sup>warning</sup> whine.  
 When I got there the windscreen was smashed clean  
 with glass on the driving seat. But the tyres were O.K.  
 So I stepped in and tried the clutch.

O man with the darting mind & the sharp keen face  
 is this my Phoenix nest? O wandering man

VIII

Earth narrows sudden.

The stage our fate's played out on is the world.  
 Not narrow world of accent, world entire.  
 Rain falls in India & a wench is wed  
 in Rensay. Rain falls not. She is not deved.  
 But less a bestard, by the lack of rain.

IX

When the Kwomintang marched in & burnt us out,  
 we took to the wooded hills & headed north.  
 We carried guns to impress the villagers  
 tho we were rotten shots. Among the trees  
 I practised random potting. My sight is poor.  
 but the words on the printed page have come alive.  
 I cross the Ebro in a two-ton truck —  
 when I was in Rangoon a year ago —  
 on a fine day in June for preference.  
 Now Spion Kop & the mouse & a gaping boy.  
 The mountain road in Persia; a half-mile drop  
 on the right hand, a cliff along the left...  
 I went to Barrow once before the war.



I have gone as far as this in a picture book

150

I have stood on a rock & seen the river below  
a road beside it curving as it curved  
with a toy car humming round a bend <sup>meccano</sup>

I climbed back slowly to the charabanc  
and heard, last village, castle, & battlement  
two teachers behind me talking books & art.

- 0 man on the warm clay bed in the yellow cave
  - 0 man with stubbles chin on the harapet
  - 0 man in the simple room translating trash
- What is the peace you know? Or is it peace?

## X

I plunge & plunge to find the heart of things  
pursue forever the flickering light that leads  
One day it's Gandhi squatting at his salt  
another a cripple in the Capitol  
let Plato spend eternity on his bottom  
my hands for Hermes of the winged heel.

111  
—  
Have you no more to say O wandering man?

Say mister were yah were yah  
even in the Pacific?

But that was in Rangoon a year last June.

I will go back before Hankow has fallen

I lost my papers in Prague with the address...

## XI

Some say from Egypt some from farther East  
our fathers came with holist axe & shard  
The journey is in our bones, we must go back,  
head home forever east as farther east.

No hill is friendly: the earth hold our sweat  
my father's father's flesh is turned to clay  
but his bones lie unrotten, will not perish,  
the distance in them giving them their strength  
will fall to dust in none but native soil  
— and let the old ache die



XII

Speak now instead, my solitary man

Why shift position? Life's an endless flux  
and growth is change: & even death continues  
in merry maggots' life's business.

XIII

Last Spring I studied the rook  
They published my note in 'Ibis' on <sup>the change</sup> habits of feeding.

The year before I studied the problem of flight.

Yes that's the little grebe. The negative's  
a trifle thin but the print is not too bad.

I intend one day to photograph the gannet

They're dug up a new globe roll at the Records' Office  
I hope it throws some light on Pettifer ..

My theory is

The river people used these clubs of stale

for knocking the salmon dead my theory is  
but Thomson for one disputes it.

XIV

I set art's mask against the shifting face  
a catch at moments flash of passing light  
behind the open lids, a moving smile

no break on the painted lips; they pass & pass:  
the mask remains unchanged in my stiffening fist:  
only the mask is real, only the mask.

XV

O bearded poet complaining of your act  
rejoicing only in the painted mask  
denouncing the intrusive telephone  
or you in the little villa facing the sea  
with ordered cushions in the best of taste  
and pictures painted by friends on your mantelpiece  
Have you a Phoenix for me? Or is art long?

I scan the level sentence, the hidden rime  
the deft proficient dialog, the small  
carved Buddha squatting on the polished desk.  
Lonely and ragged eagles too sick to fly  
I do not believe you have ever looked into the sun.



At Malvern I said to Skew

to Stendahl

to Jane Austen

and old Tom Hardy's rest was grey with soap.

The sequel was in its own way amusing.

XVI

I have talked to a reeking tramp who has given me more  
and pocketed a tanner for it well content

Keats cought his heart out for a silly girl  
Blake was mad a merry, Milton blind  
he lookt like Helius with a touch more curl

The sullen thousands I meet in the street at noon  
cant die of immortal verse or worse for love,  
or draw their angels in this jangling light,  
or follow the Eighth Route Army down the cliff.

My phoenix is nested here in that <sup>winter's</sup> ~~blanket~~ near  
the chimney they jeld last week, the slum condemned.

My dilemma shifts to another, a larger plane.

<sup>232</sup> So you need not reckon me now a wandering man.



memory of Langham  
August 1956

8th Nov

Sonnet 21-38

Those summer days of sprawling in the sun  
playing at work, discussing theory  
meeting great names, admiring two or three  
for what they were and not for what they'd done:  
not long the Spanish war had been begun,  
we read and loft but saw small need to be  
awakened from our friendly lethargy  
because of Malaga or Aragon.

It seemed important then that we define  
our philosophic concepts and assist  
the birth of comradeship the discipline  
of being civilized and socialist  
nor dream in our remote equality  
from that same hour all was in jeopardy.

815 117

Sonnet 22-38

I swear allegiance to democracy  
I recognise the debt I owe to Spain  
I move the resolution once again  
and marvel sadly there should ever be  
a soul to doubt my magnanimity.  
— yet all the while from Elbro in the rain  
the hungry comrades who do not complain  
retreat slow foot by foot towards the sea.

I praise their valor and go home to bed  
content my tanner rattled on the plate  
a little pleased with what I'd heard & said  
and glad we planned quite soon to demonstrate

And Lenda's ruins, Dorca's dead  
and all Asturias bare and desolate.



815-10<sup>15</sup>

Sonnet 23-38

I think of Spain: always across the bright  
sun blistered landscape of brown sand & stones  
astride his lonely bag of aching bones  
these rides that last romantic foolish Knight.

I think of Spain: of sorrow's neophyte,  
El Greco tortured, from the spirit's moans  
building Byzantine towers of overtones  
that flickers into spires of blue & white.

I think of Spain: my troubled heart is sturd,  
and pity is forgotten for awhile,  
as memories to imagination come;  
Manolo's bridlike solo of a bird,  
round eyed Dolores, Lanna's twisted smile,  
the whirling jota, and Josepha's drum.

Visit of Basque children in September 1938

Sonnet 24-38 Sequel to S 21. P. 116.

Later we learned. Recall that anxious hour  
in stark November waiting for the news  
Madrid must fall. We had no strength to loose  
before the harsh approach of fascist power.  
A future only left for us to cover  
and whisper hopeless like the tortured Jews.  
Yet some there were with resolute refuse  
to take defeat as changeless paramour.

Madrid remained, remains. Our hearts went out  
in exultation for the new found thing;  
unmand crusaders over land & sea  
as magnet drawn assured, unfaltering:  
instead of our dry academic doubt,  
new shape & slogan for democracy.



19-20 16

Sonnet 25-38

I do not love the Jews. I find their men  
foreign as birds or fishes to my thought:  
their swerving words & actions are not wrought  
to shapes & phrases I demand again  
from life for life's assessment.

Only when  
their younger women move my gaze is caught  
by some deep bloodfelt languour til my taut  
emotion knows itself as alien.

yet birds or fishes turn & seek them will  
beyond my hands' intrusion. They must be  
left free to enjoy or shun my window sill  
to barge in shallow or to chart the sea.  
My heart's cold exile must endure until  
all pulses grant life's catholicity.

20 16

121

Sonnet 26-38

I ~~love~~ not love the Jews, altho when young  
my proud heart found a rich & resonant grace  
in the tense prophets of that wayward race  
from whose red wounds our desert faith has sprung;  
and tho' unskild in any second tongue  
the strength of bitter beauty I could trace  
in words of one with pale everted face  
on squalid pallet, with a bleeding lung.

Then thrust uncomfested on a barren ground  
awhile {<sup>roams</sup> went} faithless with a savage rape  
at life misused until my comfort found  
the subtle logic of the belly's need  
that one, a Jew, had cherted to a creed  
and laid the lines of action for an age.



21st Nov

## Lyric: Swans in Mist.

Bewildered long in thought  
by history's leaping shape  
brief peace too dearly bought  
the grief of China's rape  
the sense of being caught  
in net of no escape

I scarcely saw that day  
came later round the clock  
intent when my way  
ignoring twig and rock  
til winter's chill dismay  
wrote nerve with morning shocks

when on familiar ground  
concerned what time might bring  
I heard remembered sound  
and gaze sped wondering

123

there stretching toward the pond  
saw two white swans on wing

white swans white swans I love  
your flight is free and strait  
with grace you pass above  
bare ledges and broken gate  
nor check for threat thereof  
but wing deliberate.

could I but mark my dream,  
untroubled set my flight  
thru every anxious scheme  
that marks the baffled night,  
to where with misted gleam  
shines level place of light.



20-21 Nov.

A moment comes when man can recognize  
his hand and heart as part of history's  
inevitable purpose, when his will  
among close to toppling ruin finds a still  
compass that points where his safe journey lies  
and is not shaken thro' the gale & rous skull.

Such instant this. Life's wisdom lies ahead  
no dream next by anxiety for bread  
no talent wasted that can not be sold  
for certain shapes and smatterings of gold.  
This future need not wait til we are dead  
but in our hands and strength can now unfold.

125  
23rd

### Sonnet 27-38

I think of China's slow unburied years  
the glaze perfected by ten thousand hands;  
the dark script half a continent understands;  
the wise Kung formel in his joys and fears,  
unrocked from ripeness by small anxious fears;  
the rich soil blown and heapt from desert lands  
that breeds but jamine; and the wall that stands  
no ward now as against marauding spears.

This China slowly moves her giant form  
as the small swarming creatures trouble her,  
we too now to struggle urged by happy dream  
of peace and bread beyond the blackest storm  
Slensi Karen already are astir  
to north and west the hostings torches gleam.



23rd IV.

Sonnet 28-38

The Spaniard brought the horse and syphilis.  
a Tudor pirate shift the moaning slave.

Black woods open shadow for the hunted slave  
from smoking rods that never seemd to miss.  
A new age turns a brighter page on this:

The prosperous planter superceded Spain  
with sweating empire of the sugarcane  
but still in woods drums call and dark logs hiss.

The tortured people tremble in the dawn,  
not right awake, and clench their naked hands,  
their slow minds rife with mangled memories  
of Toussaint and his shining sabre drawn,  
of people's justice land in colder lands  
that comes in gusts across the world's wide seas.

127  
25th IV.

Sonnet 29-38

Urgent and restless, since on every nerve  
life's blunt or gentle fingers move and play  
you pass across each thought tormented day  
no place to blame: you cut across the curve  
my plodding logic maps as certain way  
to that good future which we strive to serve  
when people find the peace their hearts deserve  
have merry years and happily grow grey.

Could you but rest, could you but stay to be  
the eager dancing creature nature planned —  
but till joy weakens in every blossomed tree  
and love descends upon this troubled land  
there is no time for sloth's warm ecstasy  
for you to rest, for you to stay your hand.



## Poems in December

I persist in writing my poems  
partly out of habit as I breathe  
partly from a meritorious intent  
like a man touching his toes before bed

And I cannot say for the life of me  
if any good will ever come of it.

4th.

I would like to exercise power  
power over people and things:  
but people can shut their hearts  
and isolate themselves from me  
and I was never any good at rapping doors.

Anyhow as like as not  
if they did come out  
they'd try to exercise power over me.  
So they'd better stay in  
and leave me to do what I like with words

There is always a chance too  
that the words may arrange themselves  
in a chant or a spell  
and cry down the chimneys  
to where people think they are safest  
round the fire.



✓

Can a man when he is old and garrulous  
when endless suns have left his tired gaze wise  
when tempers of time have thumped & thumbed his features  
can an old man hold a young man  
passing to his game  
or have the right to smile as he sits rocking alone  
with nothing but memories of manifestoes?

131 ✓

An old walled city is blown to bits  
with the people and pottery in it.  
Rape and destruction radiate in pulses of pain.

The pain with a time lag  
is registered in a sonnet in my pocket.

And after awhile  
has no more meaning than  
the clay brown stains on the paper  
you rub off a pound of steak.



Street

19th

I pace the well flagged street past house and house  
exactly quartered <sup>flat. mentioned</sup> ~~and ingenious~~.

Shirt-sleeved a father with a tousled head  
clinks out the bottles and climbs up to bed.

Beneath a lamp two lovers say goodbye:  
the boy turns slow, the girl moves hurriedly.

The street is bare; the sheep are penned tonight  
as windows blacken to the switch off light  
tho' neon glitter at the corner shop.

The little gardens bear a shabby crop  
of trampled grass, tho' once or twice I come  
on lamplight faces of chrysanthemum.

My footsteps quicken to a rhythm I know,  
the pounding tempo of the radio.

A door swings open and a baby cries,  
then sudden slams upon my eager eyes.

Life thrusts through questions: I for answer find  
the shadow of a birdcage on the blind.

Christmas Poems

22nd

I.

To Deirdre

So now my dear another time  
I make a little Christmas rhyme  
not such as men anonymous  
compose on greeting cards for us  
that anyone might choose to send  
to everyone he calls a friend  
but simple rhyme that we dare call  
slight competent and personal  
to mark a book with wishes sent  
that these old stories eloquent  
of Cinderella and Tom Thumb  
bring pleasure with them when they come  
and when the binding's loose and worn,  
the pages scribbled on and torn  
you may at least remember one  
about a boy called Whittington.



II  
To Keith

Now here's a book of aeroplanes  
the icy north where terror reigns  
guns, elephants and mysteries,  
and liners lost on foamy seas  
of cowboy's quick upon the draw  
of racing bikes that break - the law.  
So read it Keith, and never fear  
the wolves are very far from here.  
Your aunt and uncle, strange but true  
for that is what we are to you  
both wish you well and hope this book  
will win at least a second look

155  
III  
To Shirley

✓  
For My Niece.

There was a Piper once who grew  
weary of the tunes he blew  
and begged the Woodland Queen to make  
an elf of him for mercy's sake.

She did. And now his piping's heard  
by none save dragonfly and bird  
By none? Ah no, for when you dance  
I always give a searching glance  
and woud not be surpris'd at all  
if he were piping in the hall.



Sonnet 30-38

28<sup>th</sup>

December

Poems in 1939.

Agen the holly wreath, light spangled tree,  
Roarse carol at the corner, profaned land,  
The parcel huggo, the tambourine's demand  
The cap on Kerb, the bound stumps' tragedy,  
But, not as once, has Christ-been born in me  
When held in mother's grasp I saw them stand  
Dark muffled singers in a merry band  
Beneath a lamp, with just clear melody.

Then, the bright robin on the Christmas card  
Bore <sup>Christ's</sup> dear mercy on his smouldring breast;  
On every hill tall shepherds stood to guard  
Their sleeping flocks. But now it is not so:  
For in this gathering twilight of the west  
There is no star, no footsteps in the snow...



6th January

## A Certain Gain

The year began with snow that blew to sleet  
gustily at first then falling heavily  
when we went to the door to hear the bells  
the rain fell on our faces listening,  
and all the gutters choked with sudden thaw.

New Year upon a twitching world of fear,  
given over to the coward & hypocrite.

The next day was a gale that rocked the house  
with squalls of hail upon the shaken panes.  
We shut ourselves against the universe.

Then on the first bright morning I went out  
into an earth new wakened innocent:  
but Europe hovered so about my thought  
I felt mechanical and unalert,  
till down the hill I heard wingwhip of air.

139

and stood to gaze at unfamiliar flyer  
with blunt-shen thrusting, dark against the light.

~~X The swan I looked for passed in truth a goose~~  
white on the belly grey on neck & wing  
flying before alone before a threatened storm  
I had no hint of, random blown or lost.

That bent-goose passing saved a bitter day  
with sharp delight of vision & memory  
unwrought to symbol of my tangled hopes.

So when on day that followed I went out  
my heart was open to the naked world.  
The hills were cast in snow, along the slopes  
dawn's gentle touch of red spread furtively;  
the sky between hills green as daffodil  
breaking to yellow of the wind-flashed flower;  
while a round cloud of brown drew steadily  
back from the peaks, and heaven overhead



was blue of summer, clearer crystalline.

The sun, a soup of gold, rose in a mist,  
but clouds before it parted, grey & brown,  
had golden edges limning them with fire.

Whatever comes this year is not all grief.

---

23rd Jan

Lectures by Anthony Bertram W O U B

The audience comes in cars and takes off its furs  
and listens with neat Remyt heads to the lectures.

He is a slight dark man talking eloquently of Cezanne  
and the cubic reaction to the misted impressionist vision,  
the square statement and the cone's precision.

We have seen on the screen slide repeating slide  
of square house shadowed in the hard white light

but all the while in Derry of the oaks  
Derry of drums, the smoke blowing over the wall  
one house holds forty seven human beings  
the only watercloset is in the yard.

There was one in the house, the landlord removed it  
and let the room for seven and six a week

The total rental is two hundred pounds

The man who draws it is an alderman



30th Jan'y

Sonnet I. 39

Died 11. 2. 38?

To the Strange Memory of Sam M'Creery

You were my friend awhile then not my friend

My heart still ignorant of my offence

recalls the gestures of your violence

that took again the things you once did lend

and left my door in rage no words could mend.

To me you died that day. The evidence

snatched here & there of why you left and whence

could keep no hope alive beyond that end.

One saw you walking in the hills at night;

another passing unfrequented street:

it was a weaver not you.

Not you who gave  
an etcher's strength to summer's brief delight  
but ghost who travels with unresting feet  
the cold unmeaning counting of the grave.

30th

143

After Visit to Rostrevor, Co. Down

When sun was winter high

and trees stood thin and bare

great flocks of rooks came by

bright in the shining air

and tho' the light was wan

a stack of men forked apart

glowed yellow till it shone

like gold upon the cart

The year had just begun

to break frost's discipline

with flecks of gold upon

the dark green spikes of whin

sheep starlings in a crowd

marsh for the sunset flight



The wet earth newly plowed  
was gash with silver light.

The river flowing still  
repeated carefully  
white house and shadowed hill  
black bough and sunset sky.

145  
31st Jan'y

Sonnet II. 39

Winters tide turns: already minted gold on which  
may at Lane's end spend: above, conduct of cloud  
breasting crest proudly like a full bellied proud  
tall storied chantry of sail bell heavy port to win.  
With this gay gilt dismissal of the year's sin  
the young unsoiled lives everywhere keen in redeemed crowd  
only the ribbed tree on the hill, the willow bow  
shakes in the sunset's blood like Christ's discipline.

I have no heart for nor have thought to spare  
for Christ, beater with rods, the eaten god of wheat  
swung like a straw charm, harvest knot to wear  
blue cross stained with life at his sprouting feet,  
but inhabit an older colder world where  
magic burns with no more than this sun's heat.

Imitation of Hopkins



31st Jan

## Images of light

Bred on this island at the edge of time  
whose waves bear little but tear more away  
where the earth rocks with wonder to her prime  
no greater light begets a wider day:

lost in the sunset of a bog forlorn  
only the flooded ditches gleaming bright  
with glimmer only at through summerd moon  
and far stars falling down the sky at night:

mocked by this fate remote and dispossessed  
like feeble kings defeated dreaming still  
of some high fabulous glory in the west  
of some tall city on its golden hill:

rhetorical we mutter guessing part  
of what our frantic syllables imply  
til shivering with grief tormented heart

147

we seek the wharves from whence the ferries ply

that lead for darkness of the rimming sea,  
the absolute, the place that ends in ice  
beyond the cape where whale ribs like a tree  
cage a green moon in phosphorescent vice;

mesht in this fear and offered no escape  
from the slow terror of enclosing night  
I shut my eyes and with blind fingers shape,  
from dream and hope, these images of light.



Now at this added hour  
 when light lasts longer yet  
 somehow the sun's old lower  
 joints ere the sun is set

and in this naked light  
 earth shivers bare and chill  
 as that old witch, the night,  
 hides farm and field and hill.

Sonnet III-39

Already I have heard the quirked song  
 watcht new wings flutter in a werner air  
 toucht sticky spike on twigs that still look bare,  
 and thought the winter had not been too long  
 who caught in that autumnal web of wrong  
 gave up my spirit to a bleak despair  
 and told my quaking heart another year  
 would ring the curtain down, would sound the gong,

and life we loved the careless and the free  
 outspoken laughing and intransigent  
 would like the curls dead leaves of dying tree  
 blow out the way the Babylonians went  
 That year's begun I scarce had dared to see  
 yet bird and twig seem gay and innocent.



a memory of Ballywalter  
August 1937.

31st.

## The Barley Field

The Jonsquae cottage flanked a narrow lane  
had only the gate near rats beyond  
that ended in a stile and rusty gate

I woke with sun upon the roughcast wall  
when low voices at the windowsill  
distinguish as sleep ebbs from my slow mind  
to three men talking waiting for a fourth  
who came on cycle to their badinage  
They spoke and bantered then they went away  
still laughing at the man who had been late.

And as I planned my rising resolute  
I wondered where they went to from my door  
and why they met there at that time of day  
Had it been late at evening or dusk  
they might have gathered for that former man  
the tenant here before me to come out

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and add his gun or gaff to enterprise  
not lawful save in other's leisured days.  
But now before the dew had left the ground  
it must be labor bade them that they came  
a good halfmile from any other house.

I rose and washed and laying on the ledge  
the crumpled towel in the sun to dry  
glanc'd round to see if they were anywhere,  
heard then their restless voices out of sight  
half up the hill behind the low byre wall  
calling and laughing in a field of barley

I climbed the wall and saw them laboring  
They had gone in to open up the field:  
two swinging scythes, two binding after them,  
making a pathway for the reaper's girth

And as I stood I wondered if aye  
I'd see men working in that ancient way



how many times again in that same field:  
barley and roots and grass repeatedly  
till they were old or I had gone away

Somehow the quiet pattern of the earth  
swung deep within my heart, grass barley root,  
earth's yield abundant, only men at fault,  
and maddened to silence by mortality.  
when slate or flagstone insulates the stance.

Sonnet IV - 59

I shape the sonnet, try what strength remains  
in the bronze stove and the firm nestlet  
lest that old still my tenant hand forget  
worn out of years or youth's shrill growing pains.  
For I must run the uncertain reason's gains  
the haggard guest but unexplored is yet  
secure in knowledge that the world is set  
for screaming nights of light good aeroplanes.

I find the form familiar, easily  
the two vines balance and run steady on  
the molten metal bits ringing close  
The earth should split and rocking time should be  
a madman's chequer board with me no lawn  
from the crushed petals } I shall } etch the rose  
  (ones)    (name)





visit to Chapel in Warrenpoint  
Jan'y 1939

1st Feby.

## Chapel Dust

Waiting in town between infrequent trains  
mid January cold and growing dusk  
the cafe's shut til June the bank blinds drawn  
only the grocer's open with a girl  
filling things in the window and a man  
trundling a barrel off a bucketed dray  
and two men talking snail across the square  
I turned from broad street down a villa row  
past brass in parlors and a lot of bulbs  
til high steps and a statue market a church  
I climbed the granite noting Patrick's stance  
saw cross in stone befingered ringed with grease  
and stood in corner with oil coiling water  
swung door on stall of pamphlets and went in  
to the dim stained glass cold interior  
between low pews to where the candles burned:  
to left the pulpit, stations of the cross  
gaudily painted pane along the wall

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brass glittered on mosaic, brocaded cloth  
hung chill and motionless with metal thread  
marking <sup>some</sup> the letters of the alphabet:  
two children tiptoed in and prayed awhile  
a shabby woman in a rusty shawl  
stepped quickly to the rail and crumpled down  
crossing her face and bosom, muttering.  
I stood and gazed beyond the reedos  
to the bright window flecked by fading light  
Christ and his mother Christ at miracles  
Christ crowned a centre with a blessing hand  
and sceptre slanted. Seven candles burned  
a box of matches of familiar brand  
lay on a tray. I felt a certain urge  
to pay my penny and set up a light  
not to this colored Christ or the unknown god  
but simple flame to sway with the other flames  
against the encroaching gloom upon our time  
suppress the fancy smile a mockery  
turned clicking heel on marble and went out



Not this my father's faith, Jan otherwise  
bare to the eye but blazing in the heart.  
Have I not heard old men cry Praise the Lord  
with shining faces? That faith too is dead  
I went there to admire the colored glass  
and pass some minutes till my train was due  
I came out as I went in an atheist,  
cold and unknown in a forsaken place.

---

157  
5<sup>th</sup> Feb'y

## Elegy for Hope

Return from promenade to empty house  
only unpack the smaller bag with sponge  
lay out on ~~the~~ dusty table comb a brush  
for life resumes the tinted mind of change.  
Time now to pick the papers up and start  
some tongue of movement in the frosted grate:

but soot has fallen on the newspapers;  
a starling's nest in chimney guesst from smoke:  
time sticks to unresponsive calendar,  
I pluck the dead fruit of the month I like  
slowly with dread of calcinated joy  
Polling a pier or fishing in the bay

The chairs are shrouded only goats dare sit  
in spring sunk vallies of a friendly rump  
the letter box is stuffed with bargain lists  
leaflets and letters with a halfpenny stamp



Suppose death's disappointing legacy  
awards life with an exile's privacy?

A rhomboid loaf held by an unrust pot  
Smick on its light of matchboard. Wash your hands,  
surprised at water cold from Tap market hot  
The dripping cistern does not understand  
its leisure ended for compulsive claim  
must no more chuckle to himself alone.

Written on boardship to L'pool

159  
9/5 March

### Somet-V

Once in October when a cheated land  
held breath in terror of descending flame  
when the grey muggles followed swirled hand  
and some at corners cursed a braggart's name  
I made this journey.

Those engaged to die

held glass to light a swallowd their dismay  
left in their unaccustomed living,  
and some men pact the deck til break of day

I snatcht some hours of rest, in friendly sleep  
wrappt like a baby. Time could do no more.  
The worst befallen. Now was but to keep  
faith in a line of light along a shore  
where beyond crested currents of despair  
men rise to mercy in a juster air.



23<sup>rd</sup> March

In this spring's swift campaign  
assault of hedge and tree  
filtration of the rain  
and hail's artillery  
counterattacks of frost  
rally of yellow whin  
my scrambled soup is lost  
before the larks begin.

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23.3.39

Experience at lunch hour  
in allotments

Today at noon oppressed  
by the cold jolt of men  
between two showers I pass  
oblivious of the sun  
and the clean light mist stay  
along the sodden lane  
of stones and rutted clay  
to where the stream runs brown

Then sudden on my thought  
troubled a vague with dread  
intended distant note  
of long forgotten birds  
a high or climbing lark  
took song up as he rose  
as tho he tried to make  
Tune of uncertain stairs.



24.3.39

Sonnet VI

Brooding on Keats and his swift ebbing life  
 Knowledge achieved too late, success denied  
 That great heart-pulsing in his bleeding side  
 The obstinate girl who could not be his wife  
 The metal of his thought become a knife  
 That circumstance thrust in the captive ty'd  
 As surely as that other crucified  
 Knew peace he died for root and joint of strife.

I weigh'd my luck. Born with untainted blood  
 A certain talent for a ready phrase  
 And quiet passion of yielding rest and joy  
 The mesh in shadows that bode collapse of good  
 And barren stretch of bummed and soulless days  
 I did not envy that immortal boy.

Gave lecture on Keats 12th March  
 read Lowell's 'Life'  
 a mummy 'K & Shakespeare'

25.3.39

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After visit to Clevedon Sunday  
 Home of Patrick Mayben

The March day ends in peace.  
 Across the garden and beyond the hedge  
 where the plowed field laps its brown waves of earth  
 a blackbird sings alone

Behind the Antrim hills the setting sun  
 draws his slow fleshing shafts of hand-dialt light  
 back to his flaming core.

The earth is chill and dark. scarce feather stir.  
 no swallows yet to move beneath the tiles:

only an arc of sky  
 is warm but cooling as the light retreats  
 and the spelt gold runs thin into the blue.

We talk, my friend and I,  
 beside at fireside, overtaken by the gloom,



of cresting crisis poised for avalanche.

We are uncertain both  
which way to leap when once the grinding roar.  
The singing blackbird and the setting sun  
provide no <sup>prophecy</sup> easy best.

This island somehow lurches into spring  
to this day closes. What but proofless hope  
for summer opulent,  
and sober autumn for wise thoughtful men  
before this planet heave its tilted ring.

27.3.39

Sonnet VII

A dry north wind in March that stays the spring  
with grey and dusty ruffle on the stone  
for these three days now steadily has blown  
and warded off the imminent swallow's wing.  
No song reported yet has not been heard  
since when broke bright in milder corner set:  
the blackbird startling thrush but never yet  
that harshly calling or that mocking bird.

For April then reserved the weekend land  
between the white rain and the flashing sun.  
For April this. Yet who dare weigh the chance  
as that month passes that I will not stand  
at dawn by gangway with a slanted gun  
and hear the year's first cuckoo loud in France.



30.3.39

Then October grew wiser with the years  
knew naught could claim his heart a willing hand  
save comfort for the loneliness of tears  
save knowledge of the shape and strength of land.

Yet found him landless tho his fathers came  
over the hills, the sunstroked crying hills  
where the day dies on savage couch of flame  
and laughter of the chuckle-throated rills.

So seeing men at labor in a field  
with dog at plowheel stoit to cry salute  
but tho he woud no answer woud they yield  
but bent in motion slow of head and mutle.

Turned then away his heart an empty thing  
his hands unbidden now to move or make.  
No sky within him where larks might climb & sing

no more to slip from cloud: no day to break.

30.3.39

You brought some gorse in bloom, a shed of moss  
from ledge now gathered in the evening sun  
when the fall shadows slanting lay across  
the barren fields the rain had beaten on

You set them in a little jar of glass  
beside the clock that ticks away the spring  
and tho they brought green images of grass  
and ewes with lamb and currant blossoming

and stacks in yard, and voices sounding loud  
at open door and budding ash and bird  
that sang his heart out close against a cloud:  
it was not these I saw, not these I heard.

I saw the spring go by and shrink and yield



Whistling summer in her high among  
the black bean blossoms in the narrow field  
the cows in clover and the uncut hay

the autumn heavy with the bearded grain  
and eidersom in apples rotting slow  
the dark november skies of driven rain  
the moon on water and the moulded snow,

as the spring comes back across the land  
with lark and whin in marsh bright revelry  
- as wonders of you <sup>it stretch an older</sup> (still wood stretch a) land  
to gather now <sup>age from</sup> from some old wind turned tree.  
ja bloom or moss and I be there to see.

30.3.39

Sonnet VIII

I dreamed at sixty being large and wise  
with greying beard and tumbled shocks of hair  
with vintage speech well-changed courageous fair  
a hidden humor in my weary eyes  
saluting freely each new enterprise  
no midnight hour surrenders to despair  
no jagged banner when young men declare  
the images I loved fantastic lies.

At sixty so. Content in having known  
a richly textured love, a friend or two  
achieved a stately resture of my own  
for what the passing years had proved as true  
yet a thogah between what's scorching dew  
what blinding light, what baring of the bone?



31.3.39

Sonnet IX

Straining and breathless savagely intent  
 He argued out his case relentlessly  
 They bade him wait till the cold spell was by  
 He packed his box and begged until it went.  
 The staff surrendered and the word was sent  
 of his returning. Then with tearless eye  
 not needle drunk now knowing what it meant  
 the tall gaunt man was driven home to die

For the wide ward with bed remote from bed  
 with windows open to the morning air  
 for punctual needle putting him to sleep  
 he wanted more to lay his aching head  
 on greasy back of long familiar chair  
 with wife and child the darkest watch to keep.

Arthur M'Allister attendant in B.M.A.G.  
 returned from Sanatorium this week.

31.3.39

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Sonnet X

As he lay there what slipping memories  
 mood quietly from out the thronged days  
 the hot bazaar beneath the flogging rays  
 nights in Baghdad the Tigris and the flies  
 cool evenings in Persia and the cries  
 from town below as with a sentry's pace  
 he walked the wall, the sleek and diggy place  
 when loamy ground with slow enterprise.

Long voyage home the gnawing quarantine  
 the rotting leg stored up by running foot  
 the cold some mornings waiting for the storm

but in this bleak nook must intervene  
 the first parade for ignorant recruit  
 the first walk with his girl in uniform.

M'Allister served in Royal Marines before  
 in India as artillery in France, Mesopotamia Persia



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January	6	54
February	2	87
March	10	126
April	24	508
May	11	145 [53-920]
June	6	66 59.986
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September	4	162: 63.1148
October	11	154
November	27	400
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Total 110 poems — <sup>lines</sup> 1,910 1938



