



Book XIX

Poems by

John Hewitt

January 1942 -

## Tanka Rima

I've read too much of what the poets wrote  
 the trivial lyric - and the shoddy tale  
 the scammed couplet sticking in the throat

til my response is passionless and stale  
 and as the grey type slithers past my eyes  
 the shapes crooked are fugitive - and frail

sans the bright contours of the mind's surprise  
 blurred as the labeled forms of day's routine  
 that ask and need no least clear scrutinies

to flush the pulse with what their features mean  
 and set the hushed heart knocking with delight  
 as at the first frost or the trees' first green

or life in water held against the light  
 and in this numb mood then my timid thought  
 checks at its pauper state and rocks with fight

2.I.42

4

that length of days should be so dearly bought  
by heart's attrition - and the glutted sense  
which makes a poison of the stuffs it sought  
and mocks me with a dotard's innocence.

Walking in winter how the eyes will stretch  
their hydra hands and grope for the black bird  
about 15 open, keeping wings watch  
for green nail tip or leaving hint of seed

So bearded exiles clear the gaps in ice  
and see the blue wake open to their home  
yet half regret the now familiar place  
that in a month will only be a name.

2.I.42

We are so tread and selvedge of the earth  
that from its changes we can never rest;  
must always rake the ashes from the hearth  
and let the nettles cover up the past.

Dare someone offer - as the crown of death  
a halting moment by the place we love?  
The swarming grass invades the lonely path;  
if we then not the context shall survive.

2.I.42

### Report Centre.

In this stale air the blue smoke bites the eyes  
we change the guard we sign the book and wait  
lest drowning danger take us by surprise  
and the slow shunting system prove too late.

So we have waited marking down with care  
the lazy voices' iterate routine  
that sudden signal howling may declare  
the bent up boilers of a shrewd machine

And somehow in our places we have known  
a certain pride that tho all else may sleep  
the strange antennae of the telephone  
their poised and patient vigil ever keep.

## On the Choice of Titles

An earnest scholar stilled to weigh  
from evidence of shard and bone  
why creatures of a cruder clay  
left laborious rituals in stone  
Took note of nimble peasant hands  
and what they wrought at, page by page  
Til bound in bulk the record stands  
entitled "Irish Heritage"

That what he wrote was rescued well  
from progress and its deaf machine  
that scarce tolls the craftsmen's knell  
to me that little still must mean  
The coiling tangle of desire  
that thrust across this windy stage  
with breaking hearts or wits on fire  
that is the Irish heritage

The coarse buffoon with bawdy laugh  
moulds who holds the mob in cowering land

The randy squire whose epithet  
is scrawled across a beggarland  
the poets' <sup>talk</sup> <sub>joke</sub> <sup>tinker's tenor</sup> the drunkards song

The cattle dealers' storm of rage  
when sober daylight proves him wrong —  
This is the Irish heritage

The stubborn martyr to a cause,  
rebel's dying final  
The patriotic eloquence

The master wheedling your applause  
and after pocketing your pence  
The man who faces death or fails  
with only threadbare words for woe  
The dreamer walking in the hills —  
This is the Irish heritage.

Who takes a sober pen in hand to write  
 in the slack hours that arch the middle night  
 he tempts disaster lays his nature bare  
 to the dark monsters of the starry air  
 The weary wrist too flexible for his will  
 lies ready for the bony joints to thrill  
 into a maniac scribble which may slay  
 the shapes and faces men shd never know  
 and show his gritty eyes jnd strength breed  
 from that compulsion never will be freed  
 but always know even in the sun of day  
 what melancholy creatures round him play  
 and what the torments which exult and press  
 about the heart unnummed by wretchedness

And even if a morsel's form of good  
 whisper at broken to be understood  
 his vision grows distorted by the rest

can only cower from work unmanifest  
 and 10 by chance one such may joy his pen  
 to spell a wisdom never known to men  
 yet in his waked hours it will but seem  
 the foolish logic of a faded dream.

When I was exiled to the bitter north  
 I left the comfort of the gliding boat  
 for jolt of wooden wheel and axle creek  
 I left well sculptured walls for rough cut beams  
 and cried farewell to lonely lake and hill  
 for sojourn in a tangled wilderness

When I came to my new appointed place  
 I walked this famine for the crops had failed  
 the harvest there had taken to the wastes  
 as hid by bandits, the weeklings left  
 fills their staved days with litigious despair.

From the English prose of Tu-Sung Po  
 translator

9/10.I.42

## Earth's End

First the vast globe shall slow and slower spin  
 and man nomadic shall pursue the light  
 Then imperceptibly must there begin  
 a scorched and desert hemisphere of day  
 and a cold halfworld of unbroken night

The tides shall stop with random ebb and flood  
 and the old studied wisdom men have told  
 be all forgotten or misunderstood

The weary grass shall scarcely have the strength  
 to take the blow and in its gouty fold.

and the few men who gibber on the rim  
 Crying from dark blight to sleep or pluck  
 the shrivelled berries from the withered limb  
 shall whisper in their frantic loneliness  
 and croon sad songs about their failing luck.

## To the Faint Shade of Rudyard Kipling

O you were proud a you chanted loud of the snipers on the tops  
 of the desert [this] a the blinded eyes of the file Not would not stop  
 You beat your song lost land a long that men might turn to know  
 The jetsis drops of the jungle swamps or the grinding ice of the [green]  
 both are fitting place for a master race to be braved dumb a white  
 enduring the swoon of the tropic noon or the chill of the arctic night  
 The [green] leeks are at home far over the foam with the tents on the village  
 for profits must go in a steady flow to the ticken tape machine

You could not tell that the magi spell had less than an age to run.  
 Not those Janny claps the fanatic Japs would grab their place in the  
 and bombers would roar over Singapore as the lights go out in Bombay  
 and the face Not was white in a single night stoned him a most terrible

"The Bell"  
July 1942

16.I.42

## Remember from August in West Donegal

I remember walking this the August twilight  
along the narrow lane from house to house  
the boys here playing hurling fast and shouting  
and two black calves there making mournful cry

It seemed the long way round that we were taking  
over a rough ground higher than the bog  
three fields away white foam was on the breakers  
~~the great wind's opposition made us tired.~~ <sup>said's both dog.</sup>

The darkness came and window after window  
held out its yellow candle. we went on  
by gulls that cried above the water's din  
slow pacing now a painfully admonished.

We reached the three small houses at the gate  
that feed them where the drive turned to the right  
It was too late to make a call we argued

There was no blink of light in any room

But halfway down the drive we saw the winter  
still working on the garden with his wife  
I shouted and he started up to answer  
and in the gloom his face had glimmered white.

16.I.42

I met a painter trudging thro the snow  
with well wrapped picture brought for me to see  
He stripped the cord & paper off to show  
the quiet essay of his artistry  
and held it up. The forms were drawn with skill  
the colors were the richest - the comb being  
green stem a golden cup of daffodil -  
yet that white landscape suck the substance dry.

14

21.I.42

For the British Troops in Northern Ireland

O pity these

The unattached and the supremely bold  
wandering at last nameless as the kine  
who lost their names when they were driven in  
from the small pastures where their names are known

O pity these

angry and ill at ease  
in a strange country that their fathers wronged  
and reluctantly waiting something great  
that shall release them into ecstasy  
the taste of victory  
or familiar gate.

21.I.42

16

## Dark Journey

This with the daylong journey and dismayed  
by the strange lumpy country and the light  
that ebbed so quickly out of everything  
and left us rocking in the bus like souls  
shot numbly past the limits of the flesh  
into a dismal limbo ... we resigned  
all forward hopes or warning premonitions  
glancing with scarce recording eyes upon  
the dykes and gables that our headlands strayed ...

21.I.42

When the last war had dribbled out of print  
 and my good uncle's death had found its place  
 with all the square bronze tablets and stone men  
 I found my father who had been those years  
 a quiet shadow not to be disturbed  
 a generous companionable man

I found my manhood with him in a mind  
 that set by mine had wrogo my tangled thought  
 uncoil by warm attraction - and begin  
 to seek a stem & stature of its own

Trotting to school beside him I began  
 to mangle the hearsay stories by the hearth  
 of stars and shepherds and the golden tales  
 of tall gods out of Greece with sterner knowledge  
 of suffering men with wisdom in their mouths  
 into a fair philosophy for a boy

23/24/I

He did not clear the ground or plot the chart  
 save by suggestions I was free to choose  
 and shrewd examples out of many junks  
 of less men met the batwings doubts that beat  
 about the byways of all lonely roads

Then level in his mind and base secure  
 his cool demeanour gave me goal and mark  
 to seek a start from . After many years  
 it sometimes seems as if I had done home  
 to charity - and bagless confidence  
 that needs no apoloism for its sheer proof  
 For epigrams are rockets in the dark  
 that serve to blow the climbing waves round  
 the foundering vessel .

I remember now  
 the sunlight flashing from the rounded flints  
 along Nairby's strand , the bishopt's grave  
 the smell of damp within the walls , the sun  
 sinking , a pallid disk , across the sea

on our own Irish hills, for he was there  
 with me and grounding every element -  
 of prompted fancy that my lively mind  
 proddled & swung on. Why should I recall  
 the floating swans the ivy rotted arch  
 the stain spind belfry or the sharp peakt caps  
 the dogs between the wheels the Janus eaves  
 whence once like Dante we were born blight  
 and all the thumb'd & catalog'd array  
 of jigsaw pictures Flanders came to me  
 since all who dwelt here and lives open  
 like wrist hair glistening when I lift my hand  
 a he is here to share the coded sight.

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After the hail and sleet-  
 that piled on kerb and fence  
 and offered to the street-  
 snow's old magnificence

The west wind scour'd the air  
 of all its saggit grey  
 til heaven was high and bare  
 about the failing day

3/2/42

22

I thought tonight of all the lovers gone  
the tall the proud the swift of foot the fair  
who shod the woods or walking in the dawn  
by some fern feathered pool shook dewbright hair  
and how a bloody end was sure for each  
because their love was far too weak to win  
more than a mumbbling poet's after speech  
seeking a subject for his discipline.

Once arrogant in youth I set your name  
with names that leap too easily from the tongue  
Forget the boast: it was a foolish game  
forgiven only when the heart is young  
Rather let pray our love last all our days  
than be remembered in a poet's phrase.

The attitudes my fancy, limited  
by this jaded epoch wishes to assume  
are of the aging poet's shaggy head  
the fine words spoken in a friendly room  
the good men laughing with the laborers  
over the gate in some green country place  
the schoolboy stopping with a breathless stare  
remembering a stanza and my face.

But these are not the gestures I had planned  
when all the charted ways of men were plain  
rather the solemn tribune's lifted hand  
the voice that shook the sunbeams not in vain  
or gravely bowing to the world's applause  
personified, a people or a cause.

The fair boy who was married far too soon  
 put on the stride he thought his father wore  
 and patch'd from books the snippets of a tune  
 that made his loutish shambling on the floor  
 throw shadowgraph of grace upon the wall  
 You see him gazing at across his shoulder  
 debts & despairs may lift their hands a cell  
 they'll melt away when he is rich and older.

He gets his wife with child & runs away  
 to jolly talk with educated girls  
 The wolf may howl but he remains unbroken  
 He'll analyse its latest flick or play  
 and at the friendly fire his pipe smoke curls  
 as sleepily as the things he's never written.

This doctor's son this thief whose shocking lies  
 won him a laughing point from bar bbar  
 has a warm face - and sympathetic eyes  
 that mock his ill made panoply of war  
 He steals your books he offers bouncing cheques  
 with such affronted air and wounded pride  
 you'd scarcely dare to thwart him or to vex  
 so frail a spirit or so crucified.

This talk rewards you well for half an hour  
 with its vast stride of epic rhetoric  
 The prairie stance the Mayakovsky power  
 are something felt and no mere mystery's trick  
 til you recall with sickening regret  
 he and Van Gogh and Christ are your debt.

3. 3. 42

7. 3. 26

## Automatically written Sonnet

for seven nimble Thursdays gone away  
a coughing hamcar broke its wisdom tooth  
the pale men said I have no more to say  
but marmalade resents the flannel truth  
let none rebuke me for my periscope  
that ways a frantic fit as grows an ear  
the pink remarks of others gather hope  
and dig a stinble on its lost career  
  
so much the sample who will lose the rent  
the tricycle is far too new to sing  
for me to rob the bithard of its scent  
and drag a lambsoft attitude of string  
  
but if this armchair will not melt to cheese  
I'll take your pretty and divide my fleas.

The hospitable bush  
come out to see who passes  
do you sit by the fire  
til it is time for mess.

The floor is bare the bed  
is slabby in the corner  
but the fire talk is ready  
and the wide hearth is warm.

Waiting in patience til the winter fled  
 and these bare boughs held more than buds of rain  
 assurd from other springs the hoarded hopes  
 have certain virtue for the fairly sane

I watcht the twiptips with that darting glance  
 the starting lives by longing for a tree  
 to mark the moment when I could unleash  
 the tushy tendrils of my ecstasy

but in the sudden fits and starts of March  
 the days came colder and the sky grew low  
 and what I thought to see alert with green  
 was bowed and heavy with fat ponds of snow.

Concerned too much with talk to little crowds  
 of what men do at best ignore, alone  
 when understanding faded growing louder  
 exhausting bakers' lists to name the stone

my orbits swerved into remoter space  
 nor tethered now to always solvent ground  
 but lost in nebulae of desks and places  
 I hold no gold to back my paper pound.

Jun 17. 3

Sonnet 6.42

Now on the brink and threshold of my prime  
all to the sick world lunches out of gear  
and every moment holds its mocking gear  
I dare to praise the fulness of my time  
There still were roads to follow hills to climb  
and instants when the worth of breath was clear  
my asperlines were apt and now are dear  
and chief of these the friendly craft of wine

The days have lacked not insolence and wrong  
and I have said my say as shall appear  
when time requires it which will not be long  
or I mistake the qualities that men  
here yet to slay for safety <sup>so till</sup> until then  
I'll shape and nurture my untroubled song

Jun 17. 3<sup>30</sup>

Sonnet 7.42

I have loved life not only as it sped  
along the byroads that have brought me gain  
the trees a leaf or bare the pelting rain  
the fallen clouds about the watershed  
the tossing loosestife as the sunlight spread  
of balanit wing, the lost and tasseled grain  
the berry heavy hedges in the lane  
the tilted bats that skirmish round my head.

not these alone but voices of my kind  
caught at a corner, rather overheard  
than sought for or demanded, for my mind  
like a steep field from stroke labor free  
accepts the thistledown the random seed  
borne by the wind, beasts' flank or back of birds.

Walter  
Jones  
Summer 1943

21.3.42

The lyric sonorously rimed  
with chiming echoes out of books  
was never yet by bard designed  
to match the weather of her looks.

The sonnet moving to its close  
with golden octave pause and clinch  
was never woven yet to hold  
the laughing eyes the tilted chin.

And the 'ho' he spent ten years or more  
on stanza's shape and ways of words  
I'd squander all the skill he stored  
to grant you half a glimpse of her.

21.3.42

34

The tall man spilled his cards  
and stood up with a cry  
as hard words ~~broke~~<sup>started</sup> the way for harder  
and insults followed lies

I score in sudden flash  
my caution learnt at school  
and curse the fate makes passion  
the privilege of fools

Rversed

19/22.3

36

in halper speech stand manaced without  
have so still a culte mode of song.  
and dare not enter those great Halls of song  
of the grave English, lyric Irish tongue.

Once alien here my fathers built their Rouse  
claims drained and gave the land the shapes of use  
and in their setting brought a rizzard hoard  
of well rubed words that left their overtones  
in the old England of the chalky downs

The native Irish limping to the hills  
took with them the enchantments and the spells  
that in the clans' free days hung gay and rich  
on every twig of every thorny hedge  
and gave the rain pocket stone a meaning past  
the blind engraving of the Jibous post.

So I, because of all the buried men  
in Ulster clay, because of rock and glen  
and mist and rain and quality of air  
as Irish in my thought as any done,  
who now would make a vine to fix that thought

21/22 · 3

## Quest

I have fingered every tick  
 even found in verse or rime  
 swung the anapaestic line  
 carved the brittle lyric

Tripp'd with blunt hexameters  
 into cluttered cluttered speech  
 bit my tongue and ground my teeth  
 envirous of talkers

Who by grace and natural ease  
 fluke the loaded syllables  
 till a foreigner may spell  
 magic from the verses

Now before death comes I wish  
 I may have the skill to make  
 an inevitable shape  
 rimes that may not perish.

Dissatisfied with click's heavy verse  
 that wears the bland ancestral features plain  
 the homophasic noun the bloated adjective  
 all floating round like monting aldermen

He tied my hand - as vest mylazy wit  
 with consonantal rimes and assonance  
 twisting them slick complexities to fit  
 the subtler levels of my eloquence

Their only virtue is that I may know  
 a little more of words spent the time  
 when with a flourish I repair the full  
 voluptuous magnificence of rime.

finished 24-3-42

## Winter in Armagh

The army lorry cold anonymous  
straining its plates and groaning heavily  
bore me at speed along the winter road  
between black hedges under a grey sky

Low on the left a flooded bog was encircled  
with black tipped flags that here a there had gone  
all over ripe and harried by the wind  
into gay flaunting tufts of thistledown

and on the right the higher ground assumed  
the attributes of hills : the crooking trees  
bare now and grey with the approaching mist  
with starklings hosting in their companies

Then at a sudden corner hedges gave  
a grass bank topped by line of oak and beech  
above red acres of wet decaying leaves

and veined with grey high as man could reach.

I glanced at the young soldier by my side  
gripping the wheel with grubby knuckled hand,  
a cockney by his tongue, and wondered if  
I spoke my thoughts he'd ever understand;

for I am native tho' my fathers came  
from father acres over the grey sea :  
the clay that hugs the rows of exile bones  
has shaped my phantom nationality .

### Exercises in Manner of an Irish Poet

1

This vexing rime you used to phrase  
 of one you lost in - a famous time  
 has left me jumbling in the dark,  
 not yet a rime, Austin Clarke

2

We tried the styles of thoughtful bards,  
 now I embark for other isles  
 inhabited by poets lost in  
 mere verbal antics, Austin Clarke

3

This mannered verse will only serve  
 as handy slings for pebbled curse;  
 but for the richer moods I need  
 the looser tunes that freedom sings

4

A yellowhammer in the elms  
 begins unseasonable stammer.  
 The sun has called so many out,  
 he has no time to doubt or reason.

26.3.42

April

44

The little praise that I have won  
has standt so many hurts I wore  
I feel I ought to praise the sun  
for shining thro' the open door

-and those I reverence the most  
are eager and creative men  
who have no time or taste to boast  
yet need my praises now and then

so tho' we call mininimale  
the forms with other life than ours  
affection surely lends its weight  
to tidal pull and aprile showers.

### Sick Sebastian in Khaki

This was a man I dreaded his sharp mind  
set such an edge upon his witty tongue  
He knew so many arts a laud definis  
the shifting fabrics & his clever song.

I thought that being tunkle wearing plain  
the homespun restive of provincial art  
is be the target for a shrewd campaign  
as he stood grow & I stand shrink from it.

But when I saw him in his conscript garb,  
his mind gone reveld now, with shambling feet  
I pitied him in whom each ragged borb  
was resting in a pus of sick conceit.

Winter Violets  
Summer 1943

May 8/43

### The Little Glen

Step off the road and in a hollow place  
too rough for lovers, seldom next by children  
until the clustered blackberries are ripe,

the blackthorn blossom and the gaudy whin  
offer a dappled interval of peace.

A slow stream curves at every little fall  
by drifted leaves a shrinking down the stones  
that tilt, clay caked for lack of recent rain,  
maps out the ragged path you still may take  
between the tall & wiry-smothered hees.

The broad grass swatches are rich with violet  
long-stemmed by struggle to achieve the sun,  
& glossy Kingcup (ash of its gold),

&, bent along the struggling Hawthorn hedge  
the gay wood-sorrel with its blunted leaf  
& honest stitchwort with its taper blades

The noisy birds pass over, and you may  
have undivided thru the zetted light  
as silent as a thrush with work to do.

July 5/43

46

We pace the things substantial years  
with insufficient awe  
stitcht to so slim a segment  
of universal law;

The trees and stones and skies  
that brick and trim our world  
can only show the quality  
our shaggy wits applaud;  
not guessing how precarious  
the gesture - and the poise  
between a hero's bitten lip  
and a creature's dribbled jaws,  
the tides and temperatures within  
the bud upon the bough  
the image in the passing eye  
the lava and the stone.

5.7.42

Poems written in Cushingall during September <sup>48</sup>

One that I loved went suffering  
shut in cocoon of pain.  
My heart peeped out to touch the wound  
then shuddered in again  
unable to assess or share  
No eager to assist  
since it was swathed in images  
of some stiff painters' Christ

And now because I could not stan  
the gap betwixt pain and mind  
for many days the throning world  
has crumbled in my hand.  
The little lives I used to lead  
in stichwort Ranch and store  
have shrivelled, died a gone their ways  
like screaming swifts alone.

### The Mask of Famine

8.9.42

Harried by storm past summer's brave decline  
that should have moved with leisure'd dignity,  
and rain, that earlier had brimmed the plumb,  
but now lay beaded on the rotting corn  
or prodded at elbows of the spated stream,  
this month must lack the ritual of phrase  
five hundred years of verse and husbandry  
have taught the habit-tutored lips of men.

Another, darker magic must be scanned,  
strange incantations which lie deeper in  
the haunted minds that see their labor's waste,  
the flooded tillage, - and the mildew'd peer,  
the bony mask of famine, - and the sky  
inhabited by shrill relentless wings.

8.9.42

September dull (Portnayelan Cottage)

This house well fence with alder, beech sycamore, and beech, that was a flickering copse of song from the gray hour before the weekend day was trimmed with wing beat and the work of birds until half ~~had~~<sup>the sun to rest</sup> the last thrush sang at dusk knows only now the strong winds blistering and 1h' intermittent batteries of rain.

This is the ebb of birdsong. You may see a startled robin scuffle in the hedge and hear no more than curlews passing over the bare wet hill between you and the light.

Poetry See 2

Li Bell W:

8.9.42

50

Seedling Time

This is the season of the thistledown tilted single or when or not yet broken loose waiting the destined wind, that hatchet behind the cold hills of the west, is hurrying to its appointed moment. From the beech the green husk letters; from the sycamore the scimitars spin down. Dark ears open what was so harsh spent in bud and leaf and I, a barren summer in my porch, frosty grey walking in mead of winter January already find my hands too small to cup clouds the wealth of clustered berries in my grasp.

8-9-42

## Spoiled Summer

Just as grain needs / need for ripening  
sunshine and heat - and mercy from the wind  
Here in the fields the graven tablets moan  
with storm and flood and cold cloud cumbers days :  
the green oats tumble in the slanting rain  
or the wet stocks slip down the runned hill  
and lie in lakes of stubble. Blackened stacks  
not worth the shifting stars in swamps of grass  
Yet on the hills the roaring tractor turns  
new leaves for second chances. There will be  
another spring, another round of growths  
to heal the raw heart of one wasted year.  
But not for me. The summer of my days  
scared by disaster, ruined by violence,  
the skipping hopes my eager spring put forth,  
caught by the robbing wheels, will never wear  
the eager light of autumn on their crests  
I can but hope this wise economy  
to reach a frugal age nor die in debt.

8-9-42

52

## Bounty

When laws are thick upon the storm  
the country people always say  
the winter will be hard and long  
for when the earth is black with frost  
The Man Above does not forget  
the little birds will all be lost  
unless He gives an extra crop  
to keep them in full heart and song.

The Brothers

North Devon

8.9.42

We saw him first stretching for blackberries  
a tall and shambling lad with English tongue  
and knee high by his side a tiny boy  
two headed munching what his brother plucked.

Then after, impert in the driving rain  
down hill towards the village once again  
we passed him coming up, the little child  
well wrapped against the weather in his cap,  
the tall lad pushing silent, his wet hair  
flat on his brow. He answered our salute  
and thrust an aimless, snapping over twigs  
the ceaseless gale had flung upon the road  
wet muddy leaves reverst at fuschia flowers.

At noon, at dusk we've seen the morning hair  
growing weather as the time of day  
resting no more than birds rest, by a bush

or for a moment by the six-band gates  
these farmers guard their fields with.

When the day  
seems all propitious we shall stop to talk  
and they shall answer in their separate ways  
why they are bound so to these hilly roads  
as what their world is like, and who may be  
the other strange inhabitants besides  
the heavy heron with the floppy wings  
the black rooks homing to the smoky trees  
and the small robin on the whitewashed post.

## Song for a Country Boy

If all the ducks that I have seen  
on all the journeys I have been  
were laid together side by side  
to strip dry had the broadest tide.

If every goose that passed me by  
with head aloft and scornful eye  
were tethered to a painted boat  
to skin the farthest star afloat.

If all the hens that I have met  
down muddy loanins green and wet  
were laid together tail to comb  
to roost for years at be at home.

8.9.42

8.9.42

56

## The Alder Stick

Cutting an alder branch to shape a stick  
I peeled the thick bark off green strip by strip  
like bitter apple the white wood turned red  
misted, of beechleaf not of berry or leaf.  
~~as soon plates of ocean weary ship~~

30.12.42

and as I wrought it, pausing now and then  
to balance on my fingers or to swing  
feeling its strength along my arm I thought  
men fools to name this wood a useless thing

good only for the props and piles whereas  
it keeps thin brittle walls of stone and brick  
It red blood stains my hands. The mark remains.  
I have found something more than plodding stick.

The Glens

The Bell  
9/23

8.9.42

had nothing today

Ground by deep glens and walls along the west  
by the bare hill tops - and the tattered moors  
this rim of arable that ends in foam  
has but to drop a leaf or snap a branch  
and my hand twitches with the leaping verse  
as haged twigs will wrench the staining wrists  
for unceasit yet that thrust beneath the sod

Not these my people, of a ramer faith  
and a more violent lineage - My dead  
lie in the steeped churchyard of Kilmore  
in a flat country rich with bloom and fruit  
My days, the busy days I owe the world  
are bound to hard morning roads and rooms  
heavy with talk of politics and art -  
I cannot share more than a common phrase  
of crop and weather when I pace these lanes  
and pause at ledge gaps spying on their stall

so many fences stretch between our minds

I fear others creed as we have always feared  
the lifted hand between the mind and truth  
the blessed Virgin and the ace of spades  
I know their savage history of wrong  
and wond at moments lend an eager voice  
if voice avail to set that tally straight

And yet no other corner in this land  
offers in shape and color all I need  
for sight to torch the mind with living light.

8-9-42

## The O'Briens Mac Donells' Castle at Red Bay

Here once hawk-faced and flinty hearted men  
 Whether their endeavor built a tower  
 on this red cliff that at the glen's wide mouth  
 gives safety from surprise and spacious caves  
 and threat perpetual to all who'd pass  
 uninvited from the north or from the west—  
 grasping in rocky claw a wedge of tide  
 for their black crag to ride—and top at least  
 until sage plunder drift the narrow seas  
 They fit a name here; and as Traitor-hosts  
 with poison'd bowl achieved an infamy  
 remembered in this land where injuries  
 countless as berries have been smeared in one  
 long infamy calls history. They are gone:

The walls are shattered; half the country round  
 is bridged and dyked with stones their builders meant  
 and drew with tackle from the beach; and coars  
 peacefully dung the grass that was their court.

8/10 - 9-42

60

## Moment Vision

A white goose paddles in the beer brown stream  
 aginst the strength of half a county's rain  
 a small girl plucks ripe berries from the hedge  
 and runs and stops and plucks and wipes her mouth  
 an old man rubs a horse down at his door  
 The skin moves lightly over the smooth ribs  
 a woman with a bucket strides across  
 Jowls' pasture rank with groundsel and with dock.

These from a bridge; the old man and the child  
 on the right bank; the woman on the left  
 the spated river running strong between  
 bearing inverted leaf of sycamore  
 hot dodges as the flowers, out of sight.

10.9.42

### On reading Landor's "Hellenics"

Prone on the pale sand in September sun  
I looked up from my book, a pocket Landor,  
as twenty soldiers ran to meet the waves  
shouting and leaping for an hour's release  
from wrench and axle and the oily rap.

And it seemed somewhere by a sea as blue  
between green headlands that the shouting Greeks  
wrestled and splashed before they bound their swords  
against their thighs and slapping on their shields  
marched back to fame anonymous - and death

I watched in envy of the easy limbs  
that had the flying sand and cast my luck  
I have no skill to call before the eyes  
of men unborn the gestures and the forms  
of those who fought for taller towers than Troy.

10.9.42

62

### The Scythesman

Along the high field's crest beside the road  
a stoop't man swings his scythe against the corn  
too steep for reaper: and behind him drift  
white scrawls of smoke as intermittently  
far on the hills the soldiers fire their guns  
in mimic battle. He will only stop  
to hone his blade then stoops to swing again  
nor turn a head from this his proper task  
His labor gave me strength. At once I saw  
the patient peasants over half the world  
facing their harvests as as much as grain  
rooted and branching from the yielding earth.

And somehow even the sickle of my words  
and the wrists still to cut and bind and save  
seem no vain fancy of a foolish mind  
but integrated part of the same craft  
which men have used since Homer beseure  
that other crop whereby we also live.

10.9.42

10.9.42

64

[5.8.42] Sonnet

It is a calm and kindly hearted night  
uncountable the stars in the pale sky  
subdued by sunset's quiet memory  
the westernmost are smaller and less bright  
The trees the black familiar to the sight  
are motionless with not a hisp or sigh  
to wake the <sup>stars</sup> ~~memory~~ in them. Merely  
the new stream runs as in the broadest light.

A touch, no more, of frost is in the air  
lifting the senses to a keen edge  
and passing footsteps march with confidence  
along the hard dry road. No longer there  
unspeaking creatures pause beneath the hedge  
to fill the night with hesitant suspense.

The milk turns sour. The stone is worn to sand  
by winds and tides unresting frost and rain.  
The leaf's edge cruts, as no restraining hand  
can keep life constant with its chilling vein.

The stars out mock us seeming so to keep  
the charted concourse of a subtle graph:  
that beam which may have guided David's sleep  
may now be but a planets' epitaph.

The paper this is written on will fade  
the ink turn pale the words obliterate  
pulp to the ephemeral purposes of trade  
play its brief moment in a future state

Yet somehow there is joy in sound as sight  
allows the gay mind to the grave go down.  
The harsh brown thistles stand against the light  
each twisted head a nimbus and a crown.

## The Heifers

The tall man drove his heifers from the fair  
 There'd been no offers. The cows well afford  
 To wait awhile. The grass was good and sweet.  
 Another month would fill them out a bit.

Also September it was warm enough  
 for the long climb. The beasts were bally too  
 and needed watching now with open gates  
 Let farmers carting flax or shifting hay  
 Left ready for their loads. He was right glad  
 to turn in up the steep lane from the road  
 but it was rough going then this morning  
 for since then some of those gun carriers  
 had churned the turf up badly with their skids.  
 The soldiers would be leaving here tomorrow.  
 Only the Lord knows why they came at all  
 smashing the fences clanging into walls  
 and skating round the corners at all hours.

He swung his stick against a clump of nettles.

The heifers plodded on. Some smell or sound  
 reminded them of home. The foremost loud  
 An answering cry came back across the hedge.  
 The split hones pattered on the red flagg'd clay.  
 They broke into a run. The tall gray man  
 saw a young fellow coming down the slope  
 a stoutish fellow with an open shirt  
 a long blue jersey and brown corduroys  
 a townsman, he had seen him at the Bay  
 when they were racing boats. He waved his stick  
 and shouted "Hold you open that wee gate  
 beyond the Pole there; on the right hand side  
 and keep these beasts from running up the hill?"  
 The man walked back and found the wooden gate  
 unloosed the wire and dragged it open wide  
 and as the heifers turned not leading him  
 into the long field with the hedges rough  
 three other beasts came up to welcome them.

12-9-42

68

## The Ratio

Each year of life alters the ratio.

You press upon your father passing those  
high epochs in his days: his age when he  
was married, and his age when you were born.

Then told by told you grip and overtake  
the long slope of his prime, and with regret  
doubled by thinking you keep pace by pace  
only the unfelt interval between.

Your best hope that its constant for a spell  
before by luck or break you narrow on  
the orphant years when he was very old  
as you know all his quiet loneliness.

But this arithmetic is not all grief:

The marriage year by year has shed its leaves  
and you look back and say - a third of life  
a half, two thirds we two have together have  
drawn out the sap - as signs of the same

rich prime the world conspired to blot us with  
as life wears the dead blur years before  
seen dwindled to a shadowy narrative  
of other people in another place.

12-9-42

Sonnet

One whom I much regard has written well  
praising his eyes for the rich joys of sight  
as more than that for how they feath' spell  
the flat & colored images of light

as often shapes for the low mind to name  
as know without the tedious sense of touch.  
I urge then that my talent take no shame  
if humbler in its scope as grasp than such

I praise what never poet praised before  
his own not mistress's no martyr's feet  
for all the rest occasions when they bore  
exultat least or troubled in retreat

They have kept led me, disregarded quite  
smooth a the floor or stumbling in the night.

12-9-42<sup>20</sup>

The Flax Hole : John M'Elroy

That was the first year that I took to flax.  
I sowed one acre of it. With my three  
I couldn't well spare more. The trouble started  
when I set out to find a ready dam  
to ret it in. There was a power of flax.  
That year as all the dams were occupied.

However I discovered an old 'hole  
beside the river; never used for years.  
I weeded it and cleared it - Then I dug  
a short drain thro: knowing full well it up  
as I put in the flax as laid the stones

next day it all lay bare. The water'd run  
back to the river thro the leaking sides.  
It was three days before the cracks closed up;  
and when I spread it some was golden brown.  
I stuck this in the middle of each beet-

so the inspectors shoudnt notice it.  
 say it but when I come to cart it in  
 this was the very lastful he pulled out  
 Always the way when you set out to hide  
 a weakness or to cover a mistake  
 That's the first spot they go for, every time.

"You've got a leaking dam" he says to me  
 "The quality is good and but for that  
 I give you forty two a stone but now  
 I'll have bent you down to thirty nine"

But I was rightly satisfied because  
 I'd bloody nearly had no dam at all.

Found Money: Michael Anderson, publisher.

Men you would call first medaling farmers here,  
 not big fellas. Here got - a run of sheep  
 here on the back hills, hardy mountain sheep  
 that's worth two hundred pounds a year at least  
 and all found money.

They need little care  
 except at lambing time - as once or twice  
 a day of dipping. You can leave them there  
 and know they're coming for you all the time.

The folks stars easy here. For every house  
 has got a son at sea or in the states  
 sending good money home.

They're not so tight  
 as those that have to take it from the ground.

## Feathers on Turf

We walkt these roads, remarking this or that  
 harmonies on the six band gate  
 effects of light a Saman, or the sea  
 as how the westwind shapes the lonely tree  
 naming the wild flowers watching from the rocks  
 the diving cormorants, the busy flocks  
 of little stint Caw where the bog from Dall  
 cuts this the seashore with a lazy scrawl  
 as leaves - a wounded tongue of sand wherein  
 the patriarchal heron stands alone.

We heard from critics how that field of grain  
 was ripe too soon. Far better risk the rain  
 that builds it up before its dry. As low  
 the bats these days will never learn to row  
 like those fine crews that kept for twenty years  
 their preysful and unbeatable careers.

And now returning to the city's gray  
 autumnal gloom, the khaki crowds by day,  
 the earlier evening with the curtain light,  
 and smothered dread of sirens in the night,  
 we know that from this gentle interval  
 rich moments will return when words recall,  
 spoken or read, or when the mind is caught  
 adrift - as idle from the leash of thought.

I even hope that certain images  
 stark country phrases, shadows made by trees  
 cloud colors, shapes of shell or stranded weed,  
 feathers on turf, or withered husks of seed,  
 and all the figures that my messy brain  
 may in its knots as ravelled loops retain  
 will when the hand is ready prompt again  
 the quiet verses that have strength to give  
 some lasting reason why I like to live.

But what I do not know, what even doubt,

Fragments of a projected long poem  
written 25.3.42 - and mislaid until 17.9.42

*Maud & "Freehold"*

I think of the good men that luck has brought  
into the narrow alleys of my thought  
not one a prophet sooth as poor unk power  
or sick, dejected with his wit gone sour.

We see the like - and in less naked days  
have felt the oafish urge to share their praise

But here I clench never pose the choice  
twixt lonely effort - and the popular voice  
just the dynamic middleton because  
that but half discern his nature's law  
he gives with lavish fist - and will not stay  
content with what seemed final yesterday  
still pressing out the frontiers of his mind  
and leaving me amazed to drag behind  
enriched with every stride and blast to know  
his gravity before the trumpets blow

And after him John Duke the painter who

is that when beating showers have flattened out  
our footprints from the land<sup>now</sup> and when the land  
wears no more track of us the tidewall sand  
one stride will bring her, lost or lone or touch  
about the places we have loved so much  
and if a farmer pausing at his plow  
or fisherman with one more line to throw  
will but recall a word of all I said  
or how you walked as low you held your head.

no careless line or lazy contour drew  
 who sees life steadily asserting still  
 the heart uplifting structure of a hill  
 against the perish threat at sullen whom  
 that make a crazy snapmine of the time.  
 No brach is trust, tentative or blind,  
 each wears th' assurance of his happy mind  
 No his gay humor coltish and untought  
 break thro' the sober silence of his thought:  
 not glib with words he bears tho' hand and eye  
 the clear proportions of life's mystery.

Then Patrick Maybin wholl forgive the line  
 if I assert his nature kin to mine  
 in that his spirits quondam repeats  
 the calm within the conflict mind by Keats  
 Mozart and roses as psychology  
 give him the mixture that comes best to me  
 thro' painted canvas Marx as poetry

Altho' as yet his harvest has been small  
 each verse is sharp and individual  
 cool as a brook, as winter sunshine brief  
 hot as a berry, naked as a leaf  
 \* \* \* \* \*

And James Mackenlay whose assessing skill  
 for novel or for film has helped to fill  
 blank passages in my experience  
 scarce dares the challenge of his excellence.  
 His simple stories etched with friendly lens  
 for pleasure as gesture, are but briefly scanned  
 before they vanish ere we can declare  
 what solid bone of truth is really there.  
 His grinded and niggard verses that reveal  
 as each occurs a deeper power to feel  
 and name the feeling, careless he'd condemn  
 to early end did I not salvage them  
 and bid their gentle rhetoric still live  
 with others' rimes that else were fugitive

Poem in November

17/18

Now let there be an end of this vain speech  
that crams my days with labor to assess  
the countless apples on the mounded beach  
for qualities of use or loveliness

Better the arm in action as the heart  
hoist for encounter. How love I the night  
when the world shudders, so to walk apart  
this hour of daybreak or conclusive night?

Poems in December

23.12

80

David and Saul David and Saul  
here is a lad that ye did not call  
whose swordless hand was the strongest of all

You who were bid from the asses' keep  
you who dreamt after your father's sheep  
were both famous princes and now are asleep.

But he who was born to the joiner's trade  
and spoke to the multitude undismay'd  
died when his friendly dream was betray'd

And after 10 years here is shuffled by  
no one knows where your white bones lie  
but the son of the joiner strides over the sky.

23.12.

December

82

This winter night<sup>1</sup> the moon shows half a face  
on a bare world all windless in the frost  
so may I musing in this gentle light<sup>1</sup>  
find unevent interval to weigh the cost  
my fervid days<sup>1</sup> exact not in a time  
of indecisive and heartbreak leave no scope  
for leisurely utterance of considered phrase<sup>1</sup>  
or faintest trace of memory or hope

But as the light<sup>1</sup> spills on the fletched ground  
the shadow of a leafless branch unnoticed  
the morning mists that mock my inner sight<sup>1</sup>  
recede before the image of a bird  
that sings here lead & sings immortally  
of all the joys that tease my mortal breath  
the springest buds the barley harvested<sup>1</sup>  
the challenge of the thotledown to death

## Rime for Children's Room B.M.A.G.

Our artist took an easy way  
of drawing Folk at Work and Play.  
Each Story's told, you will observe  
simply by Circle line and Curve

Now do you think that you could take  
a Hint from him and try to make  
some Pictures of the things you do  
with lines like these or just so few?

No use to shake your Head as high  
Just take your Pencil up and try.  
Then let us see what you have done:  
for we would like to share your fun.

A Thought for 1943

The bullies sleep but ill. They toss in bed  
cry in their dreams and scare their trembling wives  
for in the cellars of each shuddered house.

The little men are sharpening their knives

The politicians and the bankers' men  
sweet in their councils how they may defeat  
by one deft blow their foemen far away  
and the draft workers talking in the street.

Down slipp'd corridors the cardinals  
hast from the Pope with complicated plan.

The Holy Church must win whoever wins:  
and on this rock they stake the Vatican.

Altho tomorrow's trumpet for my rage  
with clockwork tumbril and magnetic brush  
and caesario mps with megaphones assuage  
the inhibitions in the pallid flesh  
my varnished bulb and plainly gilded lily  
shall make no sober swain moon melancholy

For to we watcht the leap of trigger'd spring  
and root my favors on the atom's rush  
the tangled knots upon the twisted string  
are knitted round the selvedge of my wish  
and wind shall pass as grain must die to live  
as party hast no growth - as rust eats knyfe.

## For One Who Has Not Forgott

let bangle thin my scalp with marching ghosts  
 and fingers clench for organ at the kerb  
 altho I claim no place with amber toasts  
 where men forget the waddys empty sleeve

for I shall walk more soberly than these  
 having my own nostalgias to weep  
 a mad world rocks them on her mind knees  
 I have been disinherited by time.

If I should show this snapshot to my album  
 there'd be a rush of leaves to justify  
 the altered faces that are pasted there  
 the hard sun's smile will turn to paper mask  
 the hat become a date  
 but it'll be break enough to whisper still  
 Remark the stunning hair the saggy mouth  
 We had our promise, hoarded it for years  
 now this tins washed proves our flat defeat  
 and verifies the anxious glance we wear  
 here on the fringes of the family group  
 But comfort: he will fade as we have faded  
 become a guy a shadow and a blur  
 while you the oldest one who walked first  
 will cling to your emulsion's edge and keeps  
 a curl ring'd smile of promise to divert  
 the cynic's japers in a hundred years.

## Skyfire

After a blustery down of red and gold  
 the wind drove off the clouds and left the sky  
 as clear as glass of water and as cold  
 and the dead moon was like a sightless eye

## Tinder

If I could set my wits aglow  
 they'd glow and burn with light and heat  
 and any land that needed warmth  
 could reach and feed its chill desire

and any urgent breath might blow  
 and flicker up the smoking coal  
 bright his poise or burn his guilt  
 one feet return to sheet of snow.

And if the flame consume me quite  
 and leave a withered cinder here  
 shall I regret who twost my thought  
 to shapes that give no heat or light.

29.12

The happy leave no clues. The frightened man  
peers backward to the taws behind the door,  
the broken flowerpot, the embigged change.  
The cynic wears the laminated boot  
he limps with in the alleys of his mind.  
The rebel always carries on his back  
the roaring master or the prim aunt  
The sprawling signature curves back in time . . .  
But when the happy men has left the room  
we only can recall the instant's spur  
that woke his laughter or provoked his smile.  
We cannot prove how he was taught to laugh.

29.12 <sup>20</sup>

That famous king who moaned in his despair  
and mouthed the slow hours hobbling to the dawn  
was ordered you recall to find and wear  
as certain cure the shirt of a happy man.

You know the sequel: how when he was found  
the happy man was naked as a flame  
-and when the heralds reached the palace ground  
they could not even recollect his name

What was not told, being too little known  
was that it is jolly when the moon was high  
-as all the leavy ways were dark & lame  
would sleep on lovers from behind a tree

The seas already swimming in the glass  
would curl up with laughter so that she,  
when celandines began to break the grass,

would rock a laughing youngster on her knee

and all the many men who walk the earth  
laughing at trouble, easy in the fight

if you search far enough from birth to birth  
heat sword and steers can show that fleshing sight.

29.12

92

After a Christmas wet as autumn morned  
and mild as late September, suddenly  
the south wind swings to east, the light grows cold,  
as snowflakes trickle out of the grey sky:  
Our hearts that had so quickened to the frost-  
white on the lawn or moonlit on the roof  
—and then sagged back, then dream of winter lost  
when the noon-sun had put its power to proof,  
already eager scan the rimming hills  
where snow first camps before he marches in  
on his absurd invasion, till he fills  
the dripping gath'rs, —as absorbs the dew  
the sled wheels make upon the gritty road,  
for we have need to see the earth at peace  
beneath the noiseless weight of winter's load  
blown on strength before strings' rash release.

Northern Dunes

29.12

### East Antim Water

Wet roads between black hedges and a stay  
Joint yellow-green with sunset, ribbed by trees  
all stripped to twigs. Unregimented, loose  
rooks flap for home with slow and easy beat,  
from the dark junipers that this morning's plow  
ripped over the bleak stubble. At the bridge  
the glutted ripples crowd beneath the arch  
each spind with light like twitching sticklebacks  
or idly turn aside and coast the stones  
that held the winter's lichen since the floods  
of August draped each nappe with wisps of straw.  
White at a distance in the daylapse  
more fists and faces, metal to the light  
the cycles' wheel <sup>wings</sup> spokes as a swinging can.  
Only a lonely blackbird cries aloud  
near land but out of sight. The sky <sup>sun's tide recedes,</sup>  
<sup>gray pale</sup> then darkens as a cap of cloud descends,  
but no lamp wakens in the scattered farms.  
The moon will rise on a defeated world.

### Year's End

Our climate's fashion now will let the year  
ebb out in rain and darkness with a raw  
and squally wind before the snows begin  
to make their light and tentative essays  
scratching a beach and tufting a stone  
or bringing out the brickwork of a well  
until the dropped thaw eliminates  
the white tongue on the laurel and the bit  
of speckled crystal on the pillar box

The days still lengthen as the evenings  
are set in steely light. Another month  
and then the confident and friendly snow  
will supersede the battering fists of hail  
and raise another town for us to spot.

29.12

94

John Redpath my Granduncle

I think persistently of that old man  
 the tall hawkbeak'd and handsome patriarch  
 erect in chair his hair white hair curling back  
 his swollen knuckles prodded on a stick  
 my mind's sharp picture sitting stiffly is  
 half memory and half a photograph  
 in the green album with the metal clasp.

I can remember with my collar jester  
 walking his fields in summer, listening  
 to his deep chant of praise for stock and soil  
 crouching when he knelt down for watercress  
 in a small stream that curved the grasses flat  
 close to the hedge foot.

What I must have heard  
 from other voices flaming accusing him  
 seems now irrelevant to that broad past.  
 How many times he left his little farm  
 and crossed the waters to the calling west;

and left a wife with child and got again  
 another girl with child as then returned  
 not to the grown child and the neglected farm  
 left to another farm and another woman  
 Even when I remember there was a wife  
 a country girl in the kitchen laying plates

Yet in my heart these things were never true  
 He lives yet on a farm grand patriarch  
 lifting his stick - and pointing to his fields  
 and calling his tall sons to fetch or loose

dark Moses now knows where his bones are laid.

30.12

## During a Rest from lecturing

When I am busy at my trade  
 all things assist to keep me so.  
 As if I even am afraid  
 that I won't have time to show  
 the contribution Sennet made  
 to debts that Courbet seems to owe.

But now when I can rest awhile  
 can gaze as you as turn about  
 and with the leisure of a smile  
 to share a philosophic doubt  
 and think no more of school or style  
 of Poussin's calm or Brueghel's rout

The well-sterned universe rolls in  
 with creased were in ear and eye  
 the gale achieves magre dim  
 the clouds are boiling in the sky

and on each inch of naked skin  
 sensation stings relentlessly.

30.12

## Insomnia

I wrote my verse as went to bed  
 and slept as sound as boggers sleep  
 no noisy dreams were in my head  
 of crazy trees and laughing sleep  
 nor half imagined fears to keep  
 the plodding brain awake in need.

But now because my tissues shrink  
 or poisons breed more easily  
 within my cells, I lie as thick  
 of all the facts that threaten me  
 or some tall triviality  
 that stares and stares and will not blink.

As I grow old as I grow old  
 so more and more I hear untold  
 I concentrate my narrow gaze  
 on smaller segments of the slope  
 am happy if I can but rake  
 a cedar or char-pointed stick  
 from under the wide willow cloud  
 that drives me back as like a shroud  
 wraps up the stable certainties  
 that once were landmarks for my eyes  
 Then from I seize my trophy, try to make  
 a pencil from its pointed stick  
 that I may write in symbols clear  
 the singing wisdom that I hear  
 but its I strike too often I  
 hear only wining cinders sigh.

When I work late into the night  
 the lines grow short and lift as leaps  
 as its they strive to bring to light  
 the strange inhabitants of sleep  
 as tired of the endeavor and  
 grew easy and irresponsible —  
 No rather like the palsied hand  
 of one who saw too much, too well.

Drop down drop down the ropes that bind  
my threshing thoughts on logic's bed  
and for a moment let me find  
the crazy countries of my mind  
before I'm disintegrated.

for it by rule elastic drift  
the course of nations or of stars  
may be predicted right or left  
there still may bloom in pebbled cleft  
some balsam for the older wars

that eyes behind the finger tips  
and storm with shooting thro' the brain  
to end in frost upon the lips  
or painted facereyes on bows of ships  
or lonely knights at tilt in Spain

30.12

[9.42]

Sonnet

Began 26 ended 30.12

102

The wet plowed land lies waiting for the frost  
and I too wait for that sharp quickening  
for since September gales with blustering  
and berned jets last woke my heart and cast  
a sleep of verse like leaves beneath my feet  
too strong for picking I have gone my way  
filling the darker night and shorter day  
with the stiff petals of the hall and street.

But now set free a spell for others' rest  
I have no heart in I can spare a glance  
to gauge how fare in winter circumstance  
the tree familiar the deserted nest

- and what my ravel'd thought may bring to light  
from its mole-journey safely out of sight.

Poems in 1943

Wiston Voices

28.1.43

### By the Banks of the Foyle.

Gulls at the plow's tail and  
rooks in the fallow the  
turnip fields scatterless of  
wing or of bird  
Only the plowman who  
humors his horses - a  
child with a milk can and  
never a third.

Hedges are naked and  
rain's in the ditches  
may be a goat on the  
bank as we pass  
whin tips are golden but  
bracken is rusty and  
sheep trample over the  
wind clothed grass

28.1.43

104

### On approaching Ballymoney from the N. West.

Tilt of the land turns  
and ledges are rougher  
no longer in hollows  
the farms sit on hills,  
the little streams headlong  
that once were so sluggish  
till runnel by runnel  
the Braid River fills.

28. 1. 43

mile as September the health of the weather  
but spilled down the hill tops the black clouds resemble  
the dark tide of winter that narrows the world  
and black in the ditches the water flows cold.

mile after mile of the wet gleaming plowland  
the ash trees are shaking, their feet in a stream  
only the joke flicks a whim one a token  
the iterate spring is about to begin.

106

28. 1. 43

### Lonely Orchard

An orchard far from any house  
seems drear forsaken lacking care  
the grey moss creeps along the banks  
the mortar spills with no one there

A small boy passing misses half  
the breakless fur his raids provoke  
selfconscious as a man who laugh  
on moorland road at lonely joke.

---

28.1.43

I dream someday when fortune comes that I shall have a house  
two storeys high with well-worn steps not made for me alone  
and grass for half an acre spaced with tall and conely trees  
and at the side an orchard fence with ivy smothered stone.

So when I shed my clothes for bed some cool October night  
the moon will draw bronze dapples on the lawn before my door  
and when I ride the wooden gate will wear a rim of white  
and on the grass there'll be the tracks of one that rose before.

And we shall have a friendly room with open hearth and fire  
that makes the books look wiser for the jiffy light that falls  
on Lands and faces that I love whose still will never tire  
on pictures made by men we know and on the roughcast walls

and sometime sitting in that room in level evening sun  
with the lamp at elbow when the wind is thick with dust  
I'll lift my pen a work with words until the job is done  
and on the paper lies the lyric that shall live when I am dead

Verse in February

108

3.2.43

S On Leaving E.E.E lecture I

The wise geographer with nimble hand  
strokes back the cooling shadows and lays bare  
the squat men clapping flints, with matted hair  
high on the northern hill tops. On the strand  
the tall tomb-builders, in a retching band  
sick from the breakers, seek a broken lair  
where they may shelter. With a sudden glare  
the captive Gael obeys his lord's command  
and leaps the earthworks round the Tudor fort.  
As image after image fills the screen  
of all who wrapt and died, the scholar's sleight  
thrust out the wharves across the muddy port  
enacts the factories swallow tree and green  
and buries the city of our dreadful night.

4.2.43

Sonnet II

The tally's true enough how age by age  
 just from the hills stem by the riverside  
 the smoke of hearths went up. We gape with pride  
 on gantry dome and tower as page by page  
 the leaves flick over. But the flames of rage  
 he shot at midnight, as the yellow tide  
 hot swung the last hull out and left the wide  
 stocks naked for the sea birds' heritage

These were the city where my days were spent  
 and the rancorous crowds who propt the walls  
 despised defeated → indifferent  
 til long outmoded <sup>worn</sup> intolerance gave tongue -  
 This was my city. I was born among  
 the sleek beasts just outside the warmest stalls.

## notes for a script "Salute to the Red Army"

Peasant soldier speaks:-

I came from a village of witches and bogies  
 of hairy old men who hid in the wood  
 of old women's stories that frightened the children  
 and holy ikons nailed to the walls.

When the date of the annual conscription came round  
 my grandfather urged men to hide in the woods  
 but an army commander convened a meeting  
 and talked long in the village hall

I got my call and I took my orders  
 I rattled far in a west bound train  
 I learned to shoot to drill and skirmish  
 to work out sums and to read long books

I served two years and returned to my village  
 tall and clean with a leather case

They stood in a crowd on the yellow roadway  
 with peering eyes on my jacket and boots . . . . .

The Red Armyman answers Mother Russia.

Mother Russia I am here

I who was born in the little wooden shacks  
among the great forests

where the old people still believe in witches  
and in the old cities with the bulbous churches & the peeling  
and in the new tall cities of concrete and steel  
that shouting men raise out of the dirt  
from the blueprints of Lenin

And you ask what I shall do?

I who fought in the streets of Tsaritsin  
who tumbled the front horses of Deniken as Wrangel  
who wiped the idiot scribble from the white map of Murmansk  
who snatched victory from the jaws of civil war  
and only fell back from Poland because of a traitor's gait.

I have stood guard for you far in the East there,

[decades]

when the little men thought to steal your apples and your oil.

In the hardest winter of the world

I strained against the Mannerheim line of tank traps a full box  
till it broke

as our foolish unteachable brothers cried for mercy.

You taught me mother tongue and spell  
to master the intricacies of machine  
to think and argue;

as I have gone without my rifle among the villages  
teaching and explaining, clear a tall - broad,  
and the crazy witches have run muttering into the forest.  
and the children have come out to take my hand and dance

I have gone back to the workshop bench  
showing the mechanic the value of micrometer and screw.

I who rode hard on the hills of Budyonnny  
who stood silent by Lenin's Tomb  
in hot silence became more than an army  
becoming the will of a People in arms.

## Mother Russia

I am Mother Russia : not always old Mother Russia  
 but young as 80 million children are young  
 as young as the newest cricket, as the latest playground  
 noisy with singing voices and clapping hands  
 and I can tell of those tremendous days.

## Red Army man

And I of the Red Army have much to remember  
 of the patience learnt in retreat,  
 of the scorched earth as the flagging station  
 of the swaying sabre and the flung grenade  
 and the flashing binoculars on the little hill.

## M. R.

I remember the head games & the anxious bulletins  
 the yawning gooseflesh nights before the raiders came  
 the draughty days in the blackout factories  
 the strong hostages swinging in the square

The charred planks stuck in the snow, as the child's body  
 black with the frost  
 and the warm voice of Stalin confident from the Kremlin  
 as the Red swarms advanced.

## R. Army

The staccato communiqué the typescript order  
 These were the harsh hexameters of our song  
 I could give you the names but you already know them  
 the names that mark the tide's way & the triumph  
 I could give you the names. I cannot communicate  
 the jumble of images in the mind of the partisan  
 facing the firing squad.

The held breath of the sniper in the bushes  
 the colours of dawn over the broken walls of Stalingrad  
 the taste of coffee from a tilted flask  
 the feel of blood trickling warm between the fingers  
 the spreading stain on the grey tunic as the  
 bayonet slips out  
 the gesture of the men I march with who is dead

These memories hurt but we must still remember  
 lest the grey type of the textbook  
 conceal the passion and the grief

MR

It is enough Red Army ~~saw~~ It is enough  
 no longer my Red Army but the world's  
 the cookie in the ricefield, the Kentucky miner,  
 the norwegian fisherman, the scrubbing women,  
 the blackmen cutting sugar cane, the lonely scholars,  
 the man with test tube held against the light —  
 you have become the Barma over them,  
 the firepoint star to which each compass swings.

Only the fat boss sweating will regret  
 the pity and the glory of our time.

### Paraphrase of Verses by Mayakovsky

Rally and form in your squads  
 No time to grumble or tattle  
 This cackle is becoming a bore —  
 Comrade Rifle  
 You have the floor.

No longer enslaved by the forces  
 of antediluvian gods  
 paloiced and thunderbent —  
 History, hush! your horses —

Left  
 Left  
 Left.

You met a man you havent seen for years  
 and ask him how he is. A single word  
 presents his answer: "Bravely" he will say  
 I like that word. Within its syllables  
 lie all the chances he has wrestled with  
 and lasted out. There is no arrogance  
 in what he claims: his manner modifies  
 the Jacobean gesture it invokes.

let us have done with the Jelons' glory  
 the secret vow and the gun in the dark  
 the holy water the easter lily  
 the Jane of Kilmainham and Phoenix Park

No word more of Wolfe Tone and Mitchel  
 no hat or slogan for Thomas Ashe  
 for I will remember a dawn in autumn  
 the stir of the Huskies the garnets' splash

when I first woke to the wonder of sharing  
 birthright of leather and granite and turf  
 the rain browned barley that needed stooking  
 and the shags black-necked in the white of the surf

my Ireland is young as this morning's blackbird  
 that sings no song for a day gone by  
 but swings on the top of a beech in the city  
 and bids us welcome the sun in the sky

I'll make my task to wake and alarm you  
 with things to do you have left undone  
 the bog undrained and the water wasted  
 Let belted as bound woad outlive the sun

things undone that are worth the doing  
 the towns to build and the men to befriend  
 whose latent lands have the skill and the wisdom,  
 if we but love them, to make as to men).

I must be rid of the talkative elegant ghosts  
 of Tennyson's well balanced rhetoric and Russell's sombre jest  
 for the sturdy weaver Hope has splintered the candlesticks  
 leave them alone. They have earned a quiet ease of rest.

Let them find a shadowy forum where they may mouth - and more  
 dip gills in indignation - Swift Davis' Gaither Flood  
 the late frustrated Mitchell Parnell unwise in love.  
 Their words were only words: we have paid for them in blood.

13.3.43

I think that I shall stand here till I find  
 (not with emotion but sense of speech  
 unable yet to purge my anxious mind  
 of those clutching forms that write beyond my reach)  
 the sudden phrase set like the blade of bronze  
 lays bare an age - and lets the legends fly  
 baring the white jaw be no more than swans  
 and by its power ill bid the dead men die

15.3.43

122

## First Frost.

This long mild winter with the rotten leaves  
 black in the puddles and the clouded sky  
 that hunted but neared not the snow,  
 has passed all insensibly to spring.  
 Already an ~~hatched~~ chestnut which each year  
 is first in bud the varnish streaks are split  
 and birds are noisy in the mossy beech  
 but whether the stubborn dullness of the winter  
 (some not marching or constrained to march)  
 has blunted the lens and focus of my thought  
 or whether too much talk of flat ideas  
 has suspended between the touch and thing  
 I live an abstract life self-realised  
 Of late the chill nights and a steady wind  
 have set sleep slow against it, and today  
 a clear bright frost has given the kind of pain  
 a man feels in the limb that he has lost.

19.3.43

[S.3] Sonnet for Class on Philosophy of Marx  
Lew in the Egyptian Room, OCD Museum

Here in this room - a hundred years ago  
The bearded scholars of the little town  
as alters of the north then bravely known  
stood by amaz'd as carefully and slow  
the linen ships were rolled from breast and brow  
and here revealed lay one who had gone down  
into the Egyptian desk. with anxious frown  
The doctors read the pictures row by row

We in this room have had far other task  
to spell with patience from the printed page  
how a dark bearded student hence with rage  
from Mammon's face ripped off the painted neck  
as had the bitter logic of our eye  
and how we may achieve the best we ask.

124

24.3.43

Let trouble thunder at the rest men's heel  
here is no drift of spring upon the sill  
nor bell to rock and grumble out of peal  
between the sunset and the water mill

only a sober frost upon the ground  
clothing the sod with curded crust of vine  
yet when the raw breaks in rain we shall be found  
lifting chill knuckles to avert the time :

27.3

Epitaph on a deceased Baker

old Barney Hayes is rotting here  
beneath the starry skies  
unlike the dough he used to turn  
old Barney'll never rise

23. 3.

Let no one mock me for my ignorance  
Lay blame on tutors skill-less of the craft  
or who confidé advised the clever boys  
and left me bony dreams. Or if you will  
condemn the chain I branch from. These were men  
who saw for one day shoot back every knock  
of valve and ratchet. Now I walk abroad  
amid a whirling enginey of shade worlds  
content if eye assume a sympathy  
between a color and a loaded form  
but with no art for that which this implies  
of logic easily belted into service  
my thoughts unbind & high complexity  
will only tway its low and simple clouds  
when blunt affections finger it or when  
jambian shapes make motion in the air.

24. 3. 43

126

## Second Front

no single portent. I observed the moon  
not red enough to threaten, nor too pale  
upon the black cold walls that they appear  
the bare husks of a world collapsed and void  
The season's ichor in the trusting turps  
provokes no more than what the time permits  
only the rumor spoken confident  
between the jag tip and the flaring match  
has seed of terror in it. Not for those  
who puff the smoke and leave the charred sticks down.

G. M. 24.

29. 3

This maddened-by-religion Jesuit  
the baroque Hopkins pulpit stalls, distraught  
straining his heart to match his snapping wit  
and smashing words to cap his splashing thought.

29. 3

## S.4] Sonnets on R. C. Church

As one born free I sometimes have express'd  
 an easy tolerance for your estate  
 admist the cold & dignity and weight  
 of daily millions waiting to be blest.

"If form as fault must be then this is best  
 that sets its dogmas thus deliberate  
 rooted a rock but spring delicate  
 in stone and glass and fresco (overhead)"

Your subtle poison so suffuses time  
 that little ages falsified to gain  
 have strength to summon up a vain desire  
 This overkeeps the measure of your crime  
 that Francis and Angelico must bear  
 the deadly stench of your consuming fire.

29.

## S.5]

Your flame licht victims are a stubborn crew  
 in Spain you struck your thousands merciless  
 Your feeble falter lobbled out to bless  
 the shining bombers sallow braggarts flew  
 against the tubers' spears. This is not new  
 as other creeds have equalled your excess  
 but more has raised the claims that you profess  
 or held unaltered usage long as you.

I claim no virtue. There were other men  
 who spoke the true word when to speak was death  
 and others will when your shrunk power open  
 unleashes the rank venom of its breath  
 I do but write this down that some recall  
 the firing squads - and furies at the wall.

They have talkt far too much and wrapp their words in books  
of the mute unconscious mind that mines its silent vein  
of the tall oppressive gather and the dark men with the sticks  
and the perpetual wear that is left by the heavy team

When I attempt to explain how my mind works to myself  
I can find no wicked aunt to account for the muddled rail  
no brother provoked my envy or stole the coin from the shelf  
that I need to swagger in secret earnest is a fairy tale

I have had the luck to inherit a body not prone to disease  
I was not threatened with hell as my hand does not condemn  
my gait or with danger. Then why should I quake like these  
who are heirs to the sweep's cancer or the glassblower's phlegm.

This complicates men the poet Yeats  
with his dull number of the star pinned close  
who of the tinsel skeleton of his heart  
made songs that throve him with loves advocates  
and from the bitter tongues he loosed here  
against the drift of time that batters down  
the noble mansion stone by clumsy stone  
has slept a speech for those that did not fear  
a free unmeasured land of man and men  
where public wisdom common as the grass  
shall clothe the dullest drivers so they pass  
~~sorcket him till he sought to rouse, in pain~~  
and yet his cooling thought that spun usine  
so rackt him till he sought to rouse in pain  
the airy bones of old Pythagoras

Our curse is pride; all arrogance outlives  
 who pauperized believe us sons of kings  
 that violence and rhetoric have power  
 blifit us with the strength & grace of wings  
 above the steady labor of the horn  
 that holds the answer its worst trouble brings  
 The mind denied, we trust the traitor heart  
 and clutch at cobwebs from a reed's support

We scan a field and where a weeping eye  
 would measure out for Hector's room to turn  
 and gauge from weed to close geology  
 that foretells the reaper or the charm  
 we meditate upon the tragedy  
 of dock & reed the art we move to mourn  
 the shadowy banners and the shouting men  
 who revelled here and will not rise again.

Now in the spring a man dare not sit still  
 there are so many things that must be done:  
 reports the brain must file from pulse and eye  
 of cellulose and salt and chlorophyl  
 the changing inclinations of the sun  
 the noise of birds, the colours of the sky.

lysis

April and May  
reversed in June.

lot of contradiction makes me find  
What paradox determines <sup>it</sup> I shall find

~~I sometimes wonder why I do not find~~  
no <sup>for</sup> The prompting satisfactions that my mind  
to make makes verse of <sup>grey</sup> ~~less~~ between <sup>Tall</sup> house and house

saw when moon rising thro' the sooty boughs  
<sup>january frames</sup> recalls old patterns loved or when in spring  
one blackbird fills the longer evening  
but like a tippler urgently must go  
to taste pine-resined air and mark below  
moss-cumbered boles the yellow flowers in spate

10 or just to gaze at grass across a gate. 2

11 I sleep above a flagged resounding street  
and men from shops deliver all I eat  
I burn cast coals and breath the gritty air  
and rock in trams about my brisk affairs  
My jester also. Last of all my kin  
to live beneath - a Hatch - and not within

17 <sup>Tall</sup> walls was one whose birth goes back from now

well over a hundred years. The scythe and plow

are alien to my grasp. I cannot tell

20. The weather's chance by glance or oracle  
How far an acre spreads I scarcely guess  
no crop's yield offers sign I may assess.

23 What love I have is harvested with care  
from buckram books or sometimes here and there  
from talkative old men who pause to crack  
on sunny bank or from the sagging back  
of man heeled home from shoeling. I have tried  
to key my jarison to the man beside

my elbow at the bar on market day  
but the 15 I strive to turn the talk Noway  
my hunger clamors he will not be led  
and jobs me off with politics instead.

33 Why not then seize the virtue in my luck  
and make my theme the workers who struck

35 the other day for solidarity,

or take a derrick simply as a tree  
and praise - a puddle that contains the sky  
for all  
despite its boots and wheels that clatter by?

- 39 The lonely person looking for a smoke nod  
sheet; the old men dazed with god  
40 along the mulling sheet; the grace and style  
lowering his gospel, loose with bosphorus  
of shopping women taking cups of tea;  
the laden soldier with his family  
dragging towards the train; the steady crowd  
turn cold shoulders in the brisker song  
that stands against them: slowly tottering toward  
the polished horses with the quiet var  
that breaths - a wave of lifted hats: the man  
who, stumped or blinded, squats beside his  
mobs a crumpled green  
and fingers the rough motto on his cap:  
frogs' flourish on the pavement, roaring snow  
50 that stumps like sugar on the steps below  
[the winter sunshine on an open space  
a corset model with - a convex face]  
- and hats a metal rods; the dappled play  
54 of chemists' colored bottles; surely they

make up the world my heel and nostril know,  
- are seeds of wonder and are close to  
the narrow world my pulses take for true.

- 57 But somehow these close images engage  
the prompt responses only humor rage A  
and leave the quiet depths (unstirred and) still:  
whereas the heathered shoulder of a hill  
a quick cloud on the meadow, wind ladt corn,  
black wrinkled haws, grey tufted wool on them,  
the high lark singing, the retreating sea -  
these stab the heart with sharp humility  
and prick like water on the thirsty wrist  
in hill spring thrust when hot sun splits the mist  
among dark peatstacks on long boggy plains  
such as lie high and back between the Glens  
or on the crown of Garrow struck by sun  
to emerald or wrepped <sup>in</sup> rain).

- 70  
Inset 51  
by grace and by intention to delight  
I have won

72 Hot seems to match the colors mysties write

only in places far from kent or street

74 For memory's sake indulgent I repeat  
the marvel of that dawn when you and I  
rose when the stars commanded all the sky  
and on its dry road under windless Jirs  
heard the first bird that stirs before light stirs  
and took the steep lane to the bracken's crest  
80 and stood to see the waters' dark unrest  
wet to the knees with dew - and shivering  
and watcht a black shag cross with hurried wing  
close to the surface of the roaring bay  
We waited for the sun. To the east there lay  
[a long black cloud] full belied palpable  
like some vast monster spurned from Arab spell  
a cloud that hid its rising [Quickly] <sup>Quickly</sup> one by one  
the stars were snuffed. We waited for the sun  
above cold Garri's cape in <sup>cloud</sup> limped air  
90 one star remains. The sky was high and bare  
91 save for that cloud bank, growing golden now

100

and little scattered winds in bush and bough  
trouled the dry leaves, raspt the thistle crown  
ripe with the autumn. Where the <sup>gold</sup> reeds brown  
small sea-pool started on their sleek routine.  
The peak of dunedan now was green  
in brighter light, but still the sun delayed.  
We turn disheartened. Suddenly you said  
and pointed "Look". Behind above the trees  
a crook-necked heron flapp'd with patient ease  
and passing over, flew ahead as if  
slow missile aims at Scotland. Down the cliff  
we took our (shapins) way. The heron was gone

105 that should have ~~warn~~ markt the coming of the dawn

106 We reached the dew-drip sand and turned again,  
the watered world still lacked the noise of men,  
but in the nearest loose blue smoke began  
to mingle with the leaves. A rabbit ran  
over the salt short grass. The grazing sheep  
came stumbling from the hedges lane with sleep

110

to hove along the beach rough. And then at once  
 we strode to where the river cuts the slopes  
 after a lazy drift, bog brown and slow  
 between steep banks where grey leaved salleys grow  
 - and saw a speckled gannet poised on wing  
 to fall like hurtling pebble from a cliff  
 deadly as David, clear and pitiless  
<sup>later</sup> as hawk for robin's way dishess  
 as <sup>wren's</sup> sparrowhawk for robin's way dishess  
 we ran to check from Lavor on the ledge  
 120 half hid by nettles at the first tree edge.

121 Then turning for a last look at the sea  
 we groped among. The they we came to see  
 had happened when our foolish backs were turned.  
 The cloud had litles, and below it burned,  
 hot brass upon the water, a bar of sun  
 like moon fantastie, and the they was done.  
 Our little world was younger by a day  
 and we had proudly won the longer way,  
 129 aware of every freshy spring scent

130 as benediction and as sacrament.

131 For once a day was ours, possessit entire  
 til a dark world shad narrow to a jore  
 and porage skaining and a friendly book  
 beneath the camp, and one to whom to look  
<sup>share a</sup>  
~~or hear a passage read with~~  
 at only now and then was quiet joy.

132 A day was ours wherein we could employ  
 the active senses, undiverted, free  
 for touch of bark and taste of blackberry,  
 til sleep unext shad bless the dreamless head  
 until tomorrow brought the postman's head.

140

141 My mind such nurture seeks, unsatisfied  
 with the long hours my passion <sup>or</sup> and my pride  
 determines I shall fill with rhetoric  
 of Paul Cézanne or Hostels for the sick,  
 and the expounding of a tedious text  
 how affirmation breeds the sure negation next. A

146

Regard the stables; point to where it is

148 and shew beneath the third the nimble synthesis.

A

for all beneath the sun and for the sun. X

149 Even the storied objects of my trade,

150 the golden brooch, the pot, the long bronze blade,

the mammoth's tooth, the weasel's skeleton,

the family portrait and the lettered stone

can strike no certain spark: tho' now and then

I wake to kinship with the beasts and men

who walkt a younger world, were proud unjut,

156 } and ended as we end for all our art.

157 I'd give the collar of an Irish King  
for one wet cotten <sup>loosely</sup> jiggins in the spring

when I am weary of the labeled birds

160 and want the song and not the Latin word.

A

161 Its life I need and love that careless spends  
grasp

yet offers its unnumbered means as ends

not growth and dealt: together they are one

165 life you may argue, surely intervenes  
between the crashing of the mad machine  
and the bound bales. The backyard cat at least  
still carries out the motions of a beast,  
and life still ripples down each yawning paw.

170 You see the tooth and may provoke the claw.  
The pallid archin half his years in height  
no less than sorrel dwarf for lack of light  
provides the test. you travel far to seek  
on June weekend or warm September week,  
and no beside you if you turn your eyes  
to smaller shapes their attitudes of skies.

177 Take her this city. In a decent street  
I open eyes and found both tongue and teeth  
its windows and its shelves, its doors and stores  
like tailors this close flesh upon my bones;

as what of me is honest debt to it

181

I care not to assess or to admit.

And yet should these <sup>high</sup> ~~tall~~ chimneys tumble down,

The gantlets sag and fall, and settles crown

The festered mounds of rust above the marsh,

and herons nest, and Kittiwakes cry harsh  
over the banks where bridge and rigging met.

There is but little that I should regret,

For what was good here can be better still;

190 The spring gilt o'er upon the Blundhawd hill

With no raw ridges smoking at its foot,

The flapping leaves no longer drench with root,

The little stream uncuffs row of brick,

clear running where it drifted black and thick

With oil-and-ray to carry to the sea

The salt excretions of the factory.

← Keep this as short epigram

197 Dear this wild place who knows but men in spring

may come to worship in the Giants' Ring

and fill the level turf with feet as flag

200 or bid their shaggy horses strain as drag

well-carved stones raise a higher shrine  
where we have smudged our texts in turpentine.]

203

<sup>words be twisted</sup>  
If scholars' write no jables we has been  
too long intatored for the coarse machine  
to bid our pulses march to beat of boom,  
or Jain salvation in a stuffy room;  
too many hills are callend in our bones  
for us to rest content on paving stones.

209

I would not raise a hand to bring a slate  
magnificent in art, in commerce great,  
With the <sup>smooth</sup> tall comfort of its concrete squares  
superbly measured out in equal staves,

wherein was left no single ragged line  
<sup>there</sup> of twisted thorn or resin oozing pine

when boys may light a fire, as far a day  
along off two thousand years in naked play.

216

217 But one may urge that in the landscape land  
the hedge and copse the use of man has proved;

by patient years the country-side has grown

220 friendly in sod and timber: even stone  
battered by water, shattered by the frost,  
in dyke and kiln gives more than weather cost.

223 You cannot claim the jungle's stinking spoil  
of smothered tree and clammy python's coil  
as rich in easy motif. Deep in dream

the green snake strikes, the victims writhe and scream  
~~Instinct. The Green Peoples~~

227 You would escape from brick but not ~~too~~<sup>so</sup> far

You want the hill at hand familiar,

the punctual packet and the telephone,

that you will not be lonely when alone

231 I now assert so dusty pioneer  
complaining that the road runs far too near  
who pars his dirt or throws his morning steen,  
but one who needs the comfortable pace

of safe tradition. Reckon from my face  
and its smooth lazy cheeks, the close set eyes,  
the tight shut mouth aggressive that belies  
the hands that scarce dare move an unlatched gate,  
and you will judge me hero in debate  
who junks decisions, nor will shift his bams  
240 score to applause for savage epigrams  
<sup>which</sup> that skin a laugh and leave mistrust behind.

243 — I warp and wrench the canvas that was meant  
for nothing more than gentle sentiment  
with this coarse introspection. I began  
these verses but to study why a man,  
born here and timed, should attain to peace  
with outlawed themes and alien images,  
and now I find the shifting meaning turns  
on human history and its way concerns.

250 I should have guessed what other men have known,  
that definition means comparison, <sup>demand?</sup>  
that we find our highest words require

within a human land

a cosmos weighed to justify desire

and that our logic must be stretched to include  
coral insect

to greenly save the cancer in the blood

inset the crazy alien - & the crocodile

and that the simple stock at spelling salt

implies the murdered prophet in the vault

Abraham the grave da Vinci's mortal art the plains

the shadowed tents the hidden scimitars

260 that left land drew together bombing planes  
and old bones bleeding under headless stars.

For every act is like that wavy sphere

some naked rascal carved in high Kashmir

that holds another and another yet

till eye blurs groping for the infinite.

Inset the surface of life on safer stuff

265 Yet the way madness, or a cynic mind

that in Yeats' ditch tears blind men thumping blind

and laughs because the splashing slime is cool  
on the hot now.

But neither saint nor fool,

neither a happy man who seldom sees

the emptiness behind the images

271 that wake my heart to wonder, I derive

sufficient joy from being here alive

in this mad island crammed with bloody ghosts

and moaning memories of forgotten coasts

our fathers said from, where we cannot go

the name's so lost in time's grey undertow.

277

This is my home and country. Later on

perhaps I'll find this nation is my own;

but here and now it is enough to love

this faulted ledge, this map of cloud above,

and the great sea that beats against the west

to swamp the sun.

(single seasons)

No season is the best.

I think in autumn, when the seeds are full,

the year is crowned. But black in winter, still'd

by a clear frost, the trees are lovelier;

in the spring a soft rain

and then with spring (and all its urgent) stir

I touch a peak of joy that lasts until

the hawthorn in the gnarly gutted hill

brings the warm air, or from a cairn tipped mound

289

290 The whole longhside is an enchanted ground  
with crowded fruit, and dazzling waters spread  
Layer after layer of gold, and overhead  
The weary rooks are golden as they come  
<sup>burnish'd</sup>  
The yellow light laboriously lone.

295 Once in a summer stepping slow again  
This the lush homage of a shadow lane }  
With one who had but left a couch of pain  
<sup>bed</sup>  
Reverting with now unimpeded eyes

The shepherd's purse, the barren strawberries  
Just where the nuts run in twisty pillars stone }  
And mossy foot track seeks the stream alone  
<sup>fast</sup>  
Here on a tall beach steep against the sky  
An evening thrush was calling <sup>studently</sup> ~~reverently~~

Lost in the leaves at first, discovered on  
The utmost branch his breast <sup>Toward</sup> ~~against~~ the sun;

No nestlings' clamor and no rivals' threat  
To vex his peace with danger or with debt  
He simply sang and sang for naked zest

308

Shunting the mellow sun down the submissive west. A  
310 We stood to marvel, silent at his still:  
The cruising bee in clover too was still.  
So, thought I in that instant, should my art  
make joy its theme were but the troubled heart  
Released from anger, severed from dismay  
For the last hour of my declining day.

316 It is not that like Goldsmith I recall  
Some shabby Auburn with a crumbling well  
seen 'tis the sparkling lens of exile grief  
That yields the lily of a child's belief;

320 or that like Crabbe I must furthermore  
Compulsive seek the miserable shore  
Or the next laurels by the pathos doo

that lands his youth. For 20 men's pensioner  
I pick an clover when I shall greet with 'Sir'  
Nor that like stricken Cowper safe from view  
I seek God's mercy in the morning dew

327 [a snatching Adam with a trace of Eve's

and a sport have that tugs his velvety sleeves  
nor that a foolish fancy cleats my mind  
of mon-faced folk incorrigibly kind,  
who mouth slow proverbs - as whose hands are deaf  
to many a woodcut illustrated craft.

333 No tweed bright poet drunk on pastoral  
or Morris dances in the Legion Hall,  
I know my farmer and my farmer's wife,  
the singular joys of their hunker life,  
the prime veins jut, the thick rheumatic legs,  
the cracked voice floating on the price of eggs,  
the man's Bible, and the tedious aim  
to add another boggy acre to the name.

341 And yet this is too savage.

I recall

the friendly hearts and crack of Donegal;  
the red heels in the ash, the turf blown ripe  
tangled up and held whilst the broken pipe,

and the stoop gather smugly puff and puff  
talking of labour when the world was rough  
in lowland barns or where the heck was thrust  
across the range or thro' the prairie dust;  
and I remember one who sat and swayed

<sup>till we were</sup>  
350 in island kitchen ~~wanting to afraid~~  
~~to step across the~~ cliff and glen  
of ghost or gumpach, falling off  
with shadowy forms of fierce fanatic men,  
and leaving in the midnight rainy squall  
to hobble past them with a tugging shawl;  
or on an upturned creel among the reeds  
~~mock~~ cutting his plug to scorn my ~~influence~~  
the weathered men exploring my affairs  
~~with courtesy and patience~~  
~~courtious cumming w/ experience~~

360 or that deaf man who stopped us on a bridge  
across a loch end where no tree or hedge  
covers the tilted slabs of rain grained stone  
and in slow phrases, bellowed one by one,  
offered a chance of roaching if I'd care;  
then pressing more, if I'd like heent to dare.

364

Now after twenty years I recollect  
 old Brunnan scrawny <sup>long</sup> tall as freckle necked  
 padding the floor with stick and mended sock  
 as stretching to adjust the German clock  
 and gazing as he <sup>winds</sup> toots with tireless eyes  
 on the grand picture of his famous prize  
 - a bull, a cup, a man beside the bull -

The day he won the cup was splashing full:  
 and that slow man who loves the Jaeger Horn,  
 and never fails to fork new ears of corn  
 to his few leifers when the old year ends,  
 who calls the hare and badger both his friends;  
 yet turns no back on progress, dreaming still  
 of the broad factors sweeping up the hill,  
 and the great burden wrought by equal men  
 lifting its <sup>swallows</sup> bales of fat collective grain.

381 So in this hope which harbors all I love  
 as rainhill just slips grateful into glore  
 383 as the soft plastic gathers from the mould

1921]

a strength by its loose atoms unjoined  
 I rest content. No contradictions vex  
 the single mind unpeined, or perplex  
 the will that finds no longer time to waste,  
 so clear the path imperative is traced;  
 the hearts' conscripted with its plunging blood;  
 390 The place is past for wilful attitude.  
 so ends my passion, ends my lonely rage  
 392 hast in perspectives of the golden age.

(a) 227

poem The lepros peoples with fly festred eyes  
 sink in the dirt and have no will to rise  
 save one hyster in a frenzies thro  
 who sits therein no blood at least shall flow  
 if brute or human well, if self must be  
 then up the entry that the blood run free  
 the poison'd world, the terror in the breath  
 so slope the feeling life is snuffed in death.

Inserts:

257 The crazy atom - and the crocodile

The twitching nerve that's brooked to a smile.

265 The surfaces of life are safer stuff

if weather force them open good enough.

<sup>shamed</sup>  
If we persist and split the final pod  
who knows if it reveal the seed of God?

51 old wells in morning sunlight, spilling showers  
of summer rain or dust, the plume as power  
<sup>narrow</sup> of tall black chimney in the sunset sky  
the bridge banked jets of steam as trains go by  
nostalgia lost from ships that ship by night  
down the dark channel; these by sound or sight

372  
25  
10<sup>06</sup>  
312

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