



PRIVILEGE QUERY OVER MUSEUM POST

Eire Labour letter "did not sway choice"

THE recommendation by Belfast Corporation Libraries, Museums and Art Committee to the Council to appoint Mr. Wilfred A. Seaby, Taunton, Somerset, to the position of Director, Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, was criticized by Mrs. O'Malley at yesterday's meeting of the Belfast City Council.

"Pressure outside committee" complaint

There were two candidates on the short list, Mr. Seaby and Mr. John Hewitt, Mountcharles, Belfast, the Deputy Director, and it was on the casting vote of the chairman of the committee, Councillor Tougher, that the committee on Friday recommended Mr. Seaby.

Mrs. O'Malley who was the first to speak after the minutes had been presented, said there were disturbing and disquieting features concerning the appointment. It was assumed that all appointments were made at the relevant committee meetings on the basis of the candidates' suitability and qualifications. An appointments system which depended on pressure in favour of or against applicants by council members outside the selection committee was naturally undemocratic and unjust.

There was evidence, she said, that such pressure occurred in the case of that appointment.

Mrs. O'Malley said a letter of support for one candidate was sent from a member of the Eire Labour Party who was unable to attend an earlier meeting of the committee at which, it was understood, the appointment was to be made.

It was stipulated carefully that it was to be used only if the regulations permitted. Although the contents of the letter were not divulged at the committee meeting they had been informed that its contents were made known to members of the Museum and Art committee in such a manner as to create prejudice against one candidate.

"Irregular and improper"

"This action can only be regarded as irregular and improper, and therefore involves a breach of privilege," Councillor O'Malley asserted. "The suggestion that support by a democratically elected Irish Labour member is likely to injure the prospects of a candidate is a very serious method of intimidation, and one must condemn it in the very strongest terms."

Mrs. O'Malley then moved the reference back of the

minute relating to the appointment.

Councillor Morgan, who seconded the reference back, said that not later than Tuesday they were "practically oozing righteousness" in the Council chamber when they were discussing another appointment. For some unspecified reason the appointment of a Director was unduly delayed and during that period an incident occurred of which a very unfair advantage was taken.

The making known of the contents of a letter to the committee prior to the meeting at which the appointment was made was, he said, a breach of privilege.

Reason for delay

The chairman of the Libraries, Museums and Art Committee, Councillor Tougher, replying, said the great delay caused in this appointment was partly because one meeting had to be put off owing to the visit of the British Association, and partly because the British Association had asked for the retention of Mr. Stendall as he would be of such use to them.

"As far as this appointment is concerned, nothing written in a letter to me made any difference to whom we appointed," Councillor Tougher said. "I knew a year and a half ago I would not be able to agree to Mr. Hewitt's appointment as Director.

"I found it very hard to vote against a Belfastman, but in this case I had to decide either to be popular and appoint a Belfastman, or look after the Museum and appoint the best man for the job."

The Council approved the committee's recommendation of Mr. Seaby. He will take up the position in three months' time.

In the meantime Mr. J. A. S. Stendall will, it is understood, remain as Director.

The position became vacant as a result of Mr. Stendall's retirement.

Two months' gaol for theft of lead

William Patrick Robinson (27), labourer, no fixed address, was sentenced to two months' imprisonment at Belfast Custody Court yesterday on a charge of stealing lead, valued at 50s., the property of O.D. Cars, Ltd.

Steady!



Jumbo, the baby elephant at Dublin Zoo, is a great favourite with the children, and is always ready to do his tricks. Here he is seen with a young admirer doing a balancing act.

Man tells court of being knocked down and robbed

A MAN and a woman, charged with having robbed Anthony Pearse Graham of £110 with violence, and with having conspired with one or more persons, at present unknown, to rob him, appeared at a special Court in Belfast yesterday. The case was adjourned until to-day.

They were Samuel Mills (21), Malvern Street, an aircraftman serving in the R.A.F., and Mrs. Eileen Rutherford (38), Joseph Street.

Graham, giving evidence, said that he met Eileen Rutherford in a public-house on August 14. He had in his possession about £115. Rutherford suggested that they should take drink out, saying that they could go to her aunt's house. Graham purchased some drink, and, together with Rutherford, went to a house where he met a woman and two men. After he had been there some time he left to get a taxi, and was again accompanied by Rutherford.

They walked to the Shankill Road, where they met a man in R.A.F. uniform, who was introduced by Rutherford as her brother. Graham identified Mills in Court as the same man.

Graham said that after some time, having arranged to meet the others next night, he left for home. After he had walked a few yards Mills ran after him and said that he knew of a public-

house which would be open. Graham said that it was late, and that he would go home. He then walked on and when he came to a dark part of the road was hit on the head from behind and pushed to the ground. As he was falling he was struck a second time.

When he was on the ground someone went through his trousers inside pocket, and then asked him where he kept his money. He replied—"In my left-hand trouser pocket." He then felt a hand take his money.

Graham went on to state that as he picked himself up from the ground he saw two men running away. He ran in the opposite direction, shouting for help, and soon met two policemen, and to them that he had been assaulted and robbed. He had not previously known Rutherford. He estimated that at the time he was robbed he had about £110.

Constable Charles Lally said that at about one o'clock on the morning of August 15 shouts of "Help" and "Police" had brought him, together with another constable, to the junction of the Shankill Road and Cupar Street. Here he found Graham standing, with his face covered with blood.

Detective-Constable J. Meenan said that both Rutherford and Mills when charged denied having committed the offence.

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Book XXIV

Poems by John Hewitt

September 1950 — October 1952.

7

17.9.1950

Though I have talked to trees and listened to them,
and walked back slowly from them calm and wise,
I am aware that life was speaking through them
and still unchanged they answer other eyes.

I left a stone as one lifts coin or medal
and read the legend like a line of print,
may even feel the human hand's warmth straddle
the crowded years that labour back to flint.

But flowers and blossoms bright in hedge and garden
are shut like jaws from me in the street:
I still may beg, but not be sure of pardon,
the petals keep clenched round their conceit;

for in some crazy way they are more human
than either tree, than legendary stone;
and lacking ease with child with man with woman
I can but nod and go my way alone.

23.9.50

on the Landscapes of Paul Delvaux.

These towns exist: the classical facade,
the lonely column flowering in a rose
from broken pavements, where the white moon throws
its pale immortal light, remote and sad,
on the dry fountain, and the spiral stair;
and even in the black and moonless days,
for sun is moon and noon is penitence there,
the naked lonely people go their ways.

These little cities lie among the hills,
dry sheltered quarries where the stone was drawn
that for an age was cut to planks and silts
and now, subsiding back at time's persuasion,
is slowly rock again. We turn at dawn
from these towards the valleys of evasion.

4.X.50

3

For Anne on Her 17th Birthday

We too, with your own father, share
October birthdays, when the year
puts on a grave autumnal air,
and tho' not one of us appear
just as assured, just as serene,
as we should be, so blest by chance,
now you have come to seventeen,
remember this inheritance,
and take the coming days with grace
tho' serious, light-hearted still;
with happiness in mind and face
-and purpose geared into your will.

28.X.50

So, Conor, take our thanks for what you've done
not by those harsh abstractions of despair
that find the teeming earth no longer fair,
and paint a disc when we would feel the sun;
nor by pursuit of fantasies that run
in private labyrinths and mazes where
the lonely man must find but few to share
the secret truth his agonies have won.

Not these for you. But rather by your skill,
the leaning woman over the half-door,
the labouring horse that struggles up the hill
the pity and the laughter of the poor,
move the dull heart and prop the flapping will,
by mercy made more gentle than before

Noli Me Tangere

I said I have done too little:
and then, I have tried too much.
Though the clay be fired, it is brittle
and waits for a careless touch.

Though the beast may be altered by breeding
-as pollen is brushed from the flower,
the balsam is ready for seeding
at none but its own lonely hour.

It were better to live by the seasons,
let the tides arrive and depart:
though the mind may be lavish of reasons,
all wisdom must come from the heart.

29.X.50

What do I mean by myth? A myth must seem
that form of which the waking shape's the dream.

I think just now of an old painter who
in rage beget his brood, and now that crew
-fulfer and sponge and mock him year by year:

That painter often tells me his King dear;
and armoured by that ancient ruined form
he lifts his stricken voice against the storm,
brooding on King ship and lost provinces,
th' unpainted pictures that should now be his.

Yet which of us in youth had not been sed
to think that age should find him thrown and mad.

If this be legend, myth or allegory,
twere better the reporter marked "No story".

28.X/23.XI.1950.

You, Conor, were the first of painting men
whose skill persuaded my young eyes to see
the shapes, the colours that gave quality
to the strange distant world about us then.

And if I would recall those days again
yours are the shadows that companion me,
the milkmaids linked and stepping merrily,
the silent tramping host of Islandmen.

But now the years have blown that world away
and jelled our dreams and fears with violence,
you, with a still grown sure, still express
th' enduring heart beneath our weak distress;
the weary lands remembering to pray,
the children playing in bright innocence.

25.XI.1950

Albert Schweitzer

This is a man of many subtle skills:
 the scholar's skill that like a hunter's fares
 and in the tangled thicket unawares
 takes the live truth which over barren hills
 was sought for days in vain; he also fills
 the chart of knowledge with bold numbered squares,
 with measured landmarks; and the organ's air
 he mobilises to assuage the ill
 our spirits ache with.

But the greatest test
 when, proudly worn as privilege, he strives,
 by giving comfort to the broken lives
 of Africa, to supercede the mask
 that time and distance forced upon the face
 of our assertive, often thoughtless race.

Poems in 1951

7.IV.51

Daniel O'Loan

This was a friendly man I nodded to,
 returning his slow greeting. I had planned,
 some day, when oars offered, to engage
 the turning meshes of our separate minds,
 and run, thereafter, smoother for his pace:
 for he was master most of skills I lack.
 But now it is too late. He put away
 spokessaw and saw and chisel on the bench
 left the white shaving to uncurl in dust.
 The boats he made will ride both storm and tide
 for years to come, and men will draw them up
 to the short turf ^{hull} to draw the copper nails
 and wedge new boards in, and the names will change
 as they are bartered down this rocky coast
 to tilt and silt beneath a harbour wall.
 He laid his fiducial later in its case
 that once was famous for both jig and reel
 at feis ^{of} Ceilidhe when they came for miles

to hear him draw his bow across the strings.
 And I who whistle words and whistle tunes
 may so continue, uneasily aware
 of what I missed in never knowing him
 yet no more sure I shall not fail again
 when the next craftsman lays his tools aside.

Lake Spring

Old Frosten holds his snow among the clouds
 waiting, they say, for one last fall to clear
 the last of winter from the first of spring.
 For it is middle April and by now
 the busy comerake should be in his ground
 whetting his voice among the upland whins
 till the low meadows offer him a home,
 with grass enough to lull ^{in secure} ^{insecure}
 but neither comerake nor the ^{chick} ^{chick} yet
 are evident against the noisy winds
 that roar among the ^{hardly} scarcely-budded trees.
 Larks may be heard in lulls or gaps of storm
 and blackbirds in the hedge that does not hide
 their nesting traffic. But the little flowers
 are few and tardy; and the shaggy yowes
 lobble and stagger, snuffing, tuft by tuft,
 the withered slivers, seeking the new grass;
 and the young lambs, - dropped late by custom here
 to miss the snowdrift and the frosty star,

crouch in the shelter of the whistling thorn
 Only the whin with blossom keeps its date
 - and yet there's always, somewhere when in bloom,
 so though we praise, it's ^{scarcely} hardly evidence,
 and keeps on greeting for the merry bird,
 the yellowhammer trying out its song.

And I am lost within the waste of time
 time running fast like landscape from a train
 hills kicking heels of ledge fields drawing back
 and pivoting on beetles that retreat
 ignoring us with solemn dignity
 and stations with an artificial smile
 which has no chance to change to another mood
 my father stayed while then strode ahead
 ahead could I believe that if I ran
 I'd panting catch him up and tell him all
 that has befallen since to prove his guess
 was wise and cautious as his words in life
 or did he merely turn away for me
 our brief occasions ended. Nevermore
 to share the same unspoken loyalties
 as I must turn some day my face away
 from what I'd thought was part of my own mind
 was all of it if I could measure it

sharply by sense and after slope it is
 the limits I was born with. A blind man falls
 in a Korean ditch the tracks run on
 the orders are continued. What went out
 with his last breath, and around what heart
 does he remember happiness? For it
 exists for man only in retrospect
 where the lines meet or where the bend is turned.

If what I spend my breath on seems to me
 a throbbing value, how have I the right
 to peer at others' gestures as absurd
 that give their joints to stiffness after sleep
 on dripping mountains rubbed with strips of drift,
 or the old man, his only brother - dead,
 who sits in light none reads by, old, alone
 at the last corner of a straggling lane
 in a stone house he built once long ago
 that shall outlast his name: yet year by year
 his spring well bubbles up beneath the thorn.
 Spring well and thorn, are these my verities?
 For I have seen a bush for all its petals
 ruin and splinter, and a spring be lost
 in a wide meadow full of crying sedge

There's nothing so weak as a lamb's faint cry
 in a sudden hush when the winds are gone by,
 yet the crying lamb with the tottering stride
 in season shall sullen the mountain side,
 and turn a black face and a baleful glance
 on the lonely traveller passing there.

From lamb to ram; from innocence
 to naked lust beyond all pretence,
 is too wide a stride for the mind to take;
 so I sometimes pause on a mountain track,
 and say to the devil that glowers at me: -
 Did he who made the lamb make thee?

O poet's speaking tongues I do not understand -
 schoolmaster with the notebook hidden in your desk,
 or wrapped in the folds of your buddhist-gown;
 cafe' poet, your pocket-jar with manuscript
 waiting for the other poets to arrive;
 shepherd of the Urals squatting on a hillcock
 going over and over your verses till they take the hilt of folksong
 and will be carried away from you and your name
 into remote villages with coloured jardsays
 and 15 lonely herdsmen round the night-fire;
 labourer poet making a song of your job,
 halting the ache of your arms and the drop of your feet-into words;
 craftsman poet, shaping a poem as you shape anything
 with careful tradition in every pace and pause;
 let us go beyond language and its little fences
 into the broad country of the human heart
 and sing together of peace and bread
 and the strength of our rhythms will bid earth awake

and the corn strow and not heavy
 and the millstones turn steadily
 and the guns rust in the kindly rain.

What use or point for me to study the birds
 blackbird in lolly or song-bellied robin in ledge
 who have so long established my habit of words
 it is no longer any privilege

to match and measure shrewdly outer with inner
 and find a shape which shocks my own surprise
 Not this; nor even the limp of the mount who must matter
 the smooth head-letting, and yet have wandering eyes

For I must listen when the birds sing again
 must listen as they sing, unful as they,
 who take no note of symbols for joy or pain
 though mine the task to bless or curse the day.

The Weir at Edenderry

From the high stream the water poured and forced
 an unslashed torrent through the gaping boards
 that fenced, in better times, the streams apart;
 but now it struck the lower constant river
 with such a jet there rose a fountain head,
 a crest of spray that carried to the light
 a bell of blossom like a summer thorn
 wearing the fainter colours of the sun,
 a breathless moment, on its crumbling wings;
 as suddenly, becoming, these withdrawn,
 a snowy bush that quivered with each flake.

O bush of snow O bush of Hawthorn blossom
 that held its shape of even-sifting atoms
 must I spin also, lost, into the sea?

The Bell

Here in the hill-rimmed house
 when the angelus-bell is heard,
 when the winds from the south or west,
 as clear as the nearest bird,

today, because the wind
 is sharp from another air
 and the rain beats loud on the earth,
 you must listen deep in your heart-

for the sound of that beffled bell;
 yet the cheffinch on the thorn
 still offers his rattle of notes
 to the tips of the braiding corn.

April / 24. VII

Weak lambs' bleat in the windy weather
 bird song brighter than blossom on skin
 blackbird chaffinch yellowhammer skylark
 the ancient hymn of spring begin;

lifting his bill to the east of the evening
 the single thrush on the top of the tree -
 or facing the sun at his noonday zenith
 the little brown lark sings high and free.

But now in summer the mood has darkened
 a lonely pigeon coos in the wood,
 forlorn and desolate the reeve
 cries Cain back to his brother's blood

Real Estate.

He walks his fields, and every glance
 has use and purpose in it
 as though off every thorn or barb
 he plucked the wool to spin it

I crop these fields that he marks out
 for tilling or for grazing;
 my harvest never lessens his
 however long my grazing

for I still leave the wisp of wool -
 the world and all within it:
 I merely take the memory home
 and seek the words to spin it.

An Exercise in Standard Itabbe [my first-attempt]

A friend of mine, a white-haired boy
 who loves more much the oarsman's plow
 would now and then see fit to employ
 his scanty leisure
 in making verses to enjoy
 the poet's pleasure.

I showed him how with little cost
 his feelings might be best engrossed
 in the blank verse of Robert-Frost,
 as
 and like a duck
 takes to the burn in which it's lost,
 he tried his luck.

The lines came supple, steady, clear,
 they held the country atmosphere;
 there was no flowery discourse here,
 but honest phrasing;

and half a dozen times a year
 he'd seek my praising.

But once he read his verses o'er
 to some one calligraph at the door
 who had a name in three or four
 townlands for riming,
 that he might learn how much he'd score
 by her skilled timing.

While she listened to him, dumb
 without so much as law or hum;
 then, sucking at her toothless gum,
 she said "I think
 you'd rather have the thoughts that come
 in words that ^{clack} click".

finished 26.7.51

The True Smith of Teveragh

There is a ballad rooted in the Glens
about a rebel smit the Yeas pursued,
and every stanza's badged with local names
from Trostan's shadow down to ^{the} Cragagh Wood. Cragagh

We heard it in ^{the} a farmhouse at Cloughglass
the farmer's wife ^{recalled the primary rhymes} repeated it with care
I later ^{put the incident in verse,} made a poem of it, and
^{it was} had it printed in a newspaper.

We heard it too, by asking Michael Deach,
a tall sheepfarmer with ^{white} stubbled cheeks,
beyond the Glenamiffa, in that house
^{the} an artist ^{lived in} rented for four training weeks.

The bard who wrote the ballad - Stutters Moore -
was a known tramp who beat about the Glens;
I found his little booklet on a stall

and, being scarce,
since it was scarce it cost me eighteen pence
and made it mine with little loss of pence.

This ballad's in the booklet, but the words
vary from Glen to Glen, to prove for sure
that it's the common property of all,
and only shed along
no longer written by old Stutters Moore.

He died in Ballycastle years ago,
but is remembered yet, if you enquire
in any little house among the hills,
^{where} ^{still stews} in any house can stew a gleed of fire.

It's often called
The ballad's called "The Smith of Teveragh".
There was a smiddy near that little hill,
and if you ask a man who knows the ground,
he'll point you out the ^{well-stead} ruins of it still.

But this was Duncan Moore's, not Kennedy's -
the ballad had it wrong. The pikes were made
somewhere along Glenamiffa or at Red Bay,

not here on Tieveragh. Another trade
 was Duncan Moir; he armed no living men
 but well could sock a plow or shoe a mare.
 In Ballyvoolley there's a gate he hung
 that's hardly, of at all, the worse for wear.

But living at the back of Tieveragh
^{Boes} old Duncan More had neighbours of a kind
 a man will not admit, whatever else
 he thinks about them in his private mind.

For neighbours he'd the ^{wee folk} jannies of the hill;
 he shoo'd their gentle horses when they came
 for he was friendly with them, let them sport
 among his feet, when they proposed a game.

And if he wished to turn another wood
 there on the slope he'd drive the long shade in,
 and bid them face it ^{to} on which airt they pleased,
 so be it he'd not trouble them or whin

that they had planted for their proper use.
 And when he came back rolling from the fair ^{Town}
 they'd tag his coat the way that he should go
 or see him hapted and softly bidden down
 or run ahead his supper to prepare.

This was, some say, before that war was lost,
 when the Scotch jannies beat the Irish clan,
 and rivers all ran ⁱⁿ ~~down~~ chains ^{at} ~~to~~
 and took them off as slaves across the sea;
 that ^{with damage} but others think this too, and name a man,
 or maybe name a woman, or a place
 where someone ^{nameless}, ~~not~~ certainly since then,
 has come on jannies ^{wee folk} - at their midnight play
 and know them ^{hard them} ~~by~~ ^{shook like} ~~their~~ ^{decent} tongue - as Irishmen.

Last night when we were gathered round the fire,
 an old man told us this that I commit
 to paper now. Perhaps in fifty years
 some scholar ^{folklore} may be glad to hear of it.
 folklore collectors ^{will} ~~shall~~ ^{note}

Let me add this brief ^{word} note; that old man is

our nearest neighbour, following the trade
of joiner, making chum ^{staves} ~~heads~~, wheels and shafts
for carts as far apart as Clough and Layde.

He made a zinc-lined lid to cap the well
that rises just beside the Hawthorn tree,
and twists and interweaves the ^{straggling} hanging twigs
that none through lack of care, just enmity,
thoughtless fingers ^{use} ~~use~~ no penalty

He lives alone above that gentle ^{bush} ~~thorn~~
^{few the strangers} and scarce a stranger ever ^{chaps} ~~chaps~~ his door,
but I still wonder if, from dusk to dawn,
he has as many calls as Duncen More

Hay. An Exercise in Standard Habbie

In the steep field the hay with fitch
an' dock was stubborn as a bitch;
he beat a head back to the ditch
to sharp his blade,
an' take a peek at his new watch,
what time she made.

For he was trusted in the town
where the cronies gathered round
to watch — the rising o' the moon
toos for
an' swoop their jugs,
or at some winds sit sit down
toe rest their legs.

An' this was naiv no flesh and stem,
a hell for goats an' no for men,
a scythe that blunted in yer ken
before ye swung it;

damn, but he'd see the whole thing damned
 'fore's sweet-stand damn it.

If you are leppin lae leave school
 an lae lae jarmin, yer a fool.
 There's ulla jobs that work by rule
 an sleep ^{sure} at six
 ye sit all day upon a stool
 an slay alive.

Can ye see near the shops that gets
 the biggest brands o cigarettes:
 the shop-girl has her special pets
 an ships them plenty;
 bank clerks, surveyors, doctors, vets,
 they all get twenty.

But he who tells the honest man
 altho his money's in his han
 must sleep in sleep an wait an stan

till all's away,
 except some dry an moldy bran
 that tastes like hay —

Like hay? There'd not be even hay,
 if some nugs like me didn't slay,
 slavin frae dawn till butt o day
 for little profit —

Then night, ye blade ye, that's the way —
 There's neethin effit!

I said once, I must learn to wear dung on my heel,
and today, when I looked, there was dung on the well.
I do not remember lifting it, or know if I feel
in anyway different from the way I felt.

But a townsman friend walking here with me yesterday,
remarked that I knew and was known to the country folk,
not only the people passing, but the men at the hay,
for each gave a friendly salute or paused for a crack or a smoke.

And as we were walking I kept interrupting his talk,
so neat and so urgently rendered straight out of print,
with: "See that's a yellow warbler," or: "Look, that's a sparrowhawk"
or: "Notice the evening sun on the ripening lint."

But the countrymen born and bred will have doubts of me still,
though once in awhile I have tried to establish my right,
footing the turf, in the rain, on the hilt of a hill,

or lifting and putting potatoes till the last of the light.

For he knows as well as I do that I need not face
the wreaths of snow on a perishing January day,
looking for wandering yowes in a mountainy place,
or treading down the long drills with the blue-stone spray;

that, for good or ill, the money I get and spend
has come an easier way than out of the ground,
that I can rise and go when my holidays end,
but he must labour for life in the place he is bound.

After the drought of spring
 when grass was light on the fields
 and men shouldered the bottles of hay
 to the famished and eager beasts,

The rain and the heat began
 a steady session of growth,
 though the rain kept them late at the mowing,
 the corn was still short in the stalks.

I too had my season of drought
 in my busy days in the city:
 in moments I snatched to pause
 I was vexed with my bone-dry heart.

And when I returned to this place
 I was mocked by the sporting summer,
 the meadows knee-deep with new grass,

the delicate green of the flax.

Then leaning my foot on a gate
 to tie a troublesome lace,
 a release fell on my mind
 after the steps on the road;

and all at once I heard
 the wind in a field of young corn,
 the first-gentle song of the corn
 bespeaking the meat in the hulls,

and deep in my bone-dry heart
 and far in my labouring mind,
 the first stirring voice of the wind,
 like birdsong deep in the wood,

bade me listen to sound ^{beyond} after sound,
 to the whetstone harsh on the blade,
 the mowers trying the day,
 the thresher loud in the yard.

29.7

The cold eye watches, the cold eye sees
 the crooked men and their policies,
 the men who cling to a dream outworn
 and strangle the children not yet born;
 the slopping men with a lust for fame
 who covered his hands with a shine of shame,
 and tries to smear the day that will break
 for the rising nations, the peoples awake;
 and the small men blind with profit and pride
 who commit the crime of patricide;
 and the honest men with anxious eyes
 whose dream must fail in the first sunrise,
 because their Rope was given to them
 as a bursting bud without a stem.
 The cold eye watches, the cold eye sees
 the manners rot in the bones of these.
 But the cattle flourish, the crops still grow,

the black cloud in winter brings the snow,
 the sand still drifts, and the weirs run,
 and the lizard basks on the scorching stone.
 O falling leaf and star in the sky
 shelter my days from that searching eye.

29.7

When the bell rings in the steeple
 all the clean-faced country people,
 fault-constructed, briskly pass
 on their way to morning mass:
 I still stand in jeopardy
 under the unchristened tree.

29.7

The priest goes through the motions of the play;
 his skirts flounce out, his cuffs are lifted up;
 the people stand and sing or kneel and pray,
 but God's not in the wafer or the cup.

He asks no weekly miracle whose days
 are fed on marvels from each eager sense,
 who knows earth, fire and water, all are praise
 and the best grassblade all his evidence.

Journey

On a country journey
 find a back seat in the bus,
 not so comfortable but better for conversation;
 for there the men sit who have dogs or heavy parcels
 or crackling old women with baskets
 not going far,
 and so not clenched round the journey,
 or travelling farther
 or shut in on themselves with the subdued awe
 and discipline of their intention;
 near the opening and closing door
 where people pass to be greeted or sped.

The conductor usually stands there,
 knowing the faces,
 dismounting for brief forays into shops
 with labelled packages or bundles of newspapers;
 when his faces are collected, ready for talk,
 likely to know the men with dogs or parcels

and the old women with baskets;
and so, by question and answer, able to drop
a net of reassuring acceptance and recognition
along both sides of the road,
along the coloured windows of the shop-lined streets,
over the frosted glass of the public house,
beyond the clothes-lines jiggling in the breeze,
or into the jets of light at suddenly opened doors,
even into the sleep lane
that ends with a lamp on a table.

The Gaps.

3.8
43

Finding a rough place on the mountain where the stork was killed
he took a chill and came home shivering,
refused the doctor, enduring the winter
a few hours longer than usual;
for a week now he has sat
on a chair to the right of the hearth,
spitting against the turf and lighting his pipe,
reading the children's schoolbooks,
and hearing reports
of how they are managing to save the hay without him,
as one day
they shall have to manage everything.

4.8.

The horses wade through the flowing grass
 and the grass falls back on its path to hay;
 the meadowsweet drops like a broken reed,
 but the grass will be good on a winter day.

Certain Names in The Middle Glen.

Let me note like the words of a grace
 the cornered names of this quiet place —
 not to begin with Gannon Head
 snow to the sea on white fens laid,
 or nearer home where Glenariffe runs
 up to the moss through the juniper pines
 or the shining slates of Waterfoot
 where wagtails seek in the dawn-chill street,
 or Red Bay Castle, a neckle of stones
 above the road that the Red Arch spans,
 or Dunpedar that reaches back
 to Troolen lost in the rainstorm's track,
 or Long View (Ulloph) whose ruffled crest
 is still the place where the ravens nest.

You know these names, I take my stand
 on the lesser places, closer to hand: —
 the twisted mouth of the winding Dell

where the heron stands and the white gulls call,
and the tufts of thrift are faded paint
over the rocks of Limerick Point:

Begin with dapples where the last sand goes
to nourish the roots of bungalows,
and the turf grows narrower year by year
and bottles quills the thistle's spear.

I name the garden at Moneyvant
where petals fall on the passing cart,
and Portnagden, and, after, Layde
where the swarming way a strand has made
for the roofless house the Franciscans left
where bats fly out and thick leaves drift
on the flat broad stones of the buried men
who took the land with a stroke of the pen:
Then Ballyvoolley up in the whins
where the muddy rips cups the last of the rains;
Then down to Glenville, which I prefer
to call by its ancient name, Leamore,

whence coaches ran to College Green
when squirrels were fat and cotters lean,
but now grass covers the beech-hired drive
and not a laird of Leamore is alive.

Then cross the road that climbs and turns
from the dozen houses of child-crowned Carrig
between the hut-dam and the Porter Lodge
where windows ^{show romance to its} prove its romantic age,

travelling quiet and stepping slow
through Kane's potatoes to Newinagh,
ascend with care that tiny hill

where plots of fairies linger still,
and gaze from there on the stoned ground
where Hyman bred the famous hounds,
Three-Horses Castle; in the olden time
its Halloween had the right to fame.

But now Mee Donnell's padlocked door
guards sacks of oats on the bedroom floor;
the Jewler's kitchen only contains
an old hand-mill for crushing whins

artificial in paper bags
and lurking spiders and nimble bugs.

The next house once knew another stall
when brightness dropped from the steaming still —
one kindly neighbour gave this excuse
"He only made it for table use".

In the third house Biddy's early to bed
but her battered shoes light the road.

A bog step garden, the steep white lane
swift as a burn with the Lannan rain,
then flat rocks bare as a tinker's ass —
this is the farm and town of Cloughglass.

Yet how ^{to} describe the MacDonnell's here,
that eight sharp faces distinct appear?
And what of Charley, the elder son,
who lives with the old folk farther down;
they are MacDonnells, Mary the mother
was born MacDonnell, Jamie, her brother,
works for the women at Fallinaglass

where Rose from her windbreak sees all pass
and she and Abbie her sister Abbie who spins
are MacDonnell's too. The story begins
to tangle and twist like an Irish reel
and I'm so hand at the carding ^{the} wool —
For long before our books began
MacDonnells were the master-clan,
the Earl of Antrim at Glenarm
still runs his earldom like a farm
and wears a good name in the Shaws
Randall MacDonnell, as they've been since
old Sorley Boy laid his broadsword down
and gave his word to the Tudor crown
— it's a great temptation not to enjoy
the complex entries of Sorley Boy: —
the old men raving on Kenbane Head
as the Rattlin smoke rose thick and red
and the Earl of Essex, Elizabeth's man
massacred all but the men of the clan . . . —
and the troubles that dogged the days of those
^{men who chose}

10
~~to~~ to John James as they followed Montrose -
the hilling names of the Middle Glens
have more than a lust violence,
and I who began a gentle wine
have none of the knowledge, skill or time
to pen the epic the theme demands
with so much else on my restless lands.

There let me stop for I hardly can
cope with the stories of old Glencan
with Lubtainish and Oisín's Grave,
that scholars deny, and I believe
to be the place whence the Fenian bard
will rise one day to his just reward
when badgers and hares shall the multitude
round the old Mass Rock in Crepahl Wood,
and the well wins over with merrily and grace
at Tobermagreenagh, the sunny place

112 lines

Just Times

7.8.51

51

We used to see him then, a shambler led
emerging sudden through a thorny hedge
along the rushing stream, alert to dodge
back for the hidden trout, or on the road
with shouldered sticks from the forbidden wood
or striding briskly through the misty air
of early morning, to inspect the snares
with which he meshed the sleeping neighbourhood.

Now you will hear him talking loud to his
dog or the child he carries on his back,
across three fields, still strolling through the whin
at any season; and for all your lack
of freedom, you take time to pity this,
the middle age of Huckleberry Finn.

Epilogue The Volunteer

For all his working days an engineer
 on the deep water, at the end he came,
 unmarried, pension-armed, to settle here,
 his native place, the best to bear his name
 accepted, the last bearer of his name.

He found a little house among the hills
 where none could mock a bachelor's conceit
 in all the small domestic crafts and skills,
 and cut a figure in the village street.

Then, growing older as the years went by,
 established friends to call on when he would,
 but found it yielded all the company
 he needed, to go shuffling down the road.

When war broke on the world, ^{he named} recalled each coast,
 each port remembered. When the shadows grew
 with the lost vessels and the seamen lost,

7.8.51

He felt affronted at the ease he knew.

And with old fingers unaccustomed, wrote
 to the Head Office, saying he was well,
 and fit - as any engineer afloat -
 to sign and serve for any offered spell.

He told them in the village what he'd done.
 They hid their smiles, declaring solemnly
 the war itself could not be wretched
 till he was safely back again at sea.

The weeks of waiting let the joke grow thin,
 though still - a foolish man or two would stop,
 "No letter, John? They don't deserve to win."
 "If I were you I'd let the matter drop."

But one black week when all the bulletins
 were bomber raids, retreats as fallen towns,
 the postman found the sheet among the whisps

and handed in the letter, to announce
 that John's name had been added to the list,
 and when a place came vacant they would write.

John bore the letters in a trembling fist
 and read it ^{twice at every neighbour's fire.}
~~round the country half the night.~~

Hill Farmer: Caliban

This man whose talk was all of subsidies,
 permits for timber, grading, valuations,
 who has no thought to name his beasts or fields -
 not even his horses, though his dogs find names -
 and spares no corner for a garden flower -
garden is where he builds his winter stacks,
 he has no picture on his pink-washed walls
 beyond the grocer's calendar, save one
 a smiling Jesus of the Sacred Heart,
 awarded in some Christmas supplement:
 he reads, at most, the weekly newspaper,
 but seldom buys it, someone brings it in.

Yet he is master of a hundred skills
 with soil and beast, the skills which some must have
 to keep me fed and sheltered with my books;
 can plough and sow and harrow, mow and stack,
 knowing the days to do such; gauge the weather

by signs I'd miss, of opportunity;
 tell when potatoes need the bluestone spray,
 or that field lime, or if the lint is ready
 for pulling, dubbing, lifting from the dub;
 or when the cut hay should be shaken out;
 or lapped to stand against a showery week;
 or when to change the seed to another kind
 before last winter leaves it open prey
 to muckening or failure of the yield;
 or how to plan his stock against the ^{his} grass
 and measure out the grazing and the tillage,
 or have enough turf won to round the year;
 know when to loose the rams, and when to bring
 the sheep in off the mountain nearer home;
 be with the cow, the mare, the sow, the goose,
 when each is in her labour; rear the young
 of each of these, sometimes with gentleness,
 as when a weakly lamb's brought to the hearth
 and lapped and dosed, or when a goose has lost
 her lamb to ^{steer} guide another when care:

can handle horses break a lively ^{club} ~~cott~~
 to rein and shaft; can counter endless ills
 by certain ways that have survived the books,
 of law, of roof, of mouth, of feet and udder;
 can train a dog for working through the sheep,
 teach her what criss mean turning, standing still,
 or racing through the heather after strays;
 won several prizes at the trials here
 when led the whin to enter; has been asked
 to school another's pup a run of months,
 but seldom has the time to take it on.

can cast cement between the planks, and raise
 wells for a dairy or a piggery,
 or lay a door; repair a splintered shaft,
 for he's a hand for tools, though hable,
 when chance is offered, to extemporize
 with a bent wire, a leather strap, a cord;
 can plait a saddle of straw, or cut a stick
 out of a blackhorn trimming it with style,

to crook an ashplant in a boiling pot.

I own the debt, in my romantic way
would make him symbol of the righteous man,
the many-sided, the creative man,
against the dry and subtle specialist;
exact his pace to a philosophy,
and imitate his accent and his stride.

Yet I know well enough he's slow and dull,
leaves the smothered gate to rot along the ditch,
for velvet or benweed lushly to grow over;
each year will point the spew out as he mows
the lower meadow, threatening to repair it;
sends to the town for springs to patch his reaper
when the hay's heavy, ready to be cut,
and when it's cobbled, spends the first half-hour
caught at the slacks adjusting the worn teeth,
or later stanked in a rusty sword;
will brag his reaper's lasted thirty years;

fenced in the sleep place when the stirk was killed,
for it was full ten years since lost - he lost
a beast on the same mountain, not, of course,
counting the sheep, its snow at lambing time,
and foxes and strange dogs, that cause their havoc;
and at the auction fought like someone deaf,
brading his thousands for a hill of whis
to square his marches or keep a neighbour out.

When speaking with him I must gear my words
to the rough causey - and the heavy brae,
eliminate all hint of intellect,
suppress emotion, make no reference
beyond the rim of hills and its close folk,
attempt no definitions, or abstract terms.

It's not impulsive; wild birds and flowers
come under simple headings in his mind,
if they had folk-names he's forgotten them.
Woods he has names for, since they're troublesome;

Joseph, so much as the upplegrass,
 for charcoal, sovel, ibowst; frack is
 the blueberry because as a child he sought it;
 his easy ornithology is "crow"
 for any bird that's larger than a "juncle"

Like any country man, he likes to know
 a person's ^{name} trade and kinship; given that
 he seems to have no will to forage further
 into the life beyond the name and face.

To hear him shouting to his horse or dog
 you'd take him for a stumbling Caliban;
 yet, tender with his children, savoring
 an ^{apt} ~~good~~ retort, a little act of wisdom,
 you'd realize why kinship means so much,
 for all his coarseness, to his peasant heart;
 kinship and use are the two nets he drags
 through the strange waters of experience;
 but kinship will imply no charity,

for that stops short ^{with} of family. He'll nail
 a dying rook his shot against a door
 to be a warning to all feathered thieves;
 and he will tell with gusto how he dropped
 a frightened badger from its sett that others
 had failed to badge because they lacked the knack.

Yet in his talk there often flows a word,
 not of his making but traditional,
 which has a strength and freshness we have lost
 among too many words. He spoke of one
 with "a red muff of hair and always talkin";
 I'd know that man at any Antoin Javi;
 and once he fed a mare on beetled whis
 "till she was glitterin"; for years since then
 we've looked for mares that might have fed on whis;
 there was another man lived "birdalone",
 but that bright word involved no sympathy,
 for this was a too hants who'd settled down
 in a tin shack a single juled away,

who made counsel every person daily,
and was found dead on steps by someone else
who'd missed him at the door and sought him out.

With the conceit of talkers he will tell
some tedious epic of the commonplace
because he wants to. There are anecdotes
adjusted to the occasion must be told;
when reporting the best sick in any field
I'll always offer, fresh as quiddle bread,
what the man said when dressing his last sick
to his young daughter who'd been tramping it.

There is a time in youth's sophistication
we think such repetition stonely,
lacking in taste, lacking in subtlety,
would rather cut our tongues out than repeat
what someone may have heard us say before,
till we discover by experience
our words make little impact, few remember

what we have said or when, then we may learn
the comfort and house of ritual,
the eternal uprightness of the proper gesture
by word or hand; this one of many things
I took to heart, selective, critical.

If you commented on a colored word
or biting phrase, or turn of country speech,
I'd be embarrassed, thinking you made game
of how he spoke, of how his father spoke.

So, as it were, we rode across a fence
and maybe crack awhile, before we turn
each to his incommunicable ends,
I, sometimes, to apply a phrase or thought
his talk had prompted to my trade of words,
but nothing more. He could no more advise me
on my day's traffic than I him on his.

And yet I rack my wits in vain to find

some synthesis, some whole and feeling myth
 which will so change us both that we become,
 not only affords by chance, contemporaries,
 but fellow builders of the Commonwealth
 which must be founded if man's not is end,
 a flayed and moaning creature in the rubble.

This is no land of Constable and Clare,
 of wheat and oak, of rich use-mellowed things,
 the red roofs drowsing in the summer air,
 the slow-great river on whose dark glass swings
 the laden barge, the farmsteads fat and brown,
 wide-acred, deep in tides of ripening grain,
 the towers and roses of the rooted town,
 the nurtured woodlands, the bloom-tunnelled lane.

This is a smaller country: little fields,
 with scattered houses and black mountain streams;
 where even the rain-soft air a harshness yields
 of ancient wars and violence, which gleams
 and glades off each grassblade, rock and tree,
 and mocks the ~~sub~~ patient stride of history.

A Parish Priest.

This is no place for an ambitious man
with ignorant peasants only in his charge,
Land as thin stony acres, stiff as clay,
even in harvest-crying poverty
and grinding out their dues in rixpences.

What can a man do here who ^{should} by right
be known as a famous preacher through the land?
Scatter his eloquence and scholarship
over these sweating faces like the rain
that leaves a clean smudge for at most an hour?

I will not so. But they must learn to know
their priest's authority devolved on him from God
They're given to wakes and brutish drunkenness
to superstition and to ~~eccentric~~ idleness
I will suppress these with unerring hand

Their lives are narrowed to their lonely hearths;
save for the young at crossroads, and the men
at cattle fairs, and all at Mass, they lack
the time and place for common fellowship.

I'll build a Hall for them. They'll clear the debt
if every house in these unfeeling hills
must yield a beast to pay for it. I shall see
that those who play or dance here all observe
a proper Christian ^{manners} manner. I shall find
and cheer aprod - the men who run the stills
so that no jostled lad rocking in his boots
may break his liquor in a ^{manly} virgins face:
and every stranger shall be scrutinised;
and courting couples hunked to the light:
there'll be no besterats here, begot in cars,
as in the ditches in the Canon's time.

And when my hour comes I shall offer up
a cleansed and shining parish to our lady

It shall be counted in the least Assize
 more than a shelf of books or a great name
 for charity sermons, debaten Pastorals . . .

Certificate

Thought as I kick off my heavy boots
 I feel elated by a compliment
 I never thought to earn. Today I was
 invited, even pressed to come tomorrow
 to the tent pulling out at Ballybrack.
 Would you Red Beard, critics of Pastoral,
 synthetic scribblers, critics of my muse.
 I think that next time I appear in print
 I'll sign myself "A Puller of the Tent".

The Farmer

To watch his fields grow sodden with the rain
 while the sleeks heat, the blackened cornstaves shrout;
 to rack his hay until the stars come out
 before the shifting wind back west again;
 after a winter when thinned flocks remain,
 to see worn features scorch and crack with drought
 or find the brown edged leaf confirm the doubt
 that his long labour spray up was in vain;

could any man to whom these come to pass
 contain, surmount with no recoil or shock,
 but year by year give over all his toil
 in patient service to its indifferent soil,
 yet have his fair day pint, his Sunday mass,
 unless he were as native as the rock.

These then my twenty poems written down
 that came in spite, though some were laboured for;
 the silence had been such that I had grown
 half to believe there'd not be any more,
 I was so caught in active circumstance
 and strangely liked my strangled captivity,
 that though I blamed its long continuance
 I made no gesture my bound limbs to free.

Or was it that I knew this place was here,
 waiting my coming, hoarding up its song,
 when season after season, year by year,
 I have come home where my best moods belong
 and the old tunes they dance to; never yet
 failing to leave me, happy, in its debt.

The Lodge

Tired Tide
Towelllo

13.8.

The muddy shallow waters, tired and old,
without the strength to break in white of spray,
cry through the rocks, while our ripples fray
and lapse ^{against} along the land; and we are poled
along the ditches in the tarnished-gold
of an unreal Adriatic day.

And still our eyes that caught from faraway,
among the tilted stakes, the bell towers bold

and vertical assurance, are intent
on that fixed mark in time, which yet shall stand,
now darkness comes upon our days again,
the symbol of an old drowned continent
where on the last-rood of remaining land
faith still outfaced the mutinies of men.

For Treveragh, a volcanic "neck" in Co. Antrim

We dare not trouble with self-consciousness
that friendly little hill across the lane,
for it would have to live back through its pain
when the great flower of lava, in excess
of its deep throbbing stem, began to press
and break, and spread like fungus or a stain,
and found its nature sudden turn to rain
and ran like water kissing its distress.

It would be little comfort to invoke
the fabled legends that like bracken swing
over its sheep-grazed shoulder, or to skew
the humble virtue in the peasant folk
who turn the plough against its ribs in spring
and plant their small potatoes row on row.

It was awhile of use to scrutinise
 its withered leaf, the apple and the clay
 that reins and stains the fist and boldly lies
 in lines that guess towards the jaded way,
 for there was anchor in this scrutiny
 we could span back and plot to where we stood
 but all the time the logic of the eye
 ignored the surfer wisdom of the blood.

So now we see before us open wide
 the ledge to rest on next before we fall.
 Seek then the context, be dissatisfied
 until the leaf includes the tree and all
 the sense of growth, the magic chlorophyll,
 the temperature, the angle of the hill.

15/16.8.51 75
 For we have known a man walk through a wood
 and stop and point and say: Near here we find
 a certain kind of mushroom which is good,
 or is not good, to eat; for in his mind
 he had already leapt beyond the slow
 arithmetic of reason and could state
 the whole from any part, and hence could so
 from whole to any part without debate.

For ^{only} totals answer in the end;
 the ladder's choices alter at each tree:
 as yet the mind has hardly learnt to climb,
 But the wise heart whose only skills to spend,
 knows that the gift, however garnered,
 is still the same in time or out of time.

18.8.51

76

The necromancer or the alchemist
digging in secret towards the source of power
had even to give his private maps a twist
with jabled monster or heraldic flower,
to head the pack off. When he slipped or slept,
they smelt the footprints out and tracked him down,
and the stakes roared with one more flame adept:
the elements resumed what was their own;
the dark side of the moon must not be steered.

Or he was challenged in a kinder day,
confessed his errors and recanted straight,
knelt down in sackcloth for his sins to pray
or stood in penance by the city gate;
yet still was suspect, for some vowed they heard
a subtle hint of something in his tone
that mocked his loud avowal, or a word
whose ambiguity was quickly known:

8.12

77

The dark side of the moon must not be steered.

Later the state set up the alchemist
in a high place and gave his skills a trade,
offering all the honours he had missed
in those far days when he was so afraid;
but when the answers marshalled in his brain
and he strode down with pride to ^{make} them known,
suspicion roped him off, and once again
he stood a captive in the crowd, alone:
the dark side of the moon must claim its own.

In the Hayfield:

27.8

Then someone comes with a basket. We throw aside
the wooden rakes and stab the forks in stubble,
leaving the half-burnt hayrick for the ledge
where, sprawled in lusher shadow or on spikes
the sun still glitters over, all encamp.

The splashing tea is cupped from hand to hand
and the spoon rattles till its din is stilled
by thumb compulsive of the last to stir.

The split forks shine with butter from a bowl
until the brandished knife is dulled with straw,
and the glass jars a megaphone for wasps.

This is a sigh of rest. When we have finished,
we loll and nod to summarise the work
so far accomplished. Affording pride and sloth
we iddle lightly. Then the children rise,
kick off their shoes and measure out their race,
started and urged by shouts from those who lie
complacent in the mellow evening air.

A ritual this running round the field,
shoeless with shoulders braced and shouting mouths,
and would remind us of archaic usage
or primitive survival stored in books,
were we not lapses into eternity
where there is neither past nor future time
until the grass feels damp and we remember
that half the upper meadow's still to stack.

27.8

Tossing the swards of sodden grass
 that has not withered into hay
 with turning rake or shaken fork,
 we labour through the gusty day.

The blanched grey thistles stiffly thrust
 out of the waves of grass that seem
 like tilted sticks and floating spars
 from the still ocean of a dream.

And only now and then there come
 the scented whiff, the crackle dry,
 to evidence for our content
 this use of our economy.

On Walking a Road after many years

We walked the road unledged between the hills
 where the gay leather, first of autumn's brood,
 already masked the strong incessant hills
 and the vast ~~sky~~ clouds gave sky its altitude:

and there, ~~was~~ where everything was absolute
 and even the grazing cow against the light
 stood black and sharp, more symbol than mere brute,
 and space was blue and clouds within it, white,

my heart-leaped through the years unerringly
 to scout this leather with a Redskin stride;
 the blackened rattle called us round for tea;
 my father laid his box of paints aside.

Of, not for, my mother

I turn wasie from my mother
 admiring herself in the mirror
 dissatisfied with the hat shops,
 to give at home another shape
 to what she wore
 the year before

for I tend to lose my years
 everytime her face appears
 reduced to matter or to salt
 or peevishly drink up my milk
 or give the lie
 instinctively:

angry at language which implied
 my father was not worth my bride
 stayed overlooked, cared even less
 for what men reckon - as success

was good but weak,
 so got no break;

while her brother, the clever one,
 and the kindly golfer John,
 were held before my cynic eyes
 as inspiration to be wise
 and gain applause
 from victor - cause

now note my image in her mind
 enlarging slowly to a kind
 of heavy synthesis of these
 with frequent notice in the press
 becoming known
 at microphone;

and wonder if I have betrayed
 the fact with life my father made
 that there should be one voice to speak

for the distressed the hurt the weak
and never sigh
for flattery.

Already through my veins I feel
the subtle poison seep and steal
and find myself inclined to use
my mother's pleasure as excuse
for bowing to
the less than true.

The High Deeds of Finn

Before I was old enough for school
an old man told me of Finn MacCool,
a middle-sized giant with flashing eyes,
bigger than any four times his size,
strong as an elephant, self-reliant
- he fought his war with the Scottish giant
- and hurled a sod in a careless way;
the hole that it left became Lough Neagh;
and the sod flew wide - as the Isle of Man;
and plopped in the sea - as the Isle of Man;
and Durigedan, that mountain high
which sticks its head through the Antrim sky -
Durigedan! Why, Finn MacCool
set it there for a creepie stool.

The Mourners and the Sperrins are heaps of stone
that Finn ^{raked together} collected to search for a horse
for the squire he swung when he moved the trees.
He squeezed Lough Erne between his bare knees.

He scooped a bay with a twist of his spade,
and dumped the muck - and called it Knocklayde.

From the very length where his branks began
he dug a drain; it is now the Bann;

[and the castle at Carrick, square on its rock,
is still where he left it - block upon block.

He gouged and he grooved the sloping Glens
when his flocks ran wild for the want of pens;

and Strampford, Carlingford, Swilly and Foyle
are monuments to some morning's toil -

Oh name any mountain or lake you care,
it was Finn himself that put it there!

I dreamed for years of Finn MacCool
and carried my dream to the gates of the school

but they guessed my secret from my looks
decided to act and relied on books

and the books insisted - a lesser thing
that Finn was a captain under a king

no great at all but a fighting man

The strutting lord of a little clan
who died in a battle - an age ago

They couldn't fool me and I still know

that Finn has, under many a name
done all the things we account our fame

It was he for the barefoot children's sake
as Patrick cleared out every snake.

He caught and returned the cannon balls
that Tyrconnell fired against Derry's Walls.

[He raised the ganties - to build the ships -

he pushes the carriers down the slips
and pulls and dubs and scutches the lint
and weaves the cloth and designs the print

He spins the jute in the long thick ropes;
and mineral waters and scented soaps
are tricks and toys for a rainy day

when he can't go out - but wants to play
and when he's a cold and stays in bed
he whistles the sticks for matches instead.

He started two factories to produce

[Tobacco, for Finn both smokes and chews
 And when they talk ⁱⁿ of my Antrim glen
 of the greatest of all the travelling men
 who raced the horses from Cusheadall
 and got to Slenarm before them all
 it was Finn who took Garron in one long stride
 while the coaches clung to the waterside;
 and the rock that they call the Slensman's left
 out by Torr is a sign of his thrift
 he pucked it out of his plumpshere's way
 and left it safe for another day.

[But here's a secret, I'm sure, that shocks,
 he's built a factory of boggie blocks
 at Carnickfergus, where women and men
 may know their work for their hands again.

I'm grateful for all that MacCool has done
 X the gannies hoisted, the races run,
 [the friendly gestures the kindly acts
 that are always lost in historical facts

but there's still a lot for him to do
 before we can let him say he's through
 and if he's willing I'll lend a hand
 and so will you, when you understand -
 He may have even the strength to join
 the halves that split at the bitter Boyne.

Early September

The corn not ripe enough
 to cut, we watch the sky;
 the turf is drawn, the hay is saved,
 the dubbed lint hatted dry.

The lambs are driven down
 the glen with time to spare,
 to crowd tomorrow in the pens,
 bewildered at the fair.

But still we watch the sky
 and turn our anxious gaze
 upon the tall pale corn,
 and count the shorter days.

September in the City

I walk beneath the trees;
 the morning sunlight falls
 across the hoar-grey lawn,
 along the brick-brown walls.

And while the city roars
 far in the shining mist,
 I carry autumn in my heart,
 a leaf upon my wrist.

Evidence

Plunged in the morning air,
 my heart responds - at once
 to the slow turning year,
 and each reporting sense
 hurries - to be the first
 to offer certain proof;
 the tang of early frost,
 the colour on the leaf.

The heart still hopes the eyes
 will answer clean and sure,
 establishing her choice,
 chestnut, not sycamore.

11. IX. 51

11. IX.

When I was young my lumpy pockets held
 a fist of foreign coins, - a twist of cord,
 a nail, a bolt, a rubber, slabs of chalk,
 a watch that stopped before it fell home,
 and cardboard pictures begged or bartered for.

How I have altered! All my wealth has shrivelled
 to wisps of paper which no decent child
 could find much use for, short of starting fires.

This
~~How~~ is the balsam-season, dominant
 all over ~~the~~ covers it has rooted in;
 surviving the tall foxglove, reared now,
 with not a cup to bless its shaggy stem.
 Fuchsia still dangles from the tangled ledge,
 but its bright blossoms hang as if to fall.
 The balsam has arrayed its every leaf
 with narrow pods that glisten in the light;
 only when bellied, with the quick spring set
 to flick the brown seeds at the bursting sleeve;
 but still the frail flowers nod, not two in colour
 exactly having, running through a stem
 from tinted white to purple; each tilted lip
 mapping the lightest breath's way in the air;
 and the last autumn-bees drone in and out,
 darken the hollow throats - a busy moment,
 then leave each quivering with a private gale.

Marvel at skill in calculated stress
 which thrusts the long stem of the flowering plant
 high in the air, to sway - as the wind orders,
 to reassert its poise when the wind drops,
 and stand its season, letting each event
 of budding, leafing, flowering, bearing seed,
 occur in sequence as its nature bids;
 like a tall city or a commonwealth
 which gives its answer to a planner's dream:

no insurrection in the shouting squares;
 mob frenzies looking down the alleys; dumb
 hysteria in attics; or the loud
 frustrations of packed bars, the lonely pint
 slopped on the table, which the barmen smears
 with his brisk cloth impersonal as time;
 no empty Sunday mornings when the bells
 jangle irrelevant against the crisp

and rustling walls of teastained newspapers —

But you are gazing at a growing plant,
 no diagram for politics; keep your thought
 from pushing its coarse parallels too far,
 and postulating roots clamped to the soil
 the pumping patient cells, the flowering tufts —
 the only part allowed ^{fertility} fertility —
 supported by the labour in the stalk,
 as saving order for society.
 There's no less wonder in the drifting flake,
 or in the raindrop lurching down the leaf.

Have you not stood in wonder to observe
 the bomb-wombed satchels of the seeding plant
 that, at a touch, release their loaded charge
 with small explosions pecked and tense with life,
 and thought, in chill luminosity (and awe)
 that we [who move and hope and pray and plan,]
 have, through the long millennia, achieved
 only the gun that sprays its scorching seeds
 over the sunlit village, or against
 the star-thick sky, an arc of sudden flame?

Seed in the mould that bides its secret hour
 or metal splinter in the rotting flesh?

Should some creature on another planet
 let the strong lens like a magnet draw
 this pitted surface ^{towards} to him, could he guess
 what life stirred here? Should he not rather think
 the seasons brushing over linked order
 of the same kind he knew for ^{all spun} spinning spheres,
 reporting gaily to his six-armed kin?

You left a print, and date from style of dress
 the figures in it, yet there's something more
 which states the epoch sure as tie or tress —
 the face has style though blank as any door:

and to those faces we may correlate
 the acts and passions of the period
 may even guess the shape they draped on fate,
 the very features that they gave to God.

We too shall seem to others later born
 absurd or quaint, our nature manifest
 not merely in the way men's hair was worn
 or the up-trussing of the female breast

For every age achieves the set of masks
 that fit its drama. Yet who'd win away
 from the bright glass in which his folly basks
 to judge the scale and purpose of the play?

To be used in an address delivered at the Unveiling
of a plaque commemorating "George A. Birmingham"

Awhile - caught in the bog of politics
you let the arrows of your satire fly,
the -placeman, the corrupt, and those that by
deceit and dealing prosper, to transfix;
but these, well-schooled in all evasive tricks
and careaced in round hypocrisy
took no more heed of your sincerity
than should a rock chastised with little sticks.

So you unstring your bow, and bent your skill
to gentler humours on a smaller stage
and the swift years passed over you, until
you had forgotten all your lovely rage,
content the crowded shelf your writings fill
should offer haven in ^{an} anxious age.

And so we laugh with you at pranks and plights
at kindly wit unbarbed by wits' conceit;
the little humours of the village street
that keep the last luckpenny warm and bright;
the parlour dramas played for our delight;
the small conspiracies whose sure defeat
brings grief to petty tyrants, in the neat
twist of the merry tale that makes all right.

Yet we remember, when the laughter dies
and the last page that raised it's turned away,
the lonely traffic of Atlantic skies
above the islands in the western bay,
and, nearer home, the windy spume that flies
high over Ballintoy - and Ballintree.

102 From the French of R. M. Rilke

Just published in *L'Art* (Paris) 30.XI.51.

Across the garden suddenly in flower
You, of supporters most sustaining, bear
my ebbing heart - towards the fountain
while I am left with yours, the ever springing,
in this garden perfumed endlessly.

As a child reins-in his future powers
as yet not chafing them, I hold your heart
and all its riches. But around us both,
we are this lovely garden, we ourselves.

See! what is it we are not? We are the stars,
which answer to this garden's night; and Night
which compasses the high stars, foreign rivers
and the vast mountains in far steeper-lands
and endless space which opens out beyond them.

In separation we are not divine,
our union makes the Angel of our love
? his steps and you, his youthful mouth

Written on the back of a leaf torn from a Calendar.

On this torn leaf of a waning calendar,
 November's gale of days all spent and gone,
 I note the silent facts of winter dawn,
 of moon in hood of sky with one bright star,
 of cottage lamps across the Glen afar,
 of vacant fields, their labourers withdrawn,
 where no plough yet asserts dominion
 that I may recall all these as what they are;

not evidence for images I wrought
 or tinted to the colours of my mood,
 but rather that the truth behind my thought
 that, simply, being is beatitude
 shall have all nurture that my sense has caught
 though what may come be not all understood.

The well was low and brackish, thick with frogs,
 for the long drought had run into the earth
 like a fierce frost that hardened every vein,
 and dry leaves scuffed and rubbed the steps below,
 in crisp October and for many days.
 But now, with rough November's loaded showers,
 the spring-wells brimmed with crystal, full of light,
 the gushing pipe thrusts out its singing jet
 and the heaped leaves rot slowly into mould.

Now in the last of the light
 - a gusty hailstorm flits
 over the leached fields
 with the long potato-pits,

The hills are shut from sight
 as far as the low clouds reach
 and the blunty earth is sealed
 like the buds on the twigs of the beech.

I have learned to trust my heart
 as men will trust a spring
 though days of autumn drought
 diminish its offering;

for deep in the stream-veined hills
 the filtered system lies
 and out of the latent chalk
 unfailing waters rise.

Why do we hug this place
high in the cloud-mobbed hills,
where never a stranger's face
peers over the dripping sills,

and the only sound to be heard
when the storm falls to a lull
is the cry of a passing bird,
a curlew or a gull;

or maybe the far off bleat
from stables of horn or whin
that the tufted slopes repeat
till it dies, forlorn and thin?

On reading On Here of Land by R.S. Thomas, received today

Voice of one across the water, high
mid taller hills than mine, yet speaks
the obligations and the distances
the turning season makes

of earth and weather here where I am known
to dog and master on the road.
over a tide of leather, between
a descending and a rising cloud;

for though we rustle at a different fair
and mouths open with another sound
the fancies in the lonely skulls sap up
through bone that's rooted to the ground.

Poems in 1952.

110

The Heather bleat.

16/17 March

The slow long winter has delayed the spring
here in the hills, though bluebells grip and sway
on every tossing sabbey; the thorn hedge
that's studded by quick troops of the looping finch
is bare - as that old cupboard in the vine;
and robin singing on the taller thrush
calls - over withered grass. The earth is cold
under the turning plough; the dark manure
lies in its neat-forked piles across the lea.

With scarce a primrose or a celandine
in worked places, all the colour yet
is on the whin-tips, gold still charged with green;
a timid challenge to the hungry eye.
Not even a black-nosed lamb, for custom here
names April for yow's labour and for men's.
So when at dusk the grey light and the mist

take over the chill landscape, glen by glen,
for a brief span the heather bleats' descent
will fill the air forlorn with that remote
half-boyish, mocking and foreboding sound
the heart accepts - as if containing all.

111

Folk Custom

17. 3. 52

Our Jewish neighbour farther up the hill,
 already twice before the bench, again
 has no more trouble with his private still
 carelessly hidden just across the lane;
 running his head into the dangling noose,
 who only made poteen for table use.

It had been something if he'd skew the stuff
 at every ceilidhe round the countryside
 and from the speedy orders cleared enough
 to pay his debts or gain a second bride;
 but he'd no better wit nor more to do
 than lie on Sundays, ^{full} drunk, along the burn.

It's not his misdemeanour that affronts:
 we all have little errors to confess: —
 be up before the Petty Sessions once,
 and not a man will rate a Raat the less.

It's that we know of other men who wrought
 at stilling all their days were never caught.

26.3.52

How much of you is in my verse
 another age will take to say
 delete the detail and disperse
 the clouds that round the gathered day

No more for me to pluck who plant
 who seed nine lewis to see which grow
 my only whisper what I want
 and name the turf to wear the snow

So love me this it is not long
 the bone will show the grey remark
 the quiet meaning of the song
 that with one star consumed the dark.

Bells.

The bell at noon across the laboured fields
 when the work's halted and the workers stand
 briefly to bless themselves; or at the fair
 in a throng of men and cattle suddenly
 one here and there before the first stroke ends
 has pulled his cap off as the gesture runs
 throughout the concourse till the only sounds
 are of the dung-flanked bullocks shifting rows,
 as the strokes show the heart its loneliness...

We've stopped to watch on Sunday from the hill
 the straggling people nodding into church,
 a grey toy church set in a mat of green,
 the clergyman, gown flying, the trotting boys,
 the treading cyclist bowed against the slope,
 and as the paths cleared, leaving only sun
 upon the headstones and the sleeping grass
 the tolling bell ran on and no one came.

116 We've heard the midnight bells ring in the year
among the branches and the frosty stars
as a new people steps into the world
and hears its feet on gravel the first time
their voices, strings released, untought salute
that little resurrection once again . . .

But - there were single bells for single people,
for little clusters held a moment's space,
the city clock tower hammering its hours
buds scarce a face look up, the roaring train
so owns their clenched attention as they move .

Only in Venice that just Sunday morning,
the shutters split and leaking with the light,
the world itself a dome of clanging bronze
cupped in its endless resonance too many
solar and large and small and merry bells
for the awakened ear to count them all
bounding from towers and steeples, and rebounding

117
over the rich baroque, till every square
was full of bellpeal as a brimming well,
and which were echo, which were over water
could not be answered; not to be conceived
that any alive should ever sleep again .

6. IV. 52

A man - at a gate puts on his jacket;
the tractor waits on the sword inside;
the field is ploughed. I look at my watch;
it's four o'clock, as the light still good .

I wonder, passing, if the ploughman
had bet himself he'd finish by four,
and my deft thought included for blessing
all who finish the job in time .

6. 11. 52

118

No actor with a cupboard full of masks,
I use a mirror strictly - as a tool,
knowing my face too well to set it tasks
like being cynical or ^{masterful} beautiful.

I do not - mouth at mirrors, do not speak;
only, at times, I signal with my hand -
not merely to adjust the lettered check,
but that the ^{man inside} watching self may understand.

119

As we go north the lambs are younger,
the buds are tighter upon the trees;
and rarely even in sheltered places
is any drooping of the primroses.

Books show figures to offer the reason,
the axis-tit of this spinning globe;
but I have less use for the answers of science
than for the angry questions of Job.

Nevertheless, from my observation
I have learned to wait with a lively hope.
On the very mountain the snow lasts longest -
the curlew's call drags spring up the slope.

Megraw's Bush.

6/7. IV. 52

Passing the lambing gowes on lower ground
at easy distance for the anxious farmer,
we climbed the fences to the open moor
clear fences of a frontier running straight
with no beginning and no end in sight.

Blackened with leather, soft in mossy places,
the land seemed timeless; only now and then,
as evidence not sworn or absolute,
whin blossom named the season, and from afar
a curlew's cry bore up by the strong wind
brought confirmation. Then we came upon
a trail of wool, tangled with withered whin
and holding the last shower in beads of light
that led to a sheep's skull, with the curling horns
and upper jaw of teeth, the flesh all gone:
merandir dog or fox or days of snow
or sickness of its kind - we could not tell

what wrought this havoc. Climbing farther up

over a rounded shoulder to the north
we saw a tree, a ^{lonely sycamore} ~~soldier~~ ~~beech~~

that shelter of a hollow had allowed
its steady years of growth and thickening
but ~~saved~~ ^{failed} to save the branches from the winds
incessant pressure from the roaring west:

and round it the green turf still held the shapes
of old spade cultivation. There were stones
at the tree foot and bedded in a bank
too lost to carry off to build a wall,
that spoke of habitation long ago.

We stood to wonder at the courage of it
and the defeated lands that left their sign
sealed under green sods - and a leaning tree
which proved men something more than stricken sheep
though dead as surely and as clean forgotten.

And from the place there was a splay of tracks

this way and this, across the lonely mountain
 not beaten paths, well trodden, regular,
 but as if the grass remembered and retained
 the possibility of offering
 an act of choice to the next traveller.

We took the left hand track as serving best
 our straight intention to achieve the slope
 that spreads the glen before it and the bay,
 and then the next crest opened to our gaze
 a little loch rimmed round with tall bleached grass,
 trimmed with the colour of the April sky
 and waiting for a star to ^{step} ~~shine~~ in it.

Grey on my temples now, as thread by thread
 the pigment ebbs; a trace is set with time:
 before the wind-splayed locks are whitered all,
 I may have clenched the sonnet's final rhyme,
 or left it ragged, having given up
 the sterile labour, to begin to live,
 too late to master what is never learnt,
 that wisdom only is contemplative.

Words work their will with us. I had begun
 another center, plotted to achieve
 a balanced answer to the problem set,
 whether, grown old in service, I receive
 life's master, death, a white and solemn man,
 or, summoned in the hurry of my years,
 shall touch a forelock scarcely moist with grey,
 and which shall yield the sharpest need for tears.

But words betrayed me, or my coward thought
 grasping the colours, let the substance fly:
 when I was young and only elders died,
 it seemed, in truth, no urgent thing to die:
 but now conditioned to mortality,
 by flux of seasons, by the drift of time,
 I seek through words a life beyond the words,
 and hope my breath more mortal than my name.

In the Low Meadow where we forked the hay
 between the angust showers, this Easter day
 the yowes move slowly, each attended by
 her lamb, her twins, or in the warm grass lie
 content beside them. In this world of peace
 the slant sun lemons the rim of every fleece.

If I should leap the fence and stride across,
 I should add nothing; each would rise and toss
 a warning cry; the archipelago
 of drowsy islands now would drift and flow
 into a new and momentary hull
 till I had passed beyond them, in each skull
 the sparking batteries of alarm adjusted
 to certain range where strangeness may be trusted,
 while teches of evasion and defence
 stand mobilised behind their innocence.

So let them read unroused this Easter peace,
 for neither they nor I have longer lease
 of quiet: yet their being offers me
 a mood to share and bask in, which will be
 an image to enrich my sweetest thought
 rooted in grass and parable - enwrought.

A Journey in East Antium

Too many things precipitate
 the seeds of poems in my mind:
 a tractor driver at a gate
 a window with a crooked blind
 a long hillslope with moving cows
 the washing jiggling on the line
 the tablet on the meeting house
 the cycle-wheel hung out as sign
 the churchyard wall, the studded board
 that answers back the headlights' glare
 the shopman's name that in a word
 lays half the country's history bare
 the bridge across the stream where once
 a fool drowned himself in rope
 and one whose swift opinions
 were weather-vane for his wild age
 was slain in skirmish long ago
 the Round Tower peeping through the trees

with, somewhere, Compall's bones below
 brought north in secret when the peace
 of Banya crashed in Viking flame
 for every acre of this place
 presents its story and its name
 and thrusts its features in my face,
 till I am lost in maze of deed
 conjecture memory subject theme
 who for my better nurture needs
 the consecration of the dream
 O for a journey through a land
 where every stone is dumb to me
 that I might chance to understand
 the lonely fact objectively.

With strained eyes unaccustomed to the dark
 even denied the comfort of a star
 I look about in fear till I remark
 the intermittent headlights of a car
 and from that compass-point can certify,
 because I know what road it travels down,
 which blackness is of mountain, which of sky
 and where in ungaped darkness lies the town
 beyond the westward hills across the moor
 where I may go tomorrow at my ease
 for darkness such as this is metaphor
 and has no room for perfect similes.

High on the hill face the tractor
weaves a scarf of white vapour;
known first because of the engine
roaring across the bright glen.

On a lower slope a ploughman
follows his plodding horses;
his cries are lost - at this distance
but gulls skew white in the drills.

Loughaveema

Lough in the hills where the water
ebbs out in its secret way
terraced levels - by ledges
cracks splinter the barren clay

yet I have crossed the straight causeway
blown ripples lapping the tan
right and left skewing at midnight -
black mirrors smacked by a star.

Drought

Rainless the windy weather
 barns run with little sound
 hoofprints of watering cattle
 are sealed in the crusted ground.

Scarce a blade for the lipping
 ceaseless the ballocks plod
 at the heels of the harrow
 dust floats from the shattered sod

Over the hills together
 curlews are crying for rain
 at the loam ends two farmers
 pause to compare and complain.

15. IV. 52

Poems in May

16/20. V

May Afternoon

O world too various and immediate,
 too fierce bombardier every reeling sense
 with coloured shapes, swift textures, sounding forms —
 with birdsong; lapping rook, — and permanent
 assertive chaffinch, urgent tit, — and lark
 that flutters up till song is absolute
 and wheeling curled talking propley
 over the bushes; while, a glen away,
 a cuckoo hardly heard persists, until
 the ear is weary singing out the call
 from all the tide of noises in between,
 or are there two for certain? More than two,
 if ear could reach them; disregarding all
 cock-crowings distant, muffled bleed of lombs,
 far lowing cattle? Every twittering branch
 has also under-drome of lousing bees
 busy with traffic of the commonwealth,
 or large and anxious queens unretained,
 establishing or summoning — a state;

while wasp or fly draws its thin line of sound
 across the mirror of the listening mind:
 and sun is hot on skin, and little winds
 gentle upon the warm sweat-salted lips;
 and smell of sun on grass, of lawn-ton drifts,
 of dung and dust - and when in sheltered place,
 as faces of all flowers and leaves strain
 with light or lively shadows wind-provoked,
 wild flowers and garden flowers and butterflies
 like wandering blossoms searching for a stem:
 but colour, texture, perfume, form, so close
 wrought in the landscape's fabric, that beyond
 your shadow's length, all's out of focus, blurred
 with over-much sensation; as when you lift
 the cupped hands, tingling, from a chill spring well
 you only wet your lips, so much has run
 back through the fingers to the waiting ground.

Midnight in May.

All that at noon had colour now is dark
 only trees against the sky maintain,
 with one dimension less, their sunset-form:
 and in the windless night there is no sound
 but water running over little stones,
 part of the darkness, close to the black earth,
^{two} and rural cormorants and a heather bleat,
 the cormorants moving half a field away,
 the ~~jack~~ snipe whirring undefined in space:
 but every branch that had its day-bright song,
 carries, in place of each, a silent star.

Leaving our hearth at midnight for his own
 up the steep winding tree, our neighbour paused
 beyond the gate to weigh the chance of rain;
 an old man this, our ^{when we come} only neighbour ^{near},
 with trees between us - and a ^{noisy} little stream,
 who lives alone, and follows his slow craft
 of joinery - at clockcase, chair or churn,
 his front door shut, his workshops open wide
 to wading dog or sunshine from the south
 or the farmchildren from across the hill.

Beneath the high bright stars our neighbour paused
 to name to-morrow's weather, and we heard,
 out of the empty darkness of the ^{earth} ~~solid~~,
 a concrete calling loudly, if ear could guess,
 in the low meadow now the grass is ^{deep} high.

"The first I've heard the year," the old man said,

"They're gettin' scarcer now than times ago.

I always like to hear him, for his cry
 is ^{right good} ~~company~~ ^{for}"; and then, "Goodnight",

he turned and plodded up the winding lane
 to his dark house behind the fuchsia hedge,
 and left me, ^{measuring} ~~staring~~, under the high stars,
 how one could ~~grasp~~ ^{measure} another's loneliness.

Sonnet

20.V

My knuckles rasped and grazed with the sharp hook,
 I prove once more my lack of skill with tools
 who trudged my youth out through the tedious schools
 and now regret for life the time it took.

In manhood only have I learned to look,
 beyond the flage that pens, the line that rules,
 for what vast part of heaven lies in pods
 or what marks out a raven from a rook.

Lacking those skills too, that a lad will know
 like his own breathing now, with valve and gear,
 spared no more seasons than will serve to show
 what hedges offer at what time of year
 in certain places, where I yet may grow
 between the lost life and the life I fear.

Garron Top

137

Here on this headland sheet a thousand feet
 with the broad moorland rippling to the cliff
 on every side save one where it runs back
 till sight surrenders it to simple shapes
 of cloud and mountain: no other world exists
 than this we traverse; its inhabitants,
 the grazing sheep alert, the wheeling gull,
 the small grey linnets starting from the grass
 and swaying ^{balancing} on the bracken their bright songs.
 And no more mark of man than, long since passed,
 a ruined wellstead with its sheltered trees
 in southern hollow, and across the slope
 a drystone wall in fretted silhouette;
 the flowers are few, the moss anonymous;
 all here's abstracted to the elements.

We somehow pause for complementary forces
 to match the bare simplicities of sense:

thunder, cloud-burst, fundamental storm,
 some vast bird crying or some screaming beast
 roused from the lairs of myth and memory,
 but no voice fiercer than the lightning falls
 upon the bowed will or the waiting heart.

Back to the little house after a week
 of city business under dripping awnings
 and at night - the slates shining with rain
 once more I was aware of the old damp smell
 the odour of soaked stone reminding me
 of my own and of all houses' mortality:
 the smell of the cut hay lying was kinder,
 easier to be accepted by the mind,
 and of the freshened flowers cool to the heart;
 the steel reel's marks on ^{grass} turf recalled also
 all turf cut with wit, games and curcuses:
 but a sudden gust of wind across the meadow
 came laden with the stench of the stubbed lint
 that spread and pervaded every channel of sense,
 and I was ruffled again, as firm as a tree
 remembering man continues in his processes,
 that without him the whole world would cease to be.

The sheaves together set upright
 seemed brittle rods of hot June drawn gold,
 and in the tilted evening light
 the tufted shadows that they cast
 were part and root, like them should last
 tho' moons rise desolate and cold.

But caught and banded with the straw
 the hairy thistles bleached and dead,
 obedient to their nature's law,
 were sharp and waiting still to wound
 yet gave no shadow to the ground
 but mocked the promise of the bread.

Outside my senses, known as printed words
 as tinted woodcut half a life ago
 the crouching hedgehog on the roadside sword
 apportioned in spike and parting flank
 the world of things I know and do not know.

True to the legend, when I threatened it,
 the ball defensive coiled before my eyes:
 the twitching snout, the small peltate hands
 withdrew and left me utterly expelled
 no longer free of Adam's paradise.

Patient I waited till the fear was spent;
 and watched the waking from that little death:
 a fellow creature sharing the same light
 nervous and mortal, glad to be alive,
 and eager for the purposes of breath.

The smell of dubbed lint hangs about the fields
 faint as a memory of the brimming dams
 that sink half-empty now, unged round with stores
 but even the last hay cut and shaken out
 to dry in wind - and what September sun
 may shine between the late and early dews
 the redolent of summer, as it's stirred,
 has not the lingering quality, the power
 pervasive, like the smell of burning turf
 or damp in a stone cottage, and like them
 the lint-smell has its own authority
 as of a phrase in an old dialect

After uncounted days of drought and flood,
 a tired parched season - and a spate of rain
 in lashing torrent hard to be withstood,
 autumnal peace approaches us again:
 the streams run dark and full; the trees are bare;
 the fields hast labour, waiting for the spring;
 but in October light the clearer air
 brings new dimensions for our comforting.

The landmarks have not perished with our hopes:
 the hills remain; the constellations turn;
 - and the slant sunshadows on the western slopes
 show hidden contours we have yet to learn,
 and time - and will stand ready to obey
 the brave compulsions of this shortened day.

October Sortie.

This is a sodden country to traverse,
 a sodden country ribbed with streaming lanes
 that fray out into grass, or here and there
 diminish to a pair of muddy ruts
 which lurch thro' them - and trample to disclose,
 in sudden clumps of dripping ash or hegel,
 a huddle of grey stones, half-tumbled walls
 with, maybe, - at the gable a stack of turf
 a round pot - overturned a tilted cart
 dung - to the axle, or - a rusting plow.
 There's sometimes smoke from the chimney, and a dog
 whose sudden dash alarms the dreaming ducks
 buoyant upon - a high sod-buttressed pond
 where water gushes round, not thro', a pipe
 for any life still here is - geared to stop.

What gates you chance on, hang precarious,
 wired to a stump; a bush across a gap

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skews less authority with better use.

By the lie of the land, by landmarks, by the light-
 that, taking sometimes under a low cloud,
 bleaches the ash-trees strung along - a road
 across the hill-foot - leading to the town,
 you have a sense of where you want to go
 but - how to reach the road, to circumvent
 the fences, hedges, ditches, walls between,
 seems more than you can grapple with, and tho'
 in this late season you're not baffled by
 the green corn braved or ready for the blade,
 or tides of lint, wind-fingered, tangled close,
 for oats and lint are lifted and cut off,
 and what hay's left is in little crouching nicks
 and most of the potatoes built in mounds
 offer no greater trouble than soft earth,
 the problem's harder now, with the bare thorn
 and the bright holly at its burnished prime

Few folk are at field-labour near enough
for you to question, tho' you'll often hear
a strong voice after sleep. You'll come on sheep
that rise and moving up the sloping pasture
converge in the far corner till you've gone
and cows will lift slow heads to meditate
the meaning of your shadow and your shape.

If you should meet with someone it may be
a beg well-hooded in a tattered coat,
whom you'll ^{pass} mumble by you at a keeper's heels.
With better luck it yet might prove a man —
perhaps that voice you heard three fields ago —
with dogs that yelp and prance, and he will pause
to point you out a barn, a stile, a sheep,
describing these "the barn not ill to cross;
the stile beyond the bushy field; the sheep
above the dark house there ^{down} among the bushes."
And since you know the words you'll find the way
out of the wet road world to the firm clean road.

The Sound of Wind

When the strong wind leans across the land
rocking the trees and shouldering round the hills
you hear strange voices and a peal of bells
too far away for clearer definition,
as tho' you listened to your crowded heart.

All other noise is lost that limited life,
the cracking twig, the turning wheel, the footstep,
the tumbling water over the small stones;
the birds are swept to silence out of sight,
save for a lost note or a wandering gull.

As tho' you listened to your crowded heart;
and all the small sensations of existence
stripped off like straw, and only there remained
the immortal part you share with every man
but have no names for, being out of time.

Tong up the smouldring turf
and circle three times round
till in a ring of flying smoke
your heart is gently bound
and you'll be free of any spell
from under, over ground.

And as you circle so
repeat this ancient charm
"From charmers and committee men
my soul shall take no harm;
for I bear kindly fire to man
^{light, and}
to keep him ^{keep him warm.}"

This blessed fire I bring
^{summoned}
was kindled at no witch.
I took it from a poor man's hearth;
he dug it from a ditch;
and while my heart remembers this
forever I am rich.

Above my door the rushy cross,
the turf upon my hearth,
for I am of the (Irish) ^{this boggy soil}
by ^{nurture} nation and by birth

and let no priest deny,
no priest dispute my claim
for I was of the ^{an older} Elder Faith for I still hold the faith was here
before St. Patrick came.

The healing well was known to me,
the magic of the thorn,
the menace of the cursing stones,
long years ere I was born.

Before men swung ^{crooked} the ^{say the} scythe
I averted my look with care
and from the stock-lined harrowed

box off the platted fare.

And yesterday as I came down
 where Oisín's grave stones stand,
 the lolly branch with berries hung
 rose upright in my hand.

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"The man's a bag o' wind", the critic sneer,
 I nod assent, but smile my inward doubt:
 for lack of bellows many a friendly fire
 that warms us yet, had long ago gone out.

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The counsellors met in committee;
 they voted according to plan,
 defending the fame of their city,
 by ditching the qualified man.

The Literary Function; a wine

I went to the Irish PEN Dinner;
 they brought me a drink on a tray;
 then I found a convenient corner
 and considered the whole affray.

The authors, the poets, the critics
 were elbowing madly to stand
 beside or close to The Minister
 or to shake The Minister's hand.

Then out of the jostle of gestures,
 the chatter, the profiles, there came
 a little wee fellow towards me;
 I knew and remembered his name.

He stretcht out his fist to salute me;
 I near spilt my drink to reply.
 "How are ye doin'?" the wee man said.

"Fighten for life," sez I.

He slipped me a grin that was friendly
and whispered, "So am I!"

Then we wended into the Dinner

I sat near the wife of the Mayor

the man next to her told his stories.

she never ^{found} quivered a hair

Then after the food came the speeches

and after the speeches the songs

till this ballad-monger and that ballad-monger
were at it hammer and tongs.

Then after the Dinner was over,

and most of the guests had gone,

I got introduced to the Minister

and he was an affable man.

What need have I to heed the rant
of those gross men and ignorant
and let them think, and half agree,

they have the strength to injure me &
because my ^{pride was something} self-esteem was hurt
by revelation of the dirt

that festers in the maggot-mind
of this small parcel of mankind?

For by admitting this I wrong

the masters I have served so long,
and ^{would by this default} surely ^{would by it} condemn

what might I have to follow them?

Above the momentary wars

did they not see the fixed stars?

The shortening days drift swiftly into winter
with strong gales blowing from the south and west
the tall trees rock and sway the dead boughs splinter
and twigs for kindling litter the wet ground.

The streams are dammed with leaves. The berries cluster
and give new colour to the hedges' crest.

The robins perch on posts and juncos muster
than roar of wind there is no other sound.

I cut these faggots hissing on the fire
cut with a saw - as the full moon grew bright;
with better care I'd let them lie to season
safe in the shed against a colder night.

In truth, the shed's well stacked with coal and timber;
in seven years we've learnt economy;
but now and then - a holiday from reason
keeps the heart lumber - and the spirit free;

always provided that the gay defiance
is kept in bounds and has no real risk -
tho I can blame my present lack of caution,
in this one instance, on the placid desk.

The Fairy Hill

As we came up the brae last night at twelve
 after a cullidie down at Ballybrock,
 a wild coarse night of storm with scuds of rain
 and a gale roaring over Teveragh,
 I said in fun "A poor night for the fairies;
 they'll not stir for, altho it's Stalloween."
 And then we crossed the stile at Johnny Keegan's,
 a wallstead of a place where Johnny lives
 with not a soul to lift a pot for him.
 A cross we man, John Keegan, off and on,
 he's closed the stile against us out of spite
 and threatened law about the right of way,
 but I don't heed him, for a stile's a stile
 and proof enough for juries. From the lane
 we saw his front door open to the world
 and, in beyond, - the low room door was open,^{wide}
 and a great fire was blazing on the hearth,
 but not a sign of Johnny as we passed.

and we both thought it odd a man should keep
 his doors wide open on a night like this,
 a man not known to look for visitors.

A Coming Man

We heard a tractor roaring round the corner
 and stepped in on the sward to let it pass;
 and it was well we did, for huge with sheaves
 that trailed against the holly and the ash
 leaning across the lane and plucking straws.
 The engine loaded ^{drove across our wolds}
 High on the top a cycle and two rakes,
 and on the front a man, a lad and a boy;
 the young lad driving, Murray Emerson,
 lifted his right hand off the steering wheel,
 saluting us like Father Black himself.
 I've had great hopes of Murray Emerson
 since I pulled out for him at Ballybrock;
 no small hillfarm will hang around his neck

He held himself apart
 and only spoke to men
 when their concern was art
 of graver, brush or pen.
 He feathered other words
 but flung them to the air
 that, free as singing birds,
 they might nest anywhere.
 But somehow in his mind
 there stirred a foolish dream
 that he might also find
 share of the world's esteem.

He had not reckoned how
 men most ensure success:
 the deferential bow,
 the affable address,
 the crooking of the knees,

the motorsalesman's skill,
 the small obscenities
 that guarantee goodwill
 the need to keep his thought
 conditioned to his aim,
 to buy or to be bought
 as alternates the game
 the noisy comradeship,
 the secretive salute,
 the cliché on the lips,
 the backside to the boot.

Once more his baffled heart -
 - as scripture points the tale -
 gives back again to art
 what ^{never was} _{was not meant} for sale.

The actors that have played
 on the bare stage of my heart:
 the quiet man betrayed
 and turning, slow, apart;
 the demagogue upon
 the platform in the square,
 his flaming challenge thrown
 against the ster- stung air;
 the hero with his sword
 who charged against the tide;
 the poet's laughing word
 before he turned and died;
 the old men moving slow
 down the resounding street
 as the long trumpets blow
 and flowers fall at his feet

1950	46 [in all]	1199
1951 -	59 poems	1362 lines
1952	39	711 + additions to <u>Angry Dove</u>

