



The Better Poems of
John Hewitt
selected from

- (i) End of September 1939 to June 1938
- (ii) End of December 1932 to beginning of 1927.
- (iii) November 1939 - December 1939
- (iv) to February 1940

If there is no reprieve you may report
the prisoner at well & talk with friends
who tried to keep their courage up with chatter
about their individual concerns.

His wife was with him nearly all the time
and her example helped to armor him.

He never whimpers, kept on writing notes
on his reactions setting down with care

the cruder curves & angles of his thought.

He never reckoned Christ - a consolation

even his faith in the future was not sure

the future of the people, never his own.

He slept well too, without the screaming fears

that flack about the dreams of those like him

said that he woke most nights before the dawn

as some close bomber traveled overhead

and thought with something near to bitterness

how good the world might be if men were wise

30.8.39

Sonnet

With heart untroubled never knowing grief
save youth's dream dwarfed in coming - nothing more
friendship outgrown that seemed all life before
but rich years these outnumbered with relief
Not then for me the heart's disasters chief -
dealt yet of him that taught or her that bore,
the love denied full body, and the shore
in exile trod, the wreck on homeward reef.

They say from sorrow art must touch its height:-
blindness a madness, bloody fate of friends.
What purpose that from pain truth's only spring?

May I find rather in the farling light,
the slow achievement of small peaceful ends,
and quiet wisdom of the rested wings.

29.7.39

3

The Lollylocks against the wall
like lantern hung pagodas tall
when a south western wind begins
sway courteously like mandarins:
but with a sudden splash of rain
are accidental once again
and stand with beaded drops of light-
as cottage-lonely and as bright-
as when old Herrick made his rhyme
in England in King Charles' time.

And now God pity this old anxious man
 in hell here now or like Sebastian
 knows only danger never dares to rest
 for fear the next deft arrow pierce his breast -
 who yet on dying finds a worse dismay -
 Not missing him the world goes on its way.

19.8.39

This quiet-witty tense abstracted man
 sought art's full orbit in a single span
 knowing the heart's worst anguish as he sought
 to find the shape exactly to his thought
 And yet when all his agony is done
 men will be proud to speak of Middleton.

Colin Middleton (1910 -)

Painter & poet.

Sonnet

I tried to find a verse to fit my mood
 of labor skill then some way confident
 to make a measure of the road I went
 beside the stork rows & rook guarded wood,
 long having watched the craftsman's attitude
 and how the little words may be bound & bent
 to catch & hold I dream that I am lost
 some voice mystery of that brotherhood.

But when the words find place & space in sound
 the war upon the world's edge blunders in
 as tongue by tongue the dial fingers round
 and the still evening's shatters with the din
 til all my careful joy in craft is found
 frail as the hammock webs the spiders spin.

On this day of crisis
 when men march
 and the avalanche waits for the shout
 I try to make better english
 of Wang's translation of verses
 about the evening moon and the east lake
 by a Ming Poet
 -haunted on a small bowl.

23.8.39

All things were weary passing to the end
defeated now the lush advance of spring
the summer's freshest burgeoning
turned stale in one hot day
the weeks of August still remain to spend.

The windless leaves were green & few as yet
lay curls beneath the foot or flat in clay
and unripe laws were on the dusty storn
in scarcely noticed clusters set
with ragged tansy-clumps in disarray
the bank exhausted lay
and the drab acres of the uncut corn.

All waited for a frost to start the fall
to give an edge & sharpness to the sense
with ^{the clean limits} simple statement of mortality
to rust the sheltered rose against the wall
to rime the grass & strike the tree
with the bright blade of its clean violence

20th 8.39

Summer Dawn

Waking in chilly air familiar street
was desolate & grey, untrod & still
Past houses blind & silent till we came
over a high ditch by a narrow plank
with water coursing over little flints
thro tangled grass bleached grey in the pale light
Left on the left a huddle of dark trees
where the first birds began with startled chirp
as the boughs shook with song like falling leaves
Behind the black firs shouldering the hill
glowed the first smoulder of the coming day

Then up the long slope with the blackend whin
still smoking at the roots of crumbling turf
till here precipitated the last crest
set us against the daybreak just begun
A far light flashed a fast a flash a fast
from the grey island of the shrouded west
The land lay cold & shadowed with a mist
The water grey & calm without a ship
A narrow cloud a Scotland bundled thick
The sky above flecked evenly and high
That suddenly was smudged with smoky flame.

The cloud a Scotland split to let a shaft
of gold thro, falling yellow on each face

Taking on margins like a neon sign
 The sun was up already light lay long
 on the grey hill behind us making plain
 the round we stood on as a shadow's curve

The landscape lost in night before a vague
 took definition from crossing land
 The water glitters with broad winking blades
 The south-west mountains islanded in swirl
 of cooling grey stood tall unlit as yet
 by torches' dawn. The town below us spread
 became distinct now as the sunlight caught
 just the high buildings, concrete tower & dome
 the tower gables & long rows of roofs.

Written some time after climbing
 to see daybreak from Mark's Jost Carhill
 about midsummer with Roberts, Norman
 Dendie & Lanna.

Portraits

For a Certain Sculptor G.G. MacLennan

A shameless waster & a lying bore
 forgiven for some quality of charm:
 he imitates the style of Henry Moore
 and never seems to come to any harm.

For a Certain Painter

W.D.M. Clapham

He studied pigments bases balsams oils
 with tedious resolution wretched & slow
 yet what has he to show for all his toils
 but watercolours made ten years ago?

A Refugee

Karl Freund

He fled from Hitler's anger half a Jew
 now frequently wakes home makes wooden mats
 You'd not imagine that he even knew
 the great holes battered in the workers' flats.

||

Drullmann

A rather little snob, he nearly died
 in the black savage horror of Dachau.
 He shows his Rembrandt etchings off with pride
 insisting Art for Art's sake even now.

18.8.39

Three Bugles Blown

Three bugles blown discordantly
by ragged boys
at idle sport or flabby out of time
far down the street one august afternoon
disperse my quiet fancies and set free
my worst forebodings with their noise

Harsh like the threat of war
screaming alarm and fear
the enemy at hand the onset near
then distant like an echo calling far
salute from lonely star to lonely star

All bugles sounded in the row they made
all history as in a crystal ball
the useless charge against the unbroken wall
holding the pass appealing or obeyed
and crying pity at the end of all

I thought then of the fools who went to fight
for flag or king
leaving the bannered town or shouting street
for wrong that savage voices scream was right
when duty seemed a plain & urgent thing
and limping to defeat
or worse.

13

the long oblivious unforgotten years
after the final laurels had been laid
and slowly men beheld the dream betrayed
yet could do nothing to avert the shame
of victory that always ends the same.

I saw in the brief interval they played
men lost & broken, witless & afraid
howling in ranks not gleaming on parade.

And in the deaf cacophany
sometimes a single tone
irresistibly and at random blown
set nether aspirations free
all ending in a crying dying note
that puts its poetry to their string & raps
mocking the broken shoes the tattered coat
& their high vision of wind sculptured flags

Why then & why
reflects this thin sharp cry
a summons from these bugles never comes
to dispel their bloody rays of history
& from the stovelling shadow of their homes
in angry thousands muster & be free
all things whereby men live at least their own -
three bugles blown.

17.8.39

Ode: Arrival of Autumn

The mist at morning, something in the air
hinting, no more, of burning leaves & wood
the grasses dewy, tall trees motionless,
made a deep autumn of my anxious mood,
& wreft my spirit in a quietness
beyond the time's despair.

For since the spring a truant of my trade
I let things run untethered in my mind
so dread the flux that threatens vast & blind;
none fated was the dearest poem made.

Now somehow had the mad stream's headlong rush
that snatched a thrust as swift against the will
to strike sharp edges on the racket beneath,
with staves from meadows things from pine stacked hill
the mud light shine the gravel's flinty teeth
set in an eddy's lurch
my ripples tumbled heart to float at ease
regain a balance on an equilibrium
deflected from the terror and the noise
of the dark channels plunging to the sea.

Here in this still oasis of the heart
let thought return, but what it loved before
poor swansdown words, the fat translucent & reflective.

the 'icescoid' rock above the ragged shore,
the phrase or brush that snares the object's shape
so from this peace may start
a lyric molded of my dreaming mood
and labor still that takes on blood & bone
to find a stay as being of its own
when I am one of death's mate brotherhood.

17.8.39

lyric: First leaf

Walking in shadow lost
among enchanted words
at height of summer's tide
when the best song of birds
has crested up and died
suddenly there was lost

a leaf upon my sleeve
first of the leaves to fall
From the enchanted words
the meaning withered all . . .
But the faint song of birds
held something to believe .

Passing here at Unsworth

16.8.39

17

Since yesterday

The sun returned with power
plays down his molten ribs hour by hour
scorching the dry face drawing from the bones
all supple strength as in a tideless bay
weed heavy water floes against hot stones

13.8.39

The rimes begin to flow
mind insulated long
under constricting snow
of pitiless event
finds than now eloquent
as any summer song
the ice but grinds a break
and gull berg echo wakes .

13.8.39

Sonnet- 12

At summer's end before the harvest in
and men content or discontent assess
the stubborn profit of their business
with cloud & cloud I venture to begin
my own appraisal for my discipline
the reeding sun's encounter none the less
dare find in drought & thunder ought to bless
a count among my treasures horn & whin

How stands my harvest? where the ripest yield
from scattered year that promise little worth?
Gazed over now on this slow august day
I name the rot in terms of stacks, thick field
ironic islands in wander'd earth
some corners unequivocally gay.

25.7.39

19

Yeats in Retrospect

The poet has made his will
he chose the losing side.
In spite of his bony skull
his stiff Cro-Magnon hude
has left but painted work
on the wall of the dripping cave
and who shall decipher the marks
of hate or the symbol of love?

9.7.39

Too long I sought escape
 in the abstracted shape
 slouching the bloody days
 with a witty phrase
 hauntingly hazy
 with a prophetic eye.
 Abruptly now am brought
 to raw's end of thought -
 can now no longer live
 remote derivative
 but dream an image gone
 stand naked and alone.

9.7.39

Fearing created images that find a life within
 a twitch to gestures unforeseen or say fantastic words
 that the wounded heart shrinks back from more than the
 ripples' air
 have turned to the shakes of leaves
 and the natural song of birds

30.6.39 21

Death

When death comes ripely to an aged man
 a wise composure waits on the event -
 it seems required completion of the plan
 that hints a tries the devious ways he went
 from just still faltered till the last breath's spent.

So too a child's death may be pitiful
 the stem snapped ere the twig is well a leaf
 the bud unfulfilled while the days still cool -
 these bring the keeling heart with waste of grief
 yet life's kept terror's prompt a slow relief.

When men at prime must die in France or Spain
 since freedom beckoned or we thought it did
 the wrong his being's done seems nearly gain
 death's work is certain tho' the future's hid
 with fascist banners flying in Madrid.

But death of young men moving to his power
 death's coming summons sudden & its night
 while thronging needs still crowd his urgent hour
 rocks the shocked spirit in a chill affright -
 with the flatnonsense of the switched-off light.

April N.D.

Farewell to a Former Home

So house we say goodbye not as before
for sunburnt days of walking by the sea
of packing sticks that slant about the shore
of naming flowers in hedge a leaf a tree
with thought of you a how our absence find
with bloom in vase or letter in the hall
a sudden need for book or packing stand
or handkerchief of picture on your wall

But now goodbye for never more will turn
Jambian corner sheltered from the west
its other fires in your kind gates may burn
their smoke shall never signal home a rest.
If words & actions make a shape of air
as by some chance of fantasy remain
eternal but invisible you'll be
a scribbled text our future way makes plain.

written at Sandonagh Park
recalling residence in Westland House

23
20.4.39

Sonnet - 11

for J. Mack's departure

Now when you with me life each sense alert
you step into a world not yet rocket dry
of such sweet strengths as you have skill to try,
you could but stay among us to your heart.
Already here too long had seen enjoin
by the lush tendrils of our poverty
if your bright heart shall ever leave our stay
with sundream vapor rest in velvet dirt.

So then a learn new terrors of the night
sharp stars enbracket in alien gusts of snow
take new gales to your heart a rock dismayed
So sharp alone may flash a warmer light
a way awhile to sounding overthrown
No stunted thing grown wry or overweighted.

Jan. Wednesday left for training course
at Leicester

Brief Sanctuary

Before war mocks my memories liberty
 I'd dedicate one day to poetry
 from inviolated circumstance & will
 abstract indulgent passage free & whole
 snatching an instant island out of time
 while yet I wear an individual name.

Awake with tongue untroubled by the taste
 of midnight friends' reiterated toast
 Let me go out in sun while yet the trees
 show scarce a leaf & on the restless eyes
 light flashes from each grass blade & the road
 has added dust in remnant ripples laid:
 secure in pocket to be drawn & sound
 the seven score sonnets from the master's hand;
 a quatrain read repeated memorised
 for heart's sake moment now forever passed.

Paris school with playground empty & the hum
 thro' open window of a morning hymn
 salute a man & cart with weather guess
 & know his answer has the strength to bless
 from its slow window coeternal with
 that line of stream ground mountains in the south:
 Think then of Chaucer greeting travellers
 & Lanning each full face in missal verse.

say half aloud a stanza of his thought
 in besters hats not as Chaucer wrote,
 as striding so companioned muse & love
 of bawdy miller and vindictive reeve.
 Stop only for a man who begs a match
 a man & dog a man without a watch
 -and just at noon with man & horse at plough
 who falters at the furrows end to know
 am I but passing on a neighbor now.

Walk, a short shadow, turning with the sun
 observing fowled chestnut gold flecked whin
 equipt with neat quotation for each glance
 each twig twitit switch of mood remark'd at once
 and states deftly in remembered line
 for hole in tree bole thrush upon a stone
 or frog with frog where hill brown water makes
 a fool brown lease before it leaps the rocks
 as well run into cut deeply thro' the mud
 to ground & fix a sterold sketch of road:
 find each of these as integral & fresh
 as Canterbury or the budding ash
 and by their being prove my Shakespeare's stanza,
 cartographer's & sessions-clerk's in one.

II

For lunch returning spend a happy hour
deciding what to read & in what chair
whether in room with shelves distracting still
or room with better pictures on the wall:
take this refuge & judge this & this
make nice assortment by analysis: —
Saint Dunstons tangled epic's volume four,
the fall of Sigurd or the high austere
joints burdened verse of Yeats & scarcely known
the tired sonnets of John Ferguson:
with shining apple yearning for a tooth
a snodding leafblotch fish held loose in mouth.

Rich passage read book laid on knee for thought
vest-pocket-pencil jumbled for a note
The verse resumed where margin remonstrates
indebtedness to Spenser or John Keats.
Imagination lit aglow to share
the artistry with someone busy near
summoned by shout to sit a beer again
it's inevitable eloquence of pain
while cake is baking or while Kettle boils
til stir'd boaction by fire's need of coals.

Alone with the high utterance standing back
while Wraith of Sigurd takes a swinging shock
fall into dreaming til the room gives way

to slipping veils before a wandering eye.

III

Then for that cooling hour of lapsing light
when print grows faint & yet the sky's too bright
to drag the curtain touch the snuffing switch
I thrust books aside to give cross legs a stretch
down thro' the 'allotments where men working still
look up from labor answering my call
familiar men known for assiduous care
that brought clean daffodils to shake in shower
out of a barren and a boggy ground.
There distant greet with friendly lift of hand
as by the ditch where just the other day
the nested hairston had been cut away
peer keen for darting rat too early yet
for water boatman or vibrating gnat
remember Thomas & the searching gaze
that twines the dust or rattle with the noise
that names the hill the light wind sets astray
and after Thomas innocent John Clare.

Turn down past houses with the chimneys plumed
for tea's warm promise: sky now diademed
with brilliant stars apart from glow of sun
now pale behind the mountain, from the town
a slow fog rises like brown cloud of dust
that smolders better cities wisely lost.

Observe a store for later use when with
the chattering schoolboys in a hunkered group
with dirty knuckle knee & wrinkled sock
playing at marbles in a cul-de-sac
til mothers warn them in to lesson book,
or undiverted as intent on task
the pregnant woman walking out at dusk
as tho the prudent logic of the seed
demands darkness for its patient deed,
the bird upthrusting isolated trees
black challenge to sterility of skies,
the heedy odor of the new-cut grass
where on the show tree starlings lurch across.

The short road ended come more slowly home
where blinds are drawn in bed & sitting room
as down the street the passing lamplighter
leaves twinkling points of reminiscent fire
a knowing hoard of sober memories
of verses written when with weary eyes
men greeted sunset & oncoming night
with sad reflection & dejected thought
at the slow culmination of despair
for Lot's proud end, beneath a steady star
yet satisfied in dignity to come
with sailor & with hunter safely home

IV

When dark's complete then closer to the fire
draw table laid with danda Massinger
and Dante's now unwrining Paradise -
Til some friend call find sanctuary in these:-
the full day cresting to a perfect prime
beyond restricted resonance of rime
in gestures style of measure thepedy
or fireborn threads of gold philosophy
Til some friend call a win be earnest talk
of bread and verse experimental work
always extolling mastery remote
tho not word alien to a newer thought
if it seize shape of music take a line
melodic from some rhythm the heart has known

But in these forms obscure, abrupt, intrudes
a landstail ^{rubber} punctured with akenel roads
and pylons Sabel like from shire to shire
that shill their desolation to the air.
So while one's speaking inattentive land
will stretch & grasp in eagerness to find
some sheer & steady bastion delight
- Like Pope or Dryden to round off the night

V

This is my dream. A day to spend like this
mind soothed & succored by high symphonies
born out of days more easily mangled than these
with a crude/soles for uncharted ice

May alternate some choice of books or then
with unspilt paper & a well-charged pen
send time for spinning lost til I have found
some plan of words for image in the mind.

VI

This cannot be. If not an urgent note
from someone thankful for the words I write
against oppression or a brief demand
that summons me to break a date I planned
with rest & leisure to endure again
the unresponsive attitudes of men
from flat form pulpit while I scold & scream
and understate & overstress my dream:
the daily paper dropping in the hall
black with defeat & Lopez's incessant fall
or noncommittal voice across the air
of danger marching in from everywhere.

No way escape. The occasion of my birth
found me to a sick & fevered earth.

But I shall keep this hope: there'll be a day
to spend unmolested at pleasure this slow way
when all that's wrong is slight, adjusted soon
between two sonnets to the herest moon.

Written in Westland Drive
The Topography is of that neighborhood

31-3-39

Sonnet 9

For Arthur M'Alister, late Royal Marines,
attendant B.M.A.G.

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

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

30-3-39 33

Sonnet 8

Aspiration at 31

I dream at sixty being large and wise
with greying beard a tumbled shock of hair
with ventose speech well-changed, comagous fair,
a ready laughter lurking in my weary eyes,
saluting freely each new enterprise
no midnight hour surrendered to despair
no spurn to anger when you men declare
the images I lood fantastic mere fantasies

At sixty so. Content in having known
a richly textured love, a friend or two,
achieved a shapely vesture of my own
for what the marching years had proved as true.
Yet - the gap between what searing dew?
What blinding light? what being of the bone?

30.3.39

To R. H. in Spring.

You brought some grass in bloom a shred of moss
from hedge row gathered in the evening sun
when the pale shadows starting lay across
the barren fields the rain had beaten on

You set them in a little jar of glass
beside the clock that ticks away the spring
as the tiny brought green images of grass
and ewes with lamb and cumant blossoming
and stacks in yard, & voices sounding loud
at open door, and budding ash and bird
that sang his heart out close against a cloud:
it was not there I saw. Not these I heard.

I saw the spring go by & shrink & yield
to hasting summer in her high array
the black bean blossoms in the narrow field
the rows in clover and the uncut hay
the autumn heavy with the loaded green
and ciderson in apples rotting slow
the dark november skies of driven rain
the noon a water and the wounded snow.
And the spring coming back across the land
with lark & whin & March bright revelry
- and wonder if you'd stretch an older hand
for bloom a moss as I be there to see.
with the walk by the bloom row Carehill

25.3.39³⁵

Conversation with a Friend (P.M.)

The March day ends in peace.
Across the garden & beyond the hedge
where the plowed field lays its brown waves of earth
a blackbird sings alone.
Behind the antium hills the setting sun
draws his slow fleshing shafts of handshut light
back to his flaming core.
The earth is chill & dark. Scarce feather stir.
No swallows yet to move beneath the tiles.
Only an arc of sky
is warm but cooling as the light retreats
and the spilt gold runs thin into the blue.

We talk, my friend and I,
at fireside overtaken by the gloom
of cresting crisis poised for avalanche
we are uncertain both
which way to leap when once the grinding roar
the singing blackbird at the setting sun
provide no prophecy.
This island somehow lurches into spring
the this day closes. What but proofless hope
for summer opulent
and sober autumn for wise thoughtful men
before this planet heek its tilted ring?
after visit to Cledy.

23.3.39

Skylark

Today at noon oppressed
by the wild fate of men
between two showers I least
oblivious of the sun
and the clean lightest sky
above the trodden lane
of stones and rutted clay
to where the stream runs brown

The sudden on my thought
troubled a vague with dread
intended distant note
of lay forgotten bird
a high and climbing lark
took song up as he rose
as though he tried to make
Sense of uncertain skies.

On walking thro' the allotments, Walsley Rd.

9.3.39

Sonnet V

Written on board ship for Liverpool, a memory
of 'the Crisis'

Once in October when a cheated land
held breath in terror of descending flame
when the grey muggles followed swivels head
and some at corners curst a traggart's name
I made this journey.

Those engaged to die
held glass to light & swallowed their dismay
tight in their unaccustomed livery,
and some men trod the deck til break of day.

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

5-2-39

Elegy for Hope

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

But root has fallen on the newspapers:
 a sterling's rest in chimney guesst from smoke
 time sticks to unresponsive calendar.
 I pluck the dead fruit of the month I like
 slowly with dread of calcinated joy
 lolling on pier or fishing in the bay.

The chairs are shrouded and ghosts dare sit
 in spring sunk valleys of a friendly rumble
 the letter box is stuffed with bargain lists
 leaflets & letters with a halfpenny stamp.
 Suppose death's disappointing legacy
 awards life with a exile's privacy.

A rhomboid loaf lead by an unrust pot
 smacks on the light at switch board. Wash your hands
 surprises at water cold from the market lot.
 The dripping cistern does not understand
 its leisure ended for compulsive claim
 must no more chuckle to himself alone.

modified - complete
 for "free hold" section ^{the} lovely heart? 1-2-39

39

Chapel Dusk

Waiting in town between infrequent trains
 mid january cold & growing dusk
 the cafes shut til June the bank blinds drawn
 only the grocer's open with a girl
 hiding things in the window & a man
 trundling a barrel off a buckled dray
 & two men talking small across the square
 I turned from broad street down a villa row
 best beams in parlors and tall pots of bulbs
 til high steps & a statue market a church.

I climbed the granite using Patric's stance
 saw cross in stone befumers ringed with grease
 & stone in corner with oil curling water
 swung door on stall of booklets & went in
 to the dim staining lass cold interior
 between two rows of Jews where candles burn
 to left the pulpit stations of the cross
 gaudily painted hae along the wall
 brass glittered on mosaic broided cloth
 hung chill & motionless with metal thread
 marking some letters of the alphabet.
 two children tiptoed in & prayed awhile
 a shabby woman in a justy shawl
 slept quickly to the rail & crumpled down
 crossing her face & bosom muttering

glanced round to mark if they were anywhere
heard their thin restless voices out of sight
half up the hill behind the low byre wall
calling or laughing in a field of barley

I climbed the wall & saw them labouring
they had gone in to open up the field
two swinging scythes two binding after them
making a pathway for the reaper's stride.

And as I stood I wondered if again
I'd see men working in that ancient way
how many times again in that same field
barley & roots & grass repeated by
till they were old or I had gone away

Sometimes the quiet metre of the earth
rings deep within my heart grass barley roots
earth's yield abundant only men at fault
a mortal violence by mortality
when slate or flagstone insulates the stones.

memory of Ballywalter where we
stayed with R & W Fisher & family

31.1.39

43

Images of light

Bred on this island at the edge of time
where waves bear little but tear more away
where the earth rocks with wonder when prime
no greater light begets a wider day
lost in the sunset of a boy forlorn
only the flooded ditches gleaming bright
with glimmers only at thrush summer morn
a few stars falling down the sky straight
marked by this fate remote & dishonoured
like feeble knives deflected dreaming still
of some high fabulous glory in the west
of some tall city on its golden hill
rhetorical we murther guessing heart
of what our frantic syllables imply
till slivering with grief tormented heart
we seek the wharves from whence the ferries ply
that lead forever darkness of the rimming sea
the absolute the place that ends in ice
beyond the cape where whale ribs like a tree
cage a green moon in fleshorescent vice.
night - this fear & offers no escape
from the slow terror of enclosing night
I shut my eyes & with blind fingers shape
from dream & life, these images of light.

W. P. New Verse Comp
Radio Eucomm 6.12.48

30.1.39

30.1.39

451

Subare 1949
X January Day Winter Day

When sun was winter high
and hills stood thin above
great flocks of rooks came by
bright in the shining air

and tho the light was wan
a stark new fork apart
glowed yellow til it shone *shewed colour*
like gold upon the cart *bulletin on*

The year had just begun
to break frost's discipline
with flecks of gold upon
the dark green spikes of whin

fleet starlings in a crowd
marsh for the sunset flight
the wet earth newly ploughed
was fast with silver light.

after bus trip to Warrenpoint

Sonnet 1.
To the Strange Memory of
S. B. McCreery died 11. XI. 38
etcher and poet.

You were my friend awhile then not my friend
my heart still ignorant of my offence
recalls the gestures of your violence
that took again the things you once did lend
& left my door in rage & words could mend.
For me you died that day. The evidence
snatched here & there of why you left & whence
could keep us hope alive beyond that end.

One saw you walking in the hills at night
another hearing in frequented street
It was a weas not you. Not you who gave
an etcher's strength to summer's brief delight
but ghost who travelled with unresting feet
the cold unmeaning country of the grave.

6.1.39

A Certain Gain

The year began with snow that blew to sleet
gustily at first then falling heavily
when we went to the door where the bells
the rain fell on our faces listening
a all the gutters choked with radder than
New Year after a twitching world of fear
given over to its coward or hypocrite

The next day was a gale that shook the house
with squalls of hail upon the rattled pane.
we shut ourselves against the universe.

Then on the first bright morning I went out
into an earth new wakened innocent
but Europe heard no about my thought
I felt mechanical & inert
til down the hill I heard wing whiff of air
and stood to gaze at unfamiliar flyer
with blunt spear thrusting dark against the light.
white on the belly grey on neck & wing
flying before a threatened storm alone
I had no hint of random blown & lost

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

47

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

The sun a gong of gold rose in a mist
but clouds before it perted grey & brown
had golden edges lining them with fire

Whatever comes, this year is not all grief.

Westland Drive

22.12.38

For my Niece

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

She did.

And now his pipings heard
by none save dragonfly or bird.
By none?

Ah no for when you dance
I always give a searching glance
as would not be surprised at all
if he were piping in the hall.

Inscripshn for Book for
Shirley Toddhunter

497
19.12.38

Street-

I pace the wellflagged street past house a house
exactly quartered flat monotonous
Shirtsleaved a fatter with a tousled head
climbs out the bottles or climbs up to bed
Beneath a lamp two lovers say goodbye
the boy turns slow the girl moves hurriedly
The street is bare the sheep are lend tonight
as windows blacken to the switch off light
the news glitter at the corner shops

The little gardens bear a shabby crop
of trampled grass the once or twice I come
on lampblanck faces of chrysanthemum
My footsteps quicken to a rhythm I know
the pounding tempo of the radio
A door swings open or a baby cries
then smadden slams upon my eager eyes.
Life thrusts through questions: I for answer find
the shadow of a birdcage on the blind.

after visiting James Mackenzie
in Deerpark district

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

Sonnet 29

For R. H.

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

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

20.XI.38

A moment comes when man can recognise
his hand a part of history's
inevitable purpose when his will
swung close to toppling ruin finds a still
compass that points where his safe journey lies
and is not shaken thro' the gale grows shrill.

20.XI.38

53

Sonnet 26

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

Then thrust uncompass on a barren ground
awhile roam'd faithless with a savage rape
at life misused until my comfort found
the subtle logic of the belly's need
that one, a Jew, had clerted to a creed
and laid the lines of action for an age.

Sonnet 23

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

I think of Spain of terror's acolyte
El Greco tortured from the spirit's moans
building Byzantine towers of overtones
that flicker into spires of blue & white.

I think of Spain. My troubled heart is stirred
and pity is forgotten for awhile
as memories & imagination come;
Manolo's birdlike solo of a bird
round-eyed Dolores, Laura's twisted smile
the whirling jota & Josepha's drum.

The children named were *Enrique, Rafael*
who visited Belfast Autumn 1958
Lana Harting, Amara Breton Perry
stayed with us at Westley's Drive
Lana returned later - Jan'y 1939
& remained till early summer.

Traveller: a mosaic

I

Speak now if ever o my wandering man
walking the deck or strolling down the train
waiting the gong impatient to begin

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

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

Speak now if ever o my wandering man.

II

Not you the albatross on joany wing
with only mileage for your journeying
nor you the merlin circling over stones
litters with splintered bones & bloody feathers
or even starting flying from the cold
harsh Swedish winter to a warmer place
like tide of air, like tide predictable
tend to the shape of turf your line foretold
like tract of steps across the frosted grass.

Speak now if ever I shall listen well.

III

* Based on talk with passengers on the boat
But keep the shells & pebbles in your pocket
I shall not remark the knife you whittle with.

* Say boss

wun yah ever on de Pacific?

Boy didja

didja ever see de Hawaiian

My good boss dere's botes for yah.
Not like dis.

Bands playing on every deck

from mornin til nearly mornin
Yah jest go in an dance de way yah are
when yah feel dat way

in yer pajanes or dress up in a tux
Hot-ells dats what dey are. Hot-ells
an de Sowis? Boy

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

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

Based on talk with a deck
with another passenger
on Liverpool, and two or three
others in Belfast.

IV

* I've just been to Aberdeen to bury an uncle
now I come over to Ireland for a niece's wedding
She said it wouldnt be right with me not there
my family are born travellers by nature
my wife too. Her father had his own ship.
For me I like the trip to Ramsey & back
on a fine day, in June for preference
I have a brother in the naval reserve.
He was called up in October.

O Starling waddle away to another hat.

My father's came from a little village in Poland
most of my dead are left by the Elbe & the Rhine
I should like to get to Jerusalem before I die
but it doesnt seem likely now
tho the son of my mother's cousin
has an orange grove out there

We go each year to dip the Scotch potatoes
and sleep in huts. There was a fire last year.
America wote be good. But is not now.
My elder brother came home with a Yankee wife
my father & mother moved to the end of the house
I was a joiner's help in Winnipeg
before the slump. Six months on the job

and I was the old hand.

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

My brother too. He stays. His sons talk English.
But he never really grew to like the people.

Not these my wanderers speaking never these
blown like a feather floating like a stick
compelled a driven ebbing flowing going
part of a graph's curve in economy
ciphers & figures swelling not changing the total.

V

Sometimes Ulysses running on the porch
will shade his glance for unfamiliar sail
with seaman's eye assess her cut & rig
hazard her port & cargo then at length
reverses in his rich lethargy of thought
the islands best, the many colored seas,
the trees and hills, the witch's grunting spells
recall the dead lad & his oar to the cabin,
a growing petulant demand the boy
repeatedly in his high quavering tones
bring staff & lead him straightway to the steps
to talk with the old men among the nets.

Based on talk with J. M. Bertram
author of "The Sea Land"
& "North China Front"
The Shadow of a Gun

VI

At the moment we call that country the Northwest
its name is changed about three times a year

The Border Region or the Soviets

Shensi Kansu Ningshia. There is our hope.

A new man is emerging, a new hard type

The troops began the march an hour before day

I followed mounted on a hairy pony
& caught 'em up & passed 'em and rode on

to camp at nightfall by a little lake
between tall sides of loess, the yellow earth

Before I was right asleep the troops arrived
weary a bit but singing. It was 50 miles

with mostly bundles of rags & straw for shoes.

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

A change that from the old provincial armies
cutting across a province like a scythe

over a field & leaving only stubble
or like the dreaded locusts black & the sky

and gone from a desert

the frightened people before em like lanes in the corn

A new man is emerging a better man
hard in his mind & body, hard and kind

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

I went to go back thro Mongolia
The chief town there was only huts & tents
but not with steel & concrete

A man I met in Moscow had been there
He says ^{and they believe at Leningrad} they're the best armmen in the East
^{The whole of Europe's shift seat of the world}
can beat Jomonan & their arms superb.

O Phoenix here is your nest. The flames begin
than sung Manchu Republic twig by twig
smoke up in bitter incense.

on Polo leunchy stick curved quill in foot,
thrust ledger from him with brown clever hands
feel belt & wallet & take up once more
the tale of Kublai to th' obsequious clerk

VII

<sup>Based on letter from
F. S. S. (Internat. Brigades)</sup>
The lorry ^{just} in front got well across
then disappeared in spinning cloud of sand
we parked & waited til the dust died down
Before the air was clear a man came out

61
holding his face with bloody hands & swaying
Then all was over save infrequent shells
dropping some duds on both sides of the road
The captain said "You try to bring it in"

Say, sixty yards or more with little cover
so I went walking on the softer ground
slowly & ready to flop at the warning whine
when I got there the windscreen was blown in
with splinters on the seat. The tyres were sound.
So I steeled in & tried the clutch.

O man with the darting mind & sharp keen face
Is this my Phoenix' fire? a wandering man.

VIII

Earth narrows sudden
The stage on fate's play-out on is the world
not manas world of accent, world entire.

Rain falls in India & a wench is wed
in Ramsay. Rain falls not. She is not wed
but has a bestard by the lack of rain.

IX

^{Based on talk with Stalley Wray}
The Kwomintong march in a burnt no out

we scattered into the woods & headed north
hoping our guns impress the villagers
for we were rather shot. Among the hills
I practised random killing. My sight is poor
but the printed page has somehow come alive

I cross the Ebro in a wooden truck

When I was in Rangoon a year ago
on a fine day in June for preference
Now Spring Kok & the Muse to a gaping boy.

The mountain road in Persia: a half mile drop
on the right hand a cliff along the right left

I went to Barrow once before the war

I have gone as far as this in a picture book
I have stood on a rock to see the river below
a road beside it curving as it curved
a toy car humming round a meccano bend
I climbed back slowly to the charabanc
& heard best village orchard settlement
two teachers at the back talk books & art.

O man on the oven bed in the yellow cave
O man with the stubbled chin at the parapet
O man in the simple room translating trash

What is the peace ye know? or is it peace?

X

I plunge & plunge to find the heart of things
pursue forever the flickering light that leads
One day it's Gandhi squatting at his salt
^{another day} ^{the side against London}
another a cripple in the Capitol

Let Plato spend eternity on his bottom
my hand's for Hermes of the wiped heel

Have you no more to say O wandering man?

Say mister were yah were yah
over in the Pacific?

But that was in Rangoon a year last June
I will go back before Harlow has fallen
I lost my papers in Prague with the address.

XI

Some say from Egypt some from farther East
our fathers came with polished axe & shard
The journey's in our bones we must go back
head home forever east or farther east.
No hill is friendly: the earth hold our sweat
my father's father's flesh is turned to clay

but his bones he unsoften, will not perish
its distance in them giving them their strength
will fall to dust in none but native soil
and let the old ache die.

XII

Speak now instead, my solitary man

Why soft position? life's an endless flux
a growth is change: & even death continues
in every maggotty life's business.

XIII

Last Spring I made a study of the roots
They took my note in this on the chough
This year before I studied the theory of flight.
Yes that's last Sunday's best. The negative
requires a little touching ^{carefully}.

They've found a new globe roll at the Records Office
I hope it throws some light on Pettifer.

My theory is
the win people used these clubs of slate
for knocking the shanked salmon

but Thomson does not agree in the last Proceedings

XIV

I set art's masks against the shifting face
or catch at moments flash of passing light
behind the open lids a moving smile
break on the painted lips: they pass & pass
the masks remains unchanged in my stiffening fist
only the mask is real. only the mask

XV

1. Gordon Pittaway
2. George Sheld
3. Richard Rowley

O bearded poet-complainer of your aches
rejoicing only in the painted masks
denouncing the intrusive telephone
2 or you in the little villa facing the sea
with ordered cushions in the best of taste
& pictures painted by friends on your bookcases
Have you a Phoenix for me? or is art long?

I scan the level sentence the hidden wine
the deft proficient dialog the small
carved Buddha squinting on the polished desk

lonely & ragged eagles too sick to fly
I do not believe you have ever looked into the sun.

Sonnet 20

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

All Hallows' Eve. If thought has any power
 beyond proud limits let love's mercy fall
 on those who went in Spain's defeated hour
 from Winnipeg Provence & Donegal
 and by Jacana's the Ebro's famous estuary
 died for the dream men call democracy.

At Malvern I said to Shaw

to Homer

to Jane Austen

And old Tom Hardy's vest was grey with soot
 and J.M.M. threw his arm round my shoulder
 a trick you remember Huxley ascribes to Burleigh.

XVI

I have talked to a reeking tramp who has given me more
 & forgotten a tanner for it well content.

Keats cought his heart out for a silly girl.
 Blake was made as merry, Milton blind
 he lookt like Delius with a touch more curl.

Darwin & Johnson were praised by the best of their kind.

The rattle thousands I meet in the street at noon
 carbo-die of immortal verse or worse for love
 or draw them angels in the fading light.

(or follow the Eighth Route army down a cliff.)

My phoenix is nested here in that workshop near
 the chimney they jelled last week the slum condemned
 my dilemma shifts to another a harder plane
 So you need not beckon me now a wandering man

31.10.38

Sonnet 19

On this all Hallow's Eve the big bengal light
the small volcano spitting blue & red
the roaring tufted wheel fire dramoned
make this the gay salute to winter's night
the guttering rocket falling out of sight
the door bangs & the black jact arching fled
heedless of those who call them in to bed
bring back lost years from time's unresting flight.

I steal open a lid with squit a match
to scorch the paint round some unguarded latch
then sudden start remembering with shame
that wise old land from whence these play things come
where slanted soldiers torch the tinder thatch
and shattered towns storm heaven with leaping flame.

69
26.10.38

Sonnet 16

I learn how once men painted brim bear
a leaping boar upon the shadowed wall
then bones bepeaks them skulful swift & tall
men write large books to prove them dark or fair
til lost in willing wonder unaware
of time's cold flux I seem to hear the call
the hunter makes returning on the small
girl's laughter finding pretty shells down.

Yet while I read a dream or half regret
the bitter dark that quencht this smoky light
our epoch closes on this very day
a once great nation's word is overset
her statesmen traitor berke her away
and art & freedom pass into the night.

26.10.38

Sonnet 14

Dependent at reported violence
the rubber club the comradore way laid
the snipe on the house-top, the immense
shamefast relief when Benesh was betrayed
all art gone barren crazily afraid
or over complicated for the sense
the wells of wisdom choakt, the heart dismayd
that finds no comfort in time's evidence,

I can but turn from man's cross enterprise
that marks his hope with its distorting lam
while yet there lays a respite from the dark
to gaze with free unimplicated eyes
at mud daub'd manigold or mesh of rain
that runs like resin down the rough elm's bark.

71
25.10.38

Sonnet 12

The future narrows to a choice of shirt
a set of phrases way of raising hand
no use now for the gentle spirit hurt
that stops surpris'd or tries to understand:

no time to stalk the sleek though unaware
but time to wait for work or with a crowd
when some pale neigelomaniac takes the air
in open motor miserably proud

or see an attic office toothy nail
for knock on door or code phrase delays
the doubtful messenger who must not fail
the decent friend who has to be betrayed.

How shall I nurture senses slowly fed
with verse a canvas on this bitter bread?

23.10.38

Sonnet 10

Constricted in my thought involved by time
 in the relentless architectural plan
 rears first in knotted wits of crazy man
 & new piled brick by brick to wall & dome
 on little nations that have lost their name
 I lose the old response by which I move
 to tree & season that a lifetime gave
 my troubled mind the texture of a dream,

when spent leaf crisp in sound or in song
 brought back the pulse & shape of vanished day.

After a sodden harvest, ricks afloat
 and frost thinned blossom blown to speckled print
 I gaze on branches where the last leaves hang
 & empty hearted turn my face away.

"15 Poems"

9.8.38

73

Sonnet 9

During this silence innocent of song
 concerned with faces places shapes of stone
 things thrusting hands out eager to be known
 things true in distance proving to be wrong
 on close sensation I have lost the long
 withdrawal of the sap the undertone
 of leaf's retreat. The heedless rose has blown
 unmarket unneeded in the looking throng.

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

G. Taylor called this a 'Bell Ringer'
 in a 'candor sonnet'. Good but
 he would make head or tail of it

1932

29.12.

75

Dominion

A season yet - I shall send out my armies
 subdue a dozen provinces to silence
 shut year to flight & set up boundaries
 start commerce with earth's ends & trade my wares
 for spoils of Asia & Antarctica
 make treaties with wise princes & wage war
 on trampling creatures that would wreck the orchards
 Then hold awhile to a treacherous peace
 drain fens cram barns & pave wide roads across
 the fattest valleys of my wide domain
 pull shuns down crazy heritage of fatters
 & set an equal Law from sea to sea
 But after that a slow withdrawing in
 a concentration on my first estates
 a bribing of uncertain aliens
 a rearguard action against mutineers
 then long retreat from frontiers early won
 a judged surrender at my city gates
 Pray heaven I fall before the gates are broken
 & have no need to barter crown & sceptre
 for sleepy exile in a foreign spa
 by stranger hearts in circumstance defined
 on checkerboard of stale remote campaigns
 til hearers yawn & rise to wind the clock

Sunday Referee

19.12.32

Epithalamium

O who will share with me
the traffic of my heart
the stripping of the tree
the frost that splits apart
the winds that crape the branches
the snow that breaks the branch
dry seasons ruinous
nights sable avalanche
cold dawn the sun at noon
by cloud unreckoned blind
rain at the harvest moon
and lilt of larks unheard

Yet for her comfort there
shall sometimes fall and rest
the high stars of the air
upon her rain chill breast.

Destiny & Poems of Tomorrow

24.11.32

777

Defeat

So from defeat I learn
the stress & strain of bone
the things that smoke or burn
the stone remaining stone
no matter what way through

I shall go forth from thence
aware of quality
and to life's violence
and anger I shall be
at once both rock & tree

Largus

Morning Moment

I stood & gazed. The hills were hid in mist
save where a narrow avenue of wind
had tunneled thro & left a core of green
two fields a treeclump & a glittering cottage
backed by the sky's halfcircle of light blue.

And as I stood I strove to make a phrase
that might embrace the magic of the time
the immensity of wonder the delight
shaping an instant of significance
a poet's birth a savior's revelation
or an old man who had loved the grass & sky
& known the still & attitudes of trees
& now grown drowsy sees for the last time
the blue & green that nourish his endeavor
& will whop round his everlasting sleep

Carroll Road bus-stop.

To light a match in headwind do the hundred
just over evens, take bowling standing up
remember the Plantagenets in order
& what the Roman said about old age
reflect the Australians team of '21
shall there go flat split milk into the gutter
when shabby boots march up the gravel drive
and be mere recollection of an exile
spitting on stoves in hepland.
Or in an office totting up small items
that prove success of Britain's Ten Year Plan
under Lawtseye of commissar from ghetto
ready to swook beat wimp shall sabotage
if thought of yorke or the winning try
blue shape of cypher on the misty page

Then what the Head said when you won the cup
will sound just like an old song in the bath
heard on the landing of a boarding house.

9.11.32

What have I lost for love?
What merely laid aside?
And that were loss enough
if loving I had died
And since I daily die
it is a certain loss.
Not twice shall you or I
that selfsame water cross.
Some moments I had spent
in learning sky & earth
twelve seasons discontent
maybe a death or birth -
But there are gone. What use
complaining that the stream
made never stay or trace
to mirror the old dream?

8.11.32

81

Sonnet

I who to save the bruising of my mind
have tempered for my use a bitter tongue
and wear a cynic visor, now I find
men grab their hilts & keep their tense bows strung
when I approach.

So each encounter is
a nervous scrutiny, a lifted lamp
to mark my features falter, enemies
upon each bridge, my path an armed camp.

Should I have done much better had I gone
timidly, thro' the streets unarmed afraid
and shrinking from the thunders of stone?
Would my bare mind perpetually betray

have dwindled in its ardor a timid cold
as now to finches' leaf's or sunset's gold?

8.11.32

Autumn

Autumn no more a legend to the heart
 of sheepstack wagon rick & barn & loft ...
 under the crowning sunset of the year
 or treasure warlike galleon breasting full
 the glittering waters of the homeward straits:
 no more the fierce ritual that persuades
 winter withhold his boy just from lust:
 but drums that dumb defeat the anxious trouble
 that packs up trappings and accessories
 prelude to consternation fevered tunc
 before the onset of the frosty legions
 the stripping of the shine & heart to leave
 no trophies for the boisterous winds to rife.
 The winter is an exile for my heart
 I moan & whimper in captivity
 in time's bare cell when only frost makes gay
 the window set between me & my guard.
 And even then as other prisoners
 have waked to happiness when a stray bird
 blundering bewildered twist a cloud & cloud
 flaps fighted at their feet with twittered cry
 bringing green meadows & ivied gables trees
 so when the year's in tarmal I cram my heart
 with things & leaves of happy memory
 that when a lost lark or a starving thrush
 slips thro' the bars I have a rest for it.

26.10.32

83

Lyric

This much I wish to know
 Say who has overheard
 if when the quiet snow
 by turning roots is stirred
 there is a whisper low
 or trial trill of bird

That bids old earth open
 repeat the dreary jest-
 urge useless spring or men
 from disillusioned breast
 or does she sigh and then
 renew the game with zest?

20-9-32

Autumn takes earth again
The day breaks late & cold
My friends are older men
and, heart, you have grown old.

18, 19-9-32 ⁸⁵

Sonnet

Tonight a fresh wind from the forgotten North
brings hint of winter in its boisterous kiss
Tomorrow walking wet roads I shall miss
these heavy banks of green shing fleeced forth.
So in one sally autumn takes the earth
with hoarfrost etching its stark emphasis
til every leaf-choked twig, stubble naked, is
tund with a clearness lacking since its birth.

No doubt then redder in my dusty frame
when I have been intent on usual things
that trim a man's short hours with urgency
there'll be a daybreak glittering with rime
and a far wash seaward wash of honing wings
as life puts on a certain majesty.

Evelyn Gardens?

Tipthead: a summary

As I came thro the desert on my right
 dry bones of Eliot bleaching to the moon
 and mossdark hieroglyphs on rain grey stone
 where lizards crawled & bats whirled down the night
 as I came thro the desert on my left
 a wind emote on a pinchbeck cross
 as I came thro the desert - thus it was
 of spear shape nails thorn crownet bereft

Here we come gathering nuts in many
 nuts in many
 nuts in many
 here we come gathering nuts in many
 on a cold & frosty morning

This is that fidil which for eighteenpence
 I bought a plays when young without much sense

A mudguard like a lonely roman arch
 rests on a wester pile of hoops and springs
 a postre preaching Mrs Robens' Starch
 shakes ragged corners.

Judas's shattered keys
 left on the hills or hanging by the hair
 are not more tragic.

Bovril bottles stare

brown socketed red eyes.

The jew has not
 yet seen the profit in this reeking heap
 warm winds from sloeblands sweep the vacant lot
 the thin cat shakes a tin & goes to sleep.

Yet with these shreds I must tickle up my life
 paint wall of cave & carve bone hilted knife.

3.9.32

Lines from: St. Patrick.

I pour oblation for a lonely saint
who tho his name is borne in memory
by many a whippet jockey and priest
is clean forgotten as a living man.

For centuries a figure of straw a sand
stiff with the tinsel ritual of Rome
They proft him safely in the dusty gloom
a only stake of his shadowy precedence
as of the cloudhigh heros of our dawn
great ringing names without defining features
to mark them those of shouting kingly princes

But I have found the dust wift off the book
strong eloquent voices from the brownstained page
proclaiming Patric as an urgent man
a violent ignorant warmhearted fellow
with little humor but much tenderness
the arrogant humility of saints
lending his smallest gestures grace & magic

So I have written here the story again
hoping that some may listen & be made
wiser & stronger by his memory
if so be that my thought cloud not the glow
that still gleams fitful from his many fires

89

nor add another figure of tedious phrase
stiff in the stilted rhetoric of fault.

Wast thunder brooded over Europe's face
for from the east came tumult a dismay
as the long roman lines were driven in
before the hooves & trumpets of the tribes
The Caesars weekling held a fretful stake
and shivers as the wind across the steppes
light thro the withered rushes on the floor.

But in a village by the western sea
in Britain where the legions camp'd as yet
there dwelt a lad son of a sturdy sire
a christian deacon & an officer
who played his tumbling laughing cruel games
as the Attila had not crack'd his whip
and the long roman peace was dying away.

And when his father spoke of the high worth
of roman law and christian brotherhood
and how the good life may be shaft by both
he laugh'd unthinking shook his clustered locks
& ran to wrestle on the trodden sward.

This mother quiet woman kin of one
named worthy in the Gallic hierarchy

would often with soft voice rebuke the man
Calpurnius, the lad is young enough:
when he is older will be easily taught
to show his colts' pace by your wiser stride
and your dear father's, be as good a priest
as that old man who loved his first rash step
and bland death gently only for that chance
which took him from the four walls of his mouth.

But one spring morn when pescal bell rang early
and people sat at worship suddenly
the shout went up - The Irish pirates land
their galleys through the bay. They come in rape.

Before the noon the cottages were black
and smoking heaps of timber, and the lands
trampling the eaves of the roofless byres
²⁰⁰⁰ came jugglers jostling at their milking time.

The older folk were dead save near a score
who whimpered in the misty treeless hills
and cried to heaven. But the boys & girls
already boulder lay in stinking holds
as the long sweeps struck white the darkling tide
And Suet too for all his eagerness
sat tight lip't gaping at the dwindling shore
chained to a sobbing playmate sick with fright.

In the slave market where they came at last
with chaffering a clamor they were sundered
to pull the coarse nets by the Shannon shoals
or drive the blunt plow thro flat fields of death
or knead a king's brown bread in lonely rath
- and serve his sullen appetite with tears . . .
But Suet with strong arm a merry eyes
marcht with grunting guards down rocky roads
and over stony fods to where in the north
a harsh old pagan Malinee held rule
a savage soldier with wide untill'd fields
who master'd roaming flocks of sheep & swine
and owned the cattle on a dozen hills . . .

Here beaten to subjection the young slave
was set among the crags to watch his herd
and brooded in cloud trafficket solitude.

This was the 1500th Anniversary
of the coming of St. Patrick
I had intended a long poem which never
got itself written

Northman
Bell 1942
19.8.32
husk Poems of Today

The Hired Lad's Farewell

The Jambony only older than myself
by two tanned years sight like a grandfather
shifted his ragged body on the stacks
and plucked a longer straw.

With chin on knee

I sat not looking at him gazing out
beyond the lime-wash pillars at the yard
where a late hen that'd strayed all afternoon
ran clucking back & scraping round the door.
From the open byre came swish of lazy tails
and quiet breathing till a bucket fell.

Rooks gathered in the tall elms near the house
The sun's last crest set earth aflame
Til stack or hedge were smoldering in a haze
Tomorrow I'll be going home again

For two months now Sandy & I had been
close friends & comrades in this country life
I had learnt much from him. More than I will
ever learn in so short a time. Today
I walk more wisely for the knowledge he gave
know how of cow & horse of crop & root
that brings my heart up when a screaming train
tears thro' green acres from town to smoky town.

He's learnt from me a scrap or two of verse

the names of foreign places & fierce kings
and something of three men who have given life
a richer texture by their simple words
& how to hold a bat or toss a lot
that gave more trouble than my overarm.
We both were changed thro' meeting with each other.
We would not ever be just quite the same.

Now life became the thing I'd heard men curse at
had used us each for each then sundered us
& three months' time the lad would go to sea
an older cousin promised that last year
for all his people always went to sea
the bred in a country place of corn & flax
& early familiar with the ways of cattle.
For their small meadows stumbled to the sea's edge
and broke in cliff & shingle to the waves
And brine was on the lay the creatures muncht
giving a tang to the milk. They spread brown kelp
over the dry fields at the proper time
& got good crops: as good as any dung:
while blackbeard gulls screamed at the tail o' the plow.

He would go to sea for thirty or forty years
then settle down a lighthouse keeper or pilot
at some lost crumbling cliff just round the coast
but never again go back to work on the land.

It seems a foolish thing to lose his wisdom
hard mastered skill he's spent his boyhood getting
only to turn his hand to rope and shovel
and eat tinned pork and biscuit who knew how
to slit Rog's throat or stack the heavy sheaves.

Tomorrow then I'd sit in the farmer's trap
on bulging box or wave a nervous hand
while Sandy's stand peering over the tumbled hedge
just where the heifer broke thro yesterday
And I'd not even see him any more
unless maybe an Indian typhoon
fling me into a bar in Singapore
or at some quayside walking to the train
I'd catch a glimpse of him thro an open porthole
But here we were on the stacktops very still
Old Brennan's black bull roared. The moyley cow
that was Jan's pet lowed quietly back to him
The shadows of the elms or stacks spread out
What sun was left shone on the tips of stubble
a curlew or some other wandering bird
cried from the lough. Far off an engine loomed.

Tomorrow I was going home for good
and even if I came again next year
he would be gone. I tried to think of sport
of our antics on the hay float or pecking up
hard little windfalls hidden in the mouth

955
or crawling on our bellies after beans
or whipping up the pony or whacking pigs
til their red buttocks quivered as they ran
But it was useless.

I was going home
and Sandy here was going away to sea

He never was at best a clever talker
At least his eyes were full of comradeship
and pity at the parting. I had been
the first boy to run with him as a friend
for he'd no brothers or sisters was an orphan
and always was a sort of kind lad
out working for his keep to sullen people.

Now he was going away a kind lad
indentured to the sea til time should end
And I was going home to a city of books
to bind myself to a desk or a shelf of books.

The sun set sharp behind the Artrim ridge
and there was one star over Muldersley Hill.
I shall not be more sad at any death.

Written a memory of days of Island life
with Sandy Noble of Ballycanny village
at the farm of Brennan. July - Aug 1921

17.8

The Angle

The fish flapped on my shoes
turned up a chilling eye
its back a silver bruise
mouth soziny bloodily.

So while I cut more bait
and with my dripping rod
I mussed on chance a fate
and somehow pitied god.

After fishing for a book off
Ransay 1-0.M.

11.7.32

97

Sonnets

I scorn the Kelt yet something in my blood
^{moves} stirs at the sight of grey atlantic rain
a beggar woman in a misty lane
blessing your penny by the holy wood
green hills that ^{as the} move with shadowy brotherhood
of jay & lark or a wild refrain
with laughter somewhere in it & great pain
sung by a smouldring fire of peat or wood.

I know I know the wrong this spirit's done
the dark young men sucked dry of hope & life
then flung into the gutter, left to rot
who might have bred up handsome daughter or son
and lived in quiet with a housewife wife
but at the thought of Eve I forget.

written a skene 5 10.M

Finale

In villa gardens men with floppy hats
spray roses clatter shears or smoke their pipes
Brown tennis girls drag home reluctantly
with covered racket blazer over arm

The lit pavilions near the misted courts
are loud with cupclinks or a banged piano
Jugging shadows pass the yellow windows.

And in a vacant square, four sweating boys
play on intent to finish off the game
Between the chimneys nervous swifts are screaming
a corneraker or a dog link hill or town

motts drift like dust from laurel shrub to hedge
The parkbell rings. The anglers argue out.
This is an epoch's end.

This is the end.

Evolve Gardens

The park referred to was Waterworks
Cockle Rd.

So I must praise the hard man, he who coers
experience with half a dozen words
that fix his being with well driven nail
in the clean timber of reality.

Then if a stupid hand haul back the claw
a jumble with the nail or drag it out
the wood was cloven and will so remain.

Arts' Duped Riddle

The time be blocked in colored squares
and space a greasy fingerprint
perpetually rat riddled stairs
stir under me with skull creak's hint.

So I know well the sick with space
and dizzy on the ropeswing void
a blindman hand near praise a face
and beauty's endlessly betrayed.

The beggar when I hurried to the door
began the usual whine this lack of pence
no fault of his just lack this being poor
I told him that he needed no defence.

I dared a venture - did he play or sing
or maybe write great poems on events
Ay e all a that but more than anything
he'd greater notions than ten parlements.

He mentioned some I found a cast off shirt
and jumbled coppers for his doss house bed
- his white beard grey with thirty countries' dirt
and seventeen inventions in his head.

Evelyn Gardens

This hang called later at Westland Grove

Scissors for one armed Tailors

Springs in shoe heels to assist walking

22.5.

Beech

The chestnut beckons with speech
 the fir recalls Lord Keine's palm.
 'tis April but the copper beech
 keeps autumn in the epigram.

21.5.

Danai

Already Lawstom broods upon
 what was a black & naked tree
 so once beneath its' whelming swan
 dark beds struggled to be free.

Yet at the rape I slew no shame
 that thus the myth should be retold.
 for soon that other Grecian dame
 Laburnum will be wooed in gold

will not intrude deride or scold
 rather I'll see that other dame
 Laburnum wooed in shower of gold
 alternative

Hawthorn outside Queen's Glass
 University
 Laburnum Queen's Glass.

Listener

5.5.32

1035

Antipromethean Ode

Leave now the crest of Thought's high secrecy
 and the scarce breathable air
 Come down come back to familiar hillocks & trees
 and there

Take your invidable share
 You cannot dare
 to stand a whole day poised against the sun
 letting the unappeasable eagle tear
 your quivering entrails with harsh talon & beak
 Nor then the self-appointed penance done
 would you have skill & language so to speak
 of the adventure that men should
 walk kindly follow more lasting good
 & build a new ramparts of brotherhood.

Come down come back the mountain crags are bare
 and only once a lost lark scalds the air
 Did you not hear him crying his dismay
 and leading for the cloud patch fields below?
 Too late returning he had mist his way
 when overtaken by the plunging dark
 And when dawn came you found him soulless stark
 shuteyed upon a slipping ledge of snow.

Come down come back the winter of the heart
 must break into a blossoming of joy

That night's cold loneliness was all your part
Time's secret is not vanquish't thus
The universe is not a ten year's Troy
but storm'd by sudden sallies glorious...
Troy even itself fell not without a trick

Back then to fields & habitable places
swift blossom smashing showers & streaming faces
For humble prose

of cart & street & steeple
forgo the frenzied rhetoric
of toppling crags & elemental skies

Go back & use your eyes
on hedgehogs speedwell or chipped garden rose
on hearts & faces of dull common people.

5.4.32

105 5

Calmination

What then? A fluttering clump of daffodils
that toss in the march wind a showery week
back to the old soil then dissipated thro'
the legats of worms & belly vents of beetles
lost in the earth like a breath in the atmosphere
Or woudn't be better after a hundred years
for rose or ear or wilful turn o' mind
to mark or men a fourth generation child
maybe to send a loose & 'slobbering mouth
slithering down the long slope of the years
toward in filth too gross for violence
The most you'll get from death is whether what
your skill ambition laws the hard turf at -
is a wayward immortality - and insecure
given by man for he alone can give it
- a shadow over Memphis in the dawn
or the unhurrying gesture of a youth
turned toward the east in Babylonian brick.

Egyptian Night

Wearied with travel hungry & afraid
 Joseph and Mary with their little son
 came to the dark bulk of the dreamless Sphinx
 and halted in the shadow spent a done.
 Then night came with its kind old comrade stars
 who had convoyed their fearful journeying
 and Joseph who had spread their scanty raps
 hobbled the ass, drew water from a spring
 and lay down on a bag of straw and snored
 But Mary when the little one made cry
 thought heaven that her breasts had not yet failed
 and crooned a Galilean lullaby

There in the lonely strange Egyptian night
 the mysteries of time are met as one
 the curving legion of unmeasured stars
 the wind scorns Sphinx & Mary's little son.

I had a brief but amusing correspondence
 with A. R. Damp on this poem - of
 one of substitution

Sometime after this was written I was shown
 a small painting of the subject, by J. R. White
 in the form of a framed Mrs Beresford
 The painting was by, I think, a female relation
 of Mrs. B.

Sahara

I have been parched & barren many days
 and the frost broke the ground no quickening rain
 ran singing to the very core of being
 with gesture that was but half prophecy

Spring may thrust forth green shoots & feeble blossoms
 that have no root in me & die in a day
 and the high summer render further life
 forever vain, irrevocably vain

My only hope is for a wandering Christ
 to hide in me his forty terrible days
 and stride forth with true spring in his eager hands.

Observer

9.2.32

Host

Set the tall white candles burning
bring fine luster linen from the chest
let thy table gleam with silver
when Lord Love shall be thy guest.

But the door push to in silence
draw the gusty curtains thin
speak no word above a whisper
when Queen Sorrows woud come in.

Take no thought of lighted window
lay no table sweep no floor
when that old blind beggar Fortune
taps the pavement to thy door.

I hear blitheman's whist a larnel
a pair o' City Hall a day wh the
draw for the first Sweep o' the new
place.

109 5
6.2.32

For Hugh M^cDiarmid

O brither Scot I came upon your name
when deev'd a doiter'd by the chitterin fowls
who hae not verse intil repute of shame
wheriver our brae Scots is sung or spoke.

The river wance I stud on Glasca green
an heard the yammerin men that preach an' pray
I still hae dandlers leather hills atween
an' seen black Ailsa Craig across the bay.

An' I am Scots hae ageleng roots among
the black-moutht jethers wi the solemn beak
an hauld the lack of freedom man's warst wrong
whase jethers deid for their religion's sake.

The tongue I shake may no be frae the Clyde
or whan yer mountains carry clouts of snaw
but I hae learnt it at magrannie's side
whan round the grate we gutted frae the blaw.

An' I hae sat near fowlin up in bed
a fears for werlock boddies i' the dark
whan na onl granda wi' aye roddin' head
told me the blatherin crack o' Cutty Sark.

But I hae rin awheer of plantin' thro

O down a hundred loamies bould an bould
an' jin mazel an' exild goam lak you
among the beggars' gets what rule the world.

For I hae jaupht ma claes wi' clabber an' dirt
an' down the caussies whar the long wheels turn
hae wift the stour frae mouth an' eyes na hunt
but whelpin' for the maddin o' a burn —

a burn whar I kin stam an' west ne clane
of a' the neck I hadna skill tae jout
— M' Diarmid if I ken right a' ye mense
I think I ken the verra place tae look.

111 25
Drostener : Poems of Tomonon 3.2
quoted in Handley's "Irish Scotland 1944"
Ireland ^{Irish P}
Contemporary Irish P. 49

We Irish pride ourselves as patriots
and tell the bedroll of the valiant ones
since Clontarf's sunset saw the Norsemen broken
Aye and before that too we had our heroes:
but they were mighty fighters & victorious
The later men got nothing save defeat
hard transatlantic sidewalks or the scaffold.

We Irish vaunter than tense Lucifer
are yet content with half a dozen turf
and cry our adoration for a bog
rejoicing in the rain that never ceases
and happy to stride over sterile acres
or stony hills that scarcely feed a sheep

But we are fools I say are ignorant fools
to waste the spirit's warmth in this cold air
to spend our wit & love & poetry
on half a dozen turf — and a black bog.

We are not native here or anywhere
We were the keltic wave that broke over Europe,
and ran up this bleak beach among these stones:
but when the tide ebbed were left stranded here
in crevices & ledge protected pools
that have grown salthier with the drying up

Of the great common flow that kept us sweet
with fresh cold draughts from deep down in the ocean.

So we are bitter and are drying out
in terrible sourness in this lonely place:
and what we think is love for usual rock
a old affection for our customary ledge
is but forgotten longing for the sea
that cries far out & calls us to partake
in his great tidal movements round the earth.

Everyman

113 85 5
2.2.32

For a Mild Season

Do not be eager Spring become:
this weather may betray you still
Frost yet may strike the thrushes dumb
and snow storm cover that green hill.

Be tardy in thy burgeoning
and bids the trees be patient yet
lest winter strike thee on the wing
and spring bring more than spring's regret.

Everyman

30.1.32

A Memory

A narrow garden's apple trees
a stunted crab that grew apart
the lilacs and the lattices
the faint upon the little cart:

The sloping lawn that ended in
a high old hedge with gap well planned,
that when we'd heard the reaper's din
we'd scramble thro' to lend a hand:

The crunching gravel round the house
that woke the dog as we slipped by,
the moon on pale leburnum boughs,
the aspens in the evening sky,

The wet cut grass that lay in sun
before Tom raked it in a heap
til it was deep enough for one
to plunge his face in it a sleep.

O taste of apples smell of hay
O velvet pods and strawberries
O blessed blessed hamble spray
that scratched & cut my climbing knees

But joy more deep & peace more fair

115 25 5

when pillow'd in the high old bed
to hear the clock beneath the stair
and know the ashes still were red.

Memory of Grandmother's House
in Bangor, Co. Down 1916.

The Terrible Choice

Shalt thou be dug or left as pasture land
 where meditative cattle chew the cud
 for the green corn of the mind on either hand
 is choked by the passionate poppies of the blood?

Before the urgent roots or seedlings start
 choose thou a keep allegiance strong a whole
 Jesus the singing ^{herdsman} shepherd of the heart
 or Lenin stubborn plowman of the soul.

Danaë and the Mist-Daughters

The sun sprang out a smoke dumb song of brass
 the echoes flecked the trees with wracking gold
 while thin mists sarabanded on the grass
 in damp-ple gowns that their bright limbs enfold

The trees began to shudder in that shower
 shook out despairing sleeves of dew-fresh green
 for each was a king's daughter in her tower
 and this gold rapture far too sharp a keen.

The mists then frightened at this rape of trees
 caught up their gowns from swift feet white as bone
 but ere they fled the satyrs of the breeze
 bent down & dragged them upward by the hair.

Northman

28.10.31

Admonition to Science

Tho you breed men to better tree a root
and bundle clouds up for the ripening
of drab unpoppled corn a speckless fruit
or bid the earth tilt steadily to spring -
Tho you build stercorated palaces of gold
drape tops of walls with tapestries of light
or with undreaded of bagiers banish cold
and store the sun against the winter night
what shall't avail?

The Deas of Peru
had kindly laws a mood with quiet grace
accepting morn a thunder since they knew
no terse abstraction can unbaffle face.

16.11.31

11955

There is no wind to shake the trees
yet leaves break off & tumble down
and reach the earth by light degrees
to smolder there in red and brown

tilt. and summer overhead,
They quiver round about my head
and clutch at little twigs & cling
they fall a ^{thin} ^{crust} ~~last~~ beneath my head
their green conspiracy of spring.
whisper conspiracies

5.10.31

Nocturne autumnal

The hills
 is silent now. no insect's hum
 precludes the shaking of a blossom's head
 even the weeds are dead
 and lie stiff & dry
 The blank screen of the sky
 is innocent of any song
 And no sheep come
 with melancholy sound at eventide
 Here where the black lamb cried
 and thought its master long
 and where great gulls blown in from foamy sea
 moan & shrill
 those creaking notes is the sunshine sky lark's high
 and made hoarse with
 behind the plowman on this upturned earth
 only a lazy crow invades the sky
 Not even a withered leaf on that old tree,
 the twisted lantern by the gate,
 now stirs.
 Then a slow mist comes with its silent rain
 Come let us loiter homeward by the lane
 where surely there is music in the grass

A delphi

30.9.31

1215

Values

When on the banks of winter trees strip bare
 yet dread the plunge and huddle shivering
 I judge each gesture with a critic's care
 nor prophesy a subterranean spring.

Each season is enough. Tomorrow's thought
 will shatter today's ^{petaloid} retinue
 a glint of sun on ^{falling} apple blossom caught
 is now a ever with just that to you.

19.8.31

Sonnet

What troubled fancy of what tortured brain
is mortared in the fabric of the sky?
Who dreamed of trees & wrought them hurriedly
in the cold drizzle of primeval rain?
When rakes bore crystals who endured the pain?
When coral blossomed who was standing by?
And what great starry lake was furrowed dry
to flood the raw floor of the moonled main?

Tree hill and sea are murmurous with life
their muffled voices lack interpreter
We feel but cannot say how sways the strife
nor can we tell when time's vast bodies stir,
if one is victor shouting from the field
or a spent warrior groaning on his shield.

29.6.31

1235

Providence

White roses shatter
overblown
at the touch of a
little wind unknown

Yet the same wind
hasses and only stirs
the tall dark green
perpetual firs.

29.6.31

Ecce Homo

He crushed the shavings
in a heap on the floor
and carried great armfuls
out thro the door

for Joseph was old now
and nigh on fourscore

But her maiden secret
she dared not tell

for he looked, at the door
where the sunshaft fell
as tall as his father
Gabriel.

1255
24.6.31

Train

I left the town just as the rain began
a heavy mist on stuffy summer streets
that for the first hour rolls in pellets of dust
before it coats the pavement with its shine.

We rattled past drab yards & peeling fences
washing on lines & women making beds
and screaming hens that scratched in rubbish heaps
and at a corner where a public house
bore on its gable a picture of that king
who freed us all from popery & chains
a knot of workless fellows kicking a ball
of string & paper that broke into rags
as the vindictive drizzle rotted it.

On stretch then along sloebands to the right
with here & there a white gull picking worms
and half a mile out shrouded rotting green
the sand-choked remnant of a tarry hulk

On lurch then to the left a tunnel's flash
with smoke persisting white against the light
and we were riding thro a wooded hill
The wires cried drearily. The drizzle broke
into a stinging shower of whistling rain
that leapt the dusty windows of the train

Lebanon Progress Jan 1944

30.4.31

Utopian

The men may claim "Why delay?
we want this vision slate today"
In Jan too wise to offer them
a jerry built Jerusalem.

New Moon

1.3.31

I turned my penny in my pocket
when I saw the thin moon rise
wrote me fireside hearth & comfort
sunny mornings stary skies

stood with open mouth & pondered
til the sky was left behind
for thought cheating me expanded
took in all of humankind.

Northmen

1.3.31

1275

Practical Mysticism

Gaze at a fire til it grows cold a jar;
look at the moon til she rust hot & near
then suddenly space widens and you are
naked & lonely on a tumbling star
your throat sore bruised by thin hands of fear.

Look at a tree climb each bent twig in thought
delve mole like with the twisting of each root
then suddenly the earth & stars are caught
in a live net and in one fettern wrought
til god & you are one with seed & fruit.

Then having done these things go back to men
live quietly the sequence of your days
speak not of this a whisper, only when
the unforeknown folk who will not come open
demand your comfort in their secret ways.

1-3-31

March Snow

The frost came late that winter not til march
had urged bewildered rooks to build in trees
still dripping from the warm december rain
did any tingling of the blood set in.

We had gone on our ways from dark to dark
in drizzling twilight since All Hallow's Eve
but suddenly a cold wind rapt between
the wide gap in the hills above the town
Then snow came unexpected in our faces
Two hours it hurried drifted hurried on
left high the corners of the city's kerbs
and swirled round chimneys in tempestuous gusts
then stopped as easily as it had started.

We looked for slush as gutters runnig brown
but frost came sharply from the near full moon
scattered the clouds so long familiar
beleaguerd the whole country side at once
checked the frail snows escape a fettered puddle
setting seen stars to be its sentinels
and shetelt uncanny tyrant, over the land

Emily Jones.

1-31

1295

From "Epitome": a long poem.

So I can never think of any friend
and not draw him as complementary part
of scene or landscape wotk into my thought
like dim convention on a tapestry
Indeed thro this I find it difficult
to picture any heaven after death
For if my friends are there will they not bring
sunsets & firelight & the smell of spring
the unforgetten gesture of a cloud
faint batswings in the twilight, tilt of tree?
without these things they never were my friends:
and with them is the same impermanent world.

This was from the first long poem
in the verse

The Five Year Plan: a Chant for the Workers of the World

Let the engines roar
 let the engines roar
 we must make far more. let the engines roar
 let the shuttles ring
 let the shuttles ring
 and the hammers ring
 and the derricks swing and the ganties soar
 Shoulder to shoulder woman and man
 another leave for the five year plan
 five year five year FIVE YEAR PLAN

Pull down the slums. Give the People room
 Comrade comrade back to your loom
 Builds bright houses with plenty of room
 no more cramming in the dirt & the gloom
 Way for the tractor. Ten miles of wheat
 and children waiting for bread in the street
 Shoulder to shoulder woman and man
 another leave for the five year plan
 five year five year FIVE YEAR PLAN

Marx was a man with a big black beard
 his dead fifty years but he still is feared
 not because of his menacing look
 but because of the words he put in a book

Nicolai Lenin was small and square
 but he bored thro the Tour with his gimlet stare
 and now he sleeps in the Kremlin Wall
 Nicolai Lenin square and small.

But if he should find us standing there
 he'd bore us thro with his gimlet stare
 and Marx would shout "You forgot to look
 at its small grey type in the big red book"
 So comrade comrade back to the loom
 let the engines roar. Give the factories room
 let the engines roar

from that crag to Baltic shore
 We must not stop til every man
 is part of the worlds Great five year plan
 We must not stop til Asia's all wheat
 and children are singing in every street
 We must not stop til the world is free
 of war and class and poverty
 Till the world is free. Till the world is free
 let the engines roar let the turbines roar
 Shoulder to shoulder woman and man
 another leave for the five year plan
 five year five year FIVE YEAR PLAN.

7.6.30

Sonnet

We have stood too long at corners shouting Come
to the dull hungry thousands shuffling by
The count is over. Let us then go home
The people do not want us. Let them die

Let us go home. Are there not pleasant fires
in comfortable places, love and song
and we may lose the skill for such desires
at windy corners if we stand too long.

Let us go home. For never in our days
shall we behold the hope we shouted for
There will be other men and wiser ways
to win the final battle of this war

Let us go home. And if at any time
new press for battle let them read this rhyme.

After election. Labor defeat.

Northmen

28.5.30

1335

Arithmetic

Six larks are not so sweet as one
or jipers were not made to count
I lay on backen in the sun
and watcht the urgent songsters mount
til there were dozens in the sky
crowding it with monotonous.

But striding thro the beaded grass
I heard a cornerake call its mate
the echoes seemd to pass & pass
across two hedges and a gate
I was faery almost. Then I knew
one cornerake's net as good as two.

31.3.30

Sonnet: Pour Helène (Ronsard)

When you are very old, by candle glow
 spinning beside the fire with wearied brain
 that rings a sings to many a nemoised strain
 remembers how I praised you long ago.
 And then your servant drowsily & slow
 who dozes at his work will wake again
 at my forgotten name & that refrain
 whereat for you I wrought Time's overthrow.

I shall die deep in clay, a misty wraith
 neath myrtle shadows taking my repose
 while you that crouch beside the flickering grate
 will cry against your scorn for my young faith
 Gather today life's ever fading rose
 Believe me love, tomorrow is too late.

29.12.29

1375

St. Stephen's day. The sun was ^{warm} bright
 It seemed a prelude of the spring
 the robins pecked at withered laws
 and stiff-necked swans were on the wing.

~~The old men muffled in their coats
 came feebly stepping down the roads
 sun-blinded blinking peering round
 like dull and spring-awakened toads~~

~~And yet their voices chattered shrill
 like noisy children keen to play
 for surely they saw winter gone
 bawled once again of his tough toady~~

after a walk round Westland Rd.

Revision July 1943

The old men bundled in their coats
 hops blinking out to catch the sun
 as though like jewel-headed toads
 at least they'd split the winter stone.

15. 11. 29

Killen Street

In Killen Street one never sees
 grass growing sunshine windy trees
 for Killen Street's a dirty row
 of houses built too long ago:
 and those that live in Killen Street
 have hungry bellies, illshod feet

In Killen Street the frost made white
 the rooftops in a single night
 and over every window pane
 scrawled flowers from a fantastic brain.
 Forgive me but I cannot tell
 the meaning of this miracle.

Killen St is nothing less than a
 Dumb St - ^{Collyer} ~~Hawthorn~~ St. N.

Northman

9. 5. 29

Sarcophagus

They bound her in white linen smeared sweet spice
 over her cold limbs, closed her frightened eyes;
 tied back her jetblack hair in two broad bands,
 and on her small breasts laid her small brown hands
 They laid her gently in a carved box
 in a brick cellar deep within the rocks.

A tall man came and counted out some gold
 and took me to the tomb. He was too old
 to mourn for youth and beauty turned to dust.
 He pointed to the box and said: 'You must
 paint on this side as this 'Her father was
 a Pharaoh, and for her in kindness has
 made this rich burial in sculptured stone'
 and add: 'He is the greatest Pharaoh known,
 the mightiest monarch since Osiris here
 put empire on the desert, a put fear
 on the dusty dwellers by the springing Nile:
 the lion dreads him and the crocodile'

He went away I took the colors & drew
 not what the old man said but what I knew
 so I shall die tomorrow when he comes
 to drive the demons hence with little drums.

A warm spring day, the end of March;
 light grey down on the tassels larch
 buds showing on the scraggy trees,
 and clouds on full sailed voyages
 across a vacant sea of blue;
 The grass blades light with breaking thro
 the cleansing noisure of the mould:
 between dark houses tall and old
 in small bedraggled garden mean
 there stands the spring caught evergreen

Elizabeth Goss

- once dealt with Forthwith Anne
 & Schobring Ave.

Sonnet

I never heard the birds until today
 a sparrow heavy bush a singing tree
 a sunny morning full of melody
 and colours that cut thro the frozen clay.
 These seemd to fill the comestick. Far away
 the hills were greener than I used to see
 when mist drew trailing veils thro't them a me,
 and laketit lands glowed touchlike in the grey

These birds that were my prisoners a worse,
 have now forsaken my crumpled windowsill,
 and here about the sky blithe songs rehearse
 to win a pen quick phrasing slur & trill.
 I take the hint & stretch my limbs in verse
 to be prepared for Spring's first daffodil.

Elizabeth Goss

Christmas Eve

Note in Prelude

There is a time for the crying thim
the lyric tone of the violin
There is a time for the hammer song
of the cane-banged drum or the brass lumped song.

The Song

At ten o'clock on Christmas Eve
I thanket my host or took my leave
and shut the door or hurried down
the lane that leads to the little town

Snow fell lightly with never a noise,
making the houses look like toys:
the windows shining like colored paper
that one holds up before a taper.
When snow lay inches inches thick
and steelshod heels made now no click
the wind came up or cleared the sky
with a justy broom or a husif's eye.
The stars were shining knockers bright
across the great halldoor of night.
The trees in the fields stood still as stone
a far dog barked alone .. alone

Ballytanner

At Crowspree Manor the old church clock

Curry's Corner

crasht at the half or weekend a cock
At Deadman's Hollow my watch face shewd
eleven o'clock .. and half the road

At a quarter to twelve I hears a sound
it rang in the air and all around
Between two stars that sang a shone
an angel trumpeted a mellow tone
Behind him far & behind the stars
serafs ran in their flaming cars:
and silver wings or glowing feet
glitterd along the golden street
and golden voices or golden lutes
and dulcimers or golden flutes
O high sky crying violins
awake the coda that beperis
with golden instruments golden throats
and deep earthshaking organ notes ...
(mountain)

This Christmas morn
(boy or is born
a Christ agen
Rejice O men.

Then I saw the Mother sitting on the Throne
or a little laughing baby that held her as his own
Then I saw the Stable or the shepherds kneeling there
or old bewilderd Joseph with the starlight in his hair

and the cattle in the corner & the eint among the hay
& the droop-eared little donkey with the melancholy bray
But when I heard that sudden bray
the vision vanished clean away
and Heaven shut: and the music died
and I stood alone on the white hillside

At ten past twelve I reach the town
The snow was slushy trampled & brown
and at the end of the glimmering street
a sleet-scummed puddle soaked my feet.
And at the corner near my door
I saw them standing singing there
a shabby host of the weak & poor
beneath the street lamp's windy flare.

A big boy beat on a thundering drum
& a thin man screech of the Kingdom Come
& a red faced man covers over with hands
knelt in the slush & prayed... & prayed

A half starved cat crept frightened out
by the hoarse Hosanna gospel shout;
a drunk man lurched from an entry's dark
into the lamplight's windy arc:
and a ragged boy with his papers unsold
blew on his fingers that were red with cold

A heavy footed policeman trundled on his beat
with a deep chest cough & stamping feet.

And a big boy beat on a thundering drum
and a thin man screech of the Kingdom Come.

written on Sunday when home (Sue's Eds)
from Shanneth's Training College 3-3-0
18-18-C

This card is for 45 4-4-0 for
Red's Song I had brief correspondence
with C.D. Vane regarding my non-fair
spelling.

My warning against Vachel Lindsay's
over-loving influence

and when I turned the key in my door
a light and stepped before
for every house that Christmas morn
the laughing hope of the world is born

13.11.28

Little Ships

O little ships that come & go
 across the gleaming waters' breast
 and reach Japan & Mexico
 will you not let me join your quest?

For I could pull harsh ropes abroad
 the tugging wheel when seas run high
 and when sleet whistles sharp & cold
 I'd reef stiff sails against the sky

And I'd be quite content to eat
 the tinned salt beef the thick grey bread
 and lie awake in tropic heat
 and have a hammock for my bed.

O little ships that come & go
 can I not slip away with you
 and see Japan & Borneo
 and Madagascan & Peru?

I have heard that the bus has been used
 in elementary school in schools

Northman

6.11.28

151 B 5

Willow Pattern

Pagoda princesses in silk
 move past like hesitant gazelles
 thro blossoms blown as white as milk
 where winds are drowsy full of bells

A melancholy mandarin
 like peacock stiff in starchy dress
 ignores the fingered mandolin
 and ^{sings} the lakeside's loneliness

Two satin lovers by the sea
 peer for their golden lacquer boat
 and beat their thin hands aimlessly
 as lotus blossoms by them float.

Every man

7.8.28

The Gardener

Life limited his scope to this small plot
This meagre triumph over weed & rock
Wherein he planted phlox & bergemot
and those gay steeples of the lollyhock

But now if God has planned hereafter well
-and does things justly by the newly dead
this old man tends wide swaths of asphodel
and amaranthine blossoms bed on bed.

24.7.28 1935

Two jaery shallops
that flitted past
each with a star
on the tip of her mast

Coal dusty ground
beside the quay
Tomorrow where's
your poetry?

Written at Venus Bay Island, New Zealand

13.7.28

~~Poem~~
Roussel

When I am gone the sun will rise,
sky breaks in blossom with the dawn,
men dream each new day they'll be wise
when I am gone.

The moon, despite Endymion,
still casts a spell o'er Lovers' eyes,
tho she is cold a heartless stone.

So poets cry their feeble cries,
each in his narrow cell alone,
nor will they end their tuneful lies
when I am gone.

27.6.28

1953 5

If there's a god as some folk say
I thank him for a happy day,

and pray that he all men may bless
with equal measured happiness.

26.6.28

a menacing clunk of yews
in a graveyard late at night
like Klansmen met for a lynching
when the moon is cold & bright.

Their speech is a hidden murmur
that never scales to a cry
but in the fir's top branches
you hear their victim die

after visit to Carronmoney graveyard

22.6.28

15735

Triolet

I rummaged thru a deadman's box
-and read the letters from his friends

For photographs and ribbon locks
I rummaged thru a deadman's box.

O how the faded paper mocks
with words that could not make amends -
I rummaged thro a deadman's box
-and read the letters from his friends.

after exploring my grandfather's effects.

Northman

15.6.28

Young girls alone are lovely,
thin saplings in the wind:
the grace of each young body
brings sprung into my mind.

Their faces & little bodies
heal up the heart of time,
till old immortal ladies
walk forth again in time

Free thinker

7.6.28 159³ 5

Immortality

Talk turned this evening on the end of man
and if there is survival after death
so I perforce then heatedly began
to quarrel with the old establish'd faith

"Where are you dead? The flesh must rot we know.
Your punchbeck heaven's net above the sky.
If there's a star to which these ghosts could go
it is not mentioned in astronomy."

One answered Do you think that grief & pain
must make the sum of this our only life?
Is it not rather Christ to come again
with wings of healing for the bitter strife?

God will have mercy on his people yet.
He will adjust th' innumerable scores."
Then I replied "It seems that you forget
he had scant mercy for the brontosaurus."

Timber

Whether sunshine snow or rain
 Caesar now & Charlemain
 sleep & will not wake again

Sandstorms blow o'er Babylon
 Thistles cover Marathon
 Sabe's dead & Solomon

Winds fret thro' the quarried trees
 -creaking with ten centuries . . .
 Trees are more than dynasties.

Nettles of Offence

One had a fair body
 and one a lovely face
 and I love each because of this
 because of their high grace
 Each in her love for me
 -blacked nettles of offence
 while one lies robs in flame one is
 shod with impenitence.

1927

Cry upon The Mountain

A far off cry upon the hill
I will

not stir & seek the reason out
for I in this redoubt

lie happy in the heather on the hill.

Slow climbing up the copper moon
will soon

turn silver in the liberty
of the bare cloudless sky.

I wonder are there people on the moon?

Here in the heather on the hill
I still

lie questioning Can any know
whence are we - where we go?

I think life is a cry upon a hill.

Inshman

1927

163 5

Mr. Faint-heart Middleclass

When I see workless men I hurry by
lest I should seem to mock their wretchedness
for food & fire & roof & books have I
and comfortable dress.

They stand together in the rain & spit
upon the greasy pavement of the street
and mumble sporting gossip & make wit
of flat obscene deceit.

I dare not tell them that I have a plan
whereby to bring an end to their distress
and give them food & shelter, every man,
and comfortable dress.

This title was quoted against me during
a lecture W.C.L.C. that winter

1927

Roundel for Peace

O Lord for peace on earth we pray.
May our embattled jolly cease
and all our strength be spent this day
O Lord, for peace.

Marshals & captains go their way
- less as the pomp of Golden Greece
their storied glory turns to clay.

Therewith life's valors vanish? Nay
but rather thence shall they increase
For our best emprise waits I say
O Lord for peace

Spring 1927
June

165

Hawthorn

Some call it Hawthorn
some call it may
and it's very unlucky
- so they say

When a green tide floods
ditch hedge & tree
I catch its gentle
lethargy

Its scent makes me sad
when I should be gay
for it's very unlucky -
so they say.

(Chyngolton Avenue)

Poems from November 1939 -

Comrades y compañeros 9.XI.39

For awhile

we listened to Bilbao after twelve
found Albacete with an inkly jumper
and called Barcelona Barthelema
applauded the red sash boys
and the blue whirling skirts of the jita
the innocent fife and drum
argued for and against the anarchists
or slipped an unobtrusive note
to a secretive comrade collecting for the brigade
managed conversations till we could mention
fluently the names of party leaders
maybe even stood a drink
to a gruff voiced laughing Basque
from the rusty ship at the docks

That is over now.

The page of the atlas is turned.

But sometimes

a name slips into mind

like Jarama

or Guadalupe

or a fragment of song blows by like the scent

of a flower
of a merry milk beer

167
or the formal belt of the spinners

or a man in the street suddenly
flashes a grin
and clenches his fist shoulder high

He fought in Spain and thinks we remember it.

Dreams

18. XI. 39

If I have dreams they do not wake me cold
in the chill night. They may be muffled up
gagged by the rags that drape my strutting thought
or locked in velvet pockets of the mind
to coil all day til sleep releases them
to pad or slither up the curling fronds.

The cat or snake I can manipulate:
even the phoenix is predictable.

My worst dreads' that on dented cotton wool
the green eggs dozing wait the cracking blow
and Roe shall drop me screaming on the creeps
or doplops croak and haunt my quiet hours.

Retreat

25-29. XI. 39

169

Up the steep gravel as the laurels shook
the cold rain thro' the bare and sooty twigs
beside a grey wall forked with dirty moss
lounder on pebbles to a pillared door
compelled by careful interest in my trade
(to snatch a proper token of the past)
I went in chill november.

Ringing bell
a woman sped knowing why I came.
Left in a large Jull room til she returned
surveyed this lair of a defeated class
the tattered carpet and the damp bulged walls
the tasseled chairarms and the photographs
of tight lipst majors dead in another wars
the oval frames of tinted shawl and beard
the hockey team with neatly folded arms
the rapped music and the well rubbed novels
the careful etching of a Scottish loch
a watercolor of our native leather

When she came back I spoke about the view
to make believe I had not scrutinised
the crumbling altar and the decaying joint,
gazed hard thro' the bare trees across the bay
grey in the chill november imageless
"But from that other window" she replied

you see the hills. That is the view we like"

First a rose garden then a lichen wall
then rising shoulders of close ranked trees
steele to the basalt cliff against the sky

"It must have been most colorful last month
I said not looking at the dusty curtains.

"But we prefer to look at it in spring
when all the spruce there is a light light green.
I hope the people after us will care
for that plantation and not let it go
to be a public park for children to spoil
breaking the branches, pulling all the flowers"

My business ended stepping to the door
along a passage my attention caught
a drawing by an artist I know well
but dated twenty years back. With his name
I glibly praised his ease and elegance.
but my next phrases mist my auditor

"He caught the likeness, maybe, but he mist
the personality. That young man there
(I'd thought her son but now she had me puzzled)
is not as he has drawn him slightly built
He is strong and ^{powerful} broad. There is no doubt of that."

This never would suggest the Armstrong shoulders"

The last stride brought us to the blistered door:
she pointed to a grass grown path ahead
You can go down that way. It's more direct.

And as I went I passed a rusted cannon
and a fabled fountain spitting in the rain
with unresponsive goldfish cruising round.

Portrait

11. XII

R. P. M

Doctor poet and talker glad to live
what quatrain could his slightest image catch?
The ripe curled lips, the drawn affirmative,
the surreptitious glances at his watch

14-XII

Sonnet December during War

Now in the misty zero of the year
 when days a bleak and drizzled interval
 between a grey light moving up the wall
 and the dimmed windows of a world of fear
 the pulse beats slower and the anxious ear
 awaits each moment keening siren call
 the numb mind dumbly watches ashes fall
 into the fire's red hell wide maw'd and sheer.

No birds are singing in the brittle sticks
 the withered grass comb'd flat with channel'd rain
 the shrivell'd berries and the tinder when
 the ragged thistles round the tilted ricks
 can yield no gain of success save within
 their spent waste tickets from the season's bare.

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Portraits W. R. R

21-XII

This country parson with the corn-cob pipe
 has secret ices, has been known to write
 harsh ^{clutters} acrostic verse like ^{Hopkins} Under over ripe
 and snigger over Joyce by candlelight.

M. T. McC

29-XII

This frog-voiced woman has a masculine
 grasp of affairs. It once was thought of her
 she might have made a name in Westminster
~~who gossips now to doctore on cheap wine~~
 who whets malicious tongue on Empire news
 [12.V.59]

R. J

29-XII

House boy the cook's assistant went to sea
 endured a year: now quietly at home
 companions eye and does embroidery
 in an old house with windows fleck'd by foam
 where letters never come

Unstoned Eve

Consideration of an oil painting by Colin Middleton

I

Beneath grey threat of winds and clouds at war
 on the brown sterile beach of a cold star
 where bleak sea flings grey tresses on the shore
 with low repeated beat and dragging roar
 a naked woman sits shulged and bowed
 her hair blown backward like a tumbled cloud
 and slipping from her thigh a silken shroud
 that dull against her body takes the light
 as curve by curve it stretches cold and bright
 over a red stepped stool: a staking seags
 from shin to ankle in dejected flaps
 and limply sprawls to one foot her shoe
 the other left behind her twist the two
 square table legs on whose broad top she rests
 on left arm leaning, her full thrusting breasts
 in thin tense annoyance do not conform
 the slack third gesture of her lifted arm.

II

A naked woman on a barren beach
 none by to shock or comfort her with speech
 sharp berglike islands lit by slanted sun
 suggest no rescue to be found thereon

she sees them not with her averted eyes.

And as she broods what thronging memories
 jostle the noisy causeways of her heart
 of sunbright cities or green glens apart,
 high love remembered or regretful care
 for friendly hands that could her foaming hair

Who breaks her warded mystery for before
 women have wept upon a lonely shore
 there for one, and Dido ere the fire
 made an immortal tale of her desire.
 Not either this.

Than these for none alone
 in this vast raceney of wave and stone
 Perhaps the last of her defeated race
 she brings her tribulation to a place
 equate in grief with her unspoken grief
 devoid of meaning, drained of all belief
 for she has lived too long and sees the end
 the dreadful comets of our day portend.
 Yet so. she is not old with withered breast
 the saps of life dried up. Her limbs attest
 an eager body that perhaps had been
 rich fertile mother of a race unseen
 denied by nature's rapid poverty
 both fruit and father for her progeny
 and so defeated drearily unfulfilled
 she mourns the murdered future of her child.

29. XII. 39

Sonnet: Bus Journey

The bus fills up with laden passengers
 not pledged to travel Jan who drift away
 down wet lanes in the evening winter day
 over high stiles up avenues of firs
 The air grows heavy and the windows blur
 we judge hill crested by the skid and sway
 until on stopping gusts blow in and play
 on ^{round your remote & lonely} lonely isolated travelers.

At country town a crowd of farmers board
 well wended with liquor laughing talkative
 we lose self-consciousness alert to give
 the way attention on cramped seats of fard
 to the loud round of jests then slow with keep,
 while two men just behind talk low of sheep

Larne - to Carralough

1940

177

6.I

Epigrams by Ponce Denis Ecouillard Lebrun 1729-1807

I Sur une Dame Poète

This beautiful poet has two little whims:
 she makes up her face but not her own rimes.

II Dialogue entre un pauvre Poète et l'auteur

I have just been robbed!

I share your grief

My manuscripts!!

I pity the thief.

8.I.40

Waiting in twilight for a blue lit bus
to turn and carry me the way it came
my clearest intention coinciding with it -
the chief intention scribbled with my name.

I suddenly became disintegrated
into fat tissueed jancies, doubt and hope
vague words remembered from a hundred volumes
and faint crone of a sleeping soap.

and it seems daft that such a clumsy ^{bundle}
balanced a leather bound by tie & cap
should hold together in the twilight waiting
while night unrolls over its starry map.

179
9.I.40

Sonnet

Can mind weigh life and score it on a slate
with proper sign preceding all assest:
if not mind now then mind of ripen state
when what is good now has achieved its best?

Predicted comet may be harbinger
the gas that freezes at the point required
the seventh generation hees that bear
the foreest fruit with qualities desired -

- These may be known as you or I can write
what words a certain man will say and when
or how best dreams from ^{meagerness} ~~littleness~~ of height
make noisy nuisances of little men.

Yet will there ever be at any time
device to check the chance of love or rime?

12.I.40

Minor Poet's Dilemma

Caught at my prime in pitiful disaster
my world's walls gape about to fall:
where must I turn for comfortable master
to break the hush of terror's interval?

Say - Edward Thomas who when earth was breaking
thinking of vole and Hawthorn deathward went,
or Roman Lands, brave at eighty, making
immortal quatrains of pure sentiment?

181

26.I.40

I count among my friends that lovely man¹
from Austria who plays the mandolin
and covets gadgets, and the stooping Czech²
who uses God's name quaintly in his speech
the sensitive quiet German with his jokes³
laboriously learnt from lesson books
who loves Tuck's Shakespeare, Byron, Bernard Shaw
and has a hawk's eye and a hand to draw
a laughing likeness, and the gold tooth Basque⁴
who's given up English as a hopeless task
and now subsides with understanding grin
remembering Bilbao and the Argentine

So this and this appears as I report
each affable and with a kindly heart.
I pass their images before my eyes
and wonder where the root of evil lies
that hand and hand ever to release a bomb
to blind a baby or destroy a Rome
at sign from statesman in a Karel's room.

- 1 Karl Freund leatherworker
- 2 Lutz Gans nearest student
- 3 Siegfried Alexander architect
- 4 Andres Guinovella sailor

Mirror

Once sitting drowsy in a homeward bus
 my book unopened from sheer weariness,
 rocking obedient to the lurch and sway
 thro' foggy curtains of a winter day
 I raised my tired eyes to reflecting glass
 that let no shadows of the shapes we pass
 break thro' its hard black surface showing only
 white helpless faces islanded and lonely
 under shape-toplit hats that from their brows
 drew a blue shadow's edge across their eyes
 smaden at broods a reflected man
 stood on the platform having just got on
 He paused to pay his fare and look around
 where comfortable place might best be found
 near narrow men or snip inviting girl
 avoiding width of back or flicking shawl
 and as he looked his flat reflected face
 was set on my left shoulder like a mask
 and there were two then: this and this the same
 so like the faces he must share my name
 I woke from tedium in a sharp alarm
 vict' in the sinking focus of a storm
 but just before I could adjust my wit
 to this intrusion, at the crossing light
 he turned and swung upstairs a out of sight.
 And from that moment terror steps with me

chuckles from corners grins from cups of tea
 or flashing mirror. Other masks may make
 a flank encounter or oblique attack
 I do not fear them being integral
 more than stubbed toe or cold sea's blank wall
 admitting my retreat or step aside
 no need to hurry for the world is wide
 But this flat face, the dread that there is one
 identical with me in thought and tone
 who may do something I cannot foretell
 where I am retive and am known too well
 so shackles with responsibility
 that I move blindly where I used to see.

It was enough to fear a shadowy plane
 encompass all the images of men
 and set in sequence what we acted here
 the minute's laughter and the tedious year
 but that this life should intersect my life
 a mad leaf thrusting thro' another leaf
 thers up the roots of growth makes madness of
 the hopes I haven and the things I love.

6.11.40

And after Spring - ?

The birds I never know by sight
Have come upon the trees
and in the early morning light
repeat the ancient litanies

The spring already stirs beneath
that harrowed earth in western rows
the chestnut splits its sticky sheath
the farmer yokes his team to plow

My friendly spirit would respond
glad of the order Dobby
the spider on the bracken frond
the lapwing starting from the hay

But yet before the field is mown
the daisy locket from mossy tree
there may be left no stone on stone
of all our careful masonry

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20.11.40

Late Spring

Beneath the rusty bracken celandine
offers wide up to splashing showers of March
that quench the sun which rips the tattered clouds
ravels thin white blown edges and makes gay
the tall bare trees green with a winter's rain
smearing its purples and yellows on their boles.
The twisted Hawthorn knuckled with its age
where blackened berries still survive the birds
and the hard weather on each twig tip bears
like a bright knot of quaint embroidery
unspend and that gives a dust of gold
to every distance combing space for life.
No more than this for Spring.

The bleached dull grass
the dry & rustling thickets whisper death.
Only the braided waters everywhere
round roots and over stones have voice to speak
the uncoiling purpose of the thawing earth.

after walk to Castle Erskine.

Sonnet: Pan

The cottage garden had a laurel maze
 breast high and trim with paths well swept & bare
 and often in the endless summer days
 when bathing boys or they had time to spare
 the laughing girls went out to frolic there.
 Old John as ever eager for their praise
 would hobble round intent that each should share
 the roses' glory, tiger lilies' blaze

When every flower had won its proper name
 and every shrub ^{was} remark'd he'd always start
 with creaking limbs his old decrepit game
 and chase the squealing jillies for a kiss
 old randy bachelor with thumping heart
 crowing like Pan in Jan aecadian bliss.

memory of visit to old man near
 Donaghadee Co. Down c 1918

Hold Memory!

Here in the quiet evening of my home
 anchored beneath a rocking flow of stars
 with wife away after gardening
 laying the black sods open to the frost
 myself the navvy squelching in the clay
 now reading with market passages aloud
 for my delight or comment, I look round
 on books and pictures. In this narrow box
 of four cream walls are heaven all to love -
 the unframed canvases sketch of dancing women
 her body's lines the swinging draperies
 making a loose coil like a half heard tune;
 the sharp relation of a nest and ladder
 set in a desert landscape by that man
 whose hot imagination gears my thought
 into complex and lightning janteses
 not reach without his force but satisfying
 some tension of my spirit these mad days:
 the limbo unframed of Edinburgh
 propped on the bookstack from my father's hand
 when I remember where my fortune lies
 always I place across the chequer's head
 the comfort and responsibility
 of being a wise man's son: I often find
 my word respected because of his just name
 and love that by a rest and wayward tongue

that makes the simple truth too doctrinaire
for unaccustomed ears: above the fire
a print from Moscow of a blue Picasso
staring my generation and my faith
eightsided mirror kept for visitors
to fix their smiles in; it is dangerous
and hung well out of sight of where we sit
lest I be snared into self-consciousness
and offer gestures for the slope they make
and not the truth that they give body to:
the golden letters on the ill metal books
(I set them out by subject not by size)

suggest so many tedious memoranda
that cannot yet distil into a poem
how I found each how satisfied why retained,
I turn my mind abruptly to consider
not crazy world with dagger at its throat
I think of Kats too often and will open
but rooms remembered all inconsequent
remembered for some fancy that took root
part of the tangled thicket of my mind
bearing harsh blossom or cool quenching fruit
or his like coin or button in a drawer
with drawing pins and envelopes - and string
you jumble thro' to find a thing you need
for sudden purpose easily diverted
as hooked burr sticks to a sweeping sleeve
resists removal, interrupts your stride.

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First then the wide farm kitchen on the hill
where we cald once with a blue can for milk
I sat upon a stool while mother gossip
with the large mounded frothy handed woman
and saw the crickets glitter in the ash
{ and the flames leech along the copper pans
and the bright copper pans along the shelf.

then the brass handles of the boiler taps
in another kitchen in a city house
the bamboo tripod in the dining room
the snakes in bottles on the bathroom sill
the algae in the deep green tank, the hearth
with shesky conch shells and heavy ammonites
inside the crested fender

or after
the curtained bedroom where I had the fever
when I was seven and my mother sent
father and sister to my uncle's house
that she might keep the law and me at home:
there on the floral carpet I fought this
the ten decisive battles of the world
with my lead soldiers, out of Creasy's book
played Marathon beside the dressing table
and near the fire repeated Waterloo
with Plessey by the ward robe.

Follows then
a room in Bristol high above the town
where tenace signals tenace over the mist

and sooty spire still dreams of Chatterton
a plaque of Persian tiles upon the wall
green blue and red beneath a hard white glaze
the baby crying in another room
brought in and cradled on the blue dewan
the exile lush tong and his ~~toy~~ wife
ribald malicious with wide laughing mouth

Remembering exiles remember the Chinese
in that other house where we lived two years ago
poet and talker sitting by the fire
beating a poem's meter with the poker
about a soldier sharpening his sword
speaking of Po Chu I and his device
of reading his verses first to his housekeeper

The memory wounds. I must invent a way
to shut my mind's eye to the sight of him
be more exact about that friendly house
blur I thought a maze of details that remain
the clipped hedge round it and the narrow strip
of lush grass thick round root of apple tree
the fire we moved because it blocked the view
the hill seen from the front the garden plots
that patient sapless men work year by year
the cream walled room plain paper is our choice
J.H. the delicate tempera by my tall dark friend
who maps a face like a landscape and a hill

firm as a woman's breast, whose vision is
cold and remote as tarn among the creeps:
G.M.C. the stone face by the copyist of Moore
who lies so boldly of his famous friends
W.J.M.C. the simple watercolor of a mill
by a strange thwarted fellow ^{once} all involved
in martyr misery and pedantic detail
the carpet square and angled yellow and brown
typical of the thought that we aspire to
in a mad world of wild complexity
like bags my wife stuffs colored clippings in
the colored tiles flower patterned round the fire
my wife stuck paper over to cancel out
the white round light hung on a metal rod
that someone thought was fitting for a shop
the coarse brown jar that held the fire stiff flaps
cut by the dapan just then superseded
as they began to crumble into down
by six brought safely from an oily bag
walking ^{at dawn} in country ^{at} December's end,
in that haunted land where Rodgers lives

Recall the Spanish sailors with their wives
men with horn wrinkled faces, chattering women
who sat here singing slow nostalgic songs
when Albacete and Jarama were
drums throbbing in the proud & anxious heart
not merely names upon a folded map.

2 "New Statesman" 1940

In memory of Shelley Wang

I cannot cheat my thought. I remember too well
his bland smooth face by that hearth his cigarettes
his explanation of the characters
the firm fist with the brush held vertical
his glinting glasses laminated thick
his way of speaking of his early days
his wise grandfather, ways of making tea
Confucius soybeans and Mao Tse Tung
his recognition that my wife and I
have learned to be both integral and free
his interest in my clumsy western thought

My spirit grew beneath his influence
as seedling sprouts in cinematograph
waving uncertain arm as alternating
with cold and moisture suddenly abrupt
jostling the big round grains of earth aside
and shooting towards the warmth that warmed it.

He was a quiet man a humble scholar
compact of wisdom courage tolerance
a gentle host even of our hills
making a lovely stenza as he hasst
distilling our coarse literal art's conceit
and setting style and reason against despair

For all his greatness life could offer him
only a little death in a vast campaign

a manuscript unpublished and a book
of badly printed verse on wartime paper.

Yet I do not think he would have understood
that rich word failure. Here are other words.

I'd thought to move thro pleasant memories
re-marking where I found the form and color
resting my stiffened laurels a tired arm's
for since that day I read it in a paper
just months ago we kept my grief at bay
but Wang with his smooth face a lank black hair
eager eye distorted by jantastic lens
heard from the shadows urging me to speak.

So let this verse begun with other intent
be a libation to his memory.

1937	August to December	10
1939	Jan to end of August	45
1938	July to end of December	30
1932		31
1931		15
1930		4
1929		5
1928		13
1927		4

147 + 10

'any complete 1 make is Herari' R. 14

