

Selected Poems

tukolor



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Selected Poems by Tukolor

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A Beginning

Dry leaves of Adam of the human race
that chase the air: now Autumn bloom is gone,
no magic bough for them to cling upon.
They chase the air most when the sky is clear,
half implicate themselves with beauty's grace,
and then deny its beauty. None can steer
while falling to the ground. They always fall
at last. The skies! it happens to them all!
half-graceless creatures that hunt in airy lopes,
in everending and mistook renewal,
leafward not rainward, their everending hopes
like leaves themselves, at last their only fuel.
These leaves are brittle when they fade to brown,
are unmade Spring that to the ground fell down.

One

CLERK'S SONG I

I wish I would not wish
But fish for minnows
There is a river near here
Its water winnows

I think I shall not wake
A bell has scolded
And if I cannot hear it
I can't be faulted

I wish I would not wake
The day is peaceful
As you think nothing
Nothing is easeful

I think I will not fish
For what I call sleeping
(And I have a liking for it)
Is for keeping

CLERK'S SONG II

Imagination and the quadriuium!
a heady brew!
But I'm sleeping in a field when I'm not
supposed to.

See how I'm flat as an anvil, in this field,
with my black bread and my beer.
I'm still as a renart, about steeled
against all of it, here.

Perhaps it's love's parsed over my vows -
those rigors washed with caution.

Sheeh! Master of what! Art's for cowls and cows
and green milk's its portion.

Art just told me daisies are weeds;
that magic's only black;
and the horny moon's loverless;
and the stars' wisdom is quack.

Just let me lie here and close my eyes
and make this weed of books
into a world of lettery daisies
made by unthinking looks

glistering in the pools of the eyes
and hatching in the mind's brief day
a landsworth of sensation and colour
and magisters, helpless as they.

THE OTHER WORLD

The other day I found a weed
In a *Verdy* field, I don't know why.
It's gone now I guess. The colour?
It was quite like the zeon near
That closed-down drome at Peoples Pier.
I never seen stuff like it anywhere!
Or knew what it was. It hackled me.

It was such a peculiar thing, it was.
I scanned it then tore a clump
Straight up to get a bite, gormless to
If it were poisonous or not.
I had lost my appetite for life
And to die flush on pure astro turf
Would be a gammagamer's end.

SELECTED POEMS

It turned up safe to sup as a hygienedisk,
But with a taste so outer new to me:
Sour but not juicy in its stem, chewi leaves.
I bit it twice and swallowed hard
Then laid on the levelz of the *terf* 2 hours.
My thoughts cut like tazers into my mind,
And cleared out a sort of scapeway to the past.

I photogyred the shapes that veered around
Like dynavores. They were only shapes,
But their real substance was outer profound
And they represented pixiures not
Of mere oculative and mortal planes,
But deeply hidden consciazones
Where more artful kinememes abound.

II

I fell into a dream; I had tasted a weed
That was not made by a human hand.
It drays my mind like a baryoplasmic weight.
If I stop and think, I can pixiure it.
It wasn't photic, plastish or outer smooth.
I guess I'll mind it up again,
If I zazz it round the zee-truck of my brain.

I closed my eyes like doors and thought
I was like a ship without a port.
My words sailed like they sought a cause
In this unreal world of real laws,
So outer unknown, so outer strange:
I saw them sail into the mind's hot cores,
Then out into sense they tack and rise.

SELECTED POEMS

And yes of course, I felt a change;
It ran through me with vectored limbs.
It's always hard to see the dang
Er or any of its synonyms,
But beneath your feet the danger grows
And opens up (how, no one knows)
As deep into the smoke a fire glows,

And in these melting spaces lurk
Old memories which hatch a plot
That, like the Overseer of a hyperkirk,
Confounds what *is* with what is *not*.
At night, when all the world is murk,
Vere variorums of one basic blot,
A seed is from the shadows shot,

And as shadows out of shadows spill,
The seed and shadow join at will
As if they are unified in every part.
And *that* is what I am, I guess;
My hopes, dried out, flow less and less,
Reflecting back at the core of art
The mirror's cracked and broken heart.

BALLAD OF A DRAIN

Through similar days I pay my way
By keeping fallen rain at bay.
Through my mouth it falls and runs
Then dries beneath tomorrow's suns.

In Spring I'm eaten up by moss
And you might think that would emboss
My ugly pallor. But what I see
Brings up only entropy,

Long weariness within this hole
That I am, this rigmarole
Of eating rain. And sending it
I don't know where; it's past my wit.

I see the sky. That's all I see,
Except when folk walk over me.
Always the sky, its changing moods,
Gathering emetic foods

To feed me with. Not that I eat,
But the metaphor is still quite neat
And fits quite well. Oh what the hell,
My father was hit by a shell.

The road was struck and up he went.
My mother passed her days content;
A bag flew from a Hackney Cab
And gave her wings. We called her Mab.

It amuses me to talk like this.
It is an elementary bliss
To adopt a more important role
Than a forgotten gaping hole.

I have no father, I think you'll see.
What kind of man would breed me?
What mother would pass from her legs
These dusty old cast iron dregs?

But with no mind, I have no fears
And wear a smile between my ears
(If I had ears). A figure, clap!
Am I not a clever chap?

SELECTED POEMS

I flatter myself. Perhaps you'll tell
I'm happy now. The water fell
Last time, pouring down, this time maybe
It will fill me again. It is good to me.

It is dirty water. I, dirty, smile.
I, full and happy, reconcile
Myself to spangled, rich fair dreams.
I am gorged with filthy streams.

You don't care. You're not a drain.
You can't imagine that such a vein
Of pleasure could exist. It burns
Indeed, and wastes the glummer turns

I get sometimes, surrounds and bounds
Me, issues fissiparous sounds.
I distract myself; the water dries
And does not flow. The sun will rise

Again, again. And I shall dry
And stink to heaven sometime nigh.
Then I shall be a wishing well,
Though do not hearken what I tell.

It is reasonable, though, if my feeling are askew.
If only you wondered. If only you knew.
This moss claws sharply, constantly so.
I am inanimate. I do not know.

I cannot think. I merely speak.
I react when it rains, withdraw when I pique.
My body beneath, a hollow. My hat
Is the world. Imagine that!

SELECTED POEMS

I merely think. I cannot speak.
You cannot hear me. I am too weak.
I am beneath, your body, your soul.
You are my kingdom. I am your goal.

A SHORT HISTORY OF BRITAIN

Written by An acknowledged authority on Public Transport

They had no roads, the mountain folk,
And hunted in the outcrop godlike food.
The farmers of the dusty lowland chalk,
Hunted by like gods, made good
With axes, making wooden tracks
Across the fenlands, while they watched their backs.

The withes across the marsh were woven
And people stepped across them single file.
The water gods inside their clammy haven
Gave out an enigmatic smile.
The paths of gilded goldy corn
Rose up on holy woodland fairy-born.

But all these people had was words!
So when saviors landed - rulers armed with maps,
And compasses and rulers (and with swords),
They fell like legal thunderclaps.
And half the lands they mapped were theirs.
And when they fled they left an anarchy of heirs.

Hard petty warriors and their chums
Drove out the latinamants, caught at ease.
Their kingdoms nibbled on the filthy crumbs
They found, to nourish meagre fleas,
The land a weave of darkened lanes,
As uncontrolled as their dynastic reigns

SELECTED POEMS

Which crumbled in a snuff of air.
Who'll praise the nomansland of native tracks
That lead the farmer nowhere! Everywhere
 Came hordes of saucy nasty jacks,
 And every highway had its man
Who served it as only the desperate can.

The ancient rivers lay in wait.
Their dark and brooding waters onded on,
Whose fish swam up like fools toward the bait.
 Like a lion whose strength has gone,
 And willed on by a bigger cheat,
Boats nibbled at their economic sceat.

Then engineers made a canal
And crossed on it the elemental rock.
The waters parted deep and momental
 To free the traveller with a lock,
 A chain of locks: a ziqurrat
That scaled the sky. And each barge had a cat.

Yet these were heavy heavy loads
That broke the weary water's back. They said
"Life should be simple as our roman roads!
 Not hemigraikon, barely read,
 Much mazy and much literate.
Let mathematicians square and iterate!"

They planned and built an iron road.
Which their engines wore out, so they made more.
Now iron horses ran (where once the water flowed)
 On iron rivers cast in iron law.
 In iron prisons were they caged
Whilst rowling engines rolled around and raged.

SELECTED POEMS

But success is never adequate:
If you have the kingdom and the crown,
You cannot quite look back in peace just yet
Or let your subjects drag you down.
So, in a trice, they mixed up tar
And every horse was made into a car.

This was strength as great as Sharru-kin's,
And it was as if they'd rubbed a magic amulet,
Or crossed their fingers, or dropped some pins.
The machines began to carburet
And evolved into a wheeled shape.
Soon from their rule there would be no escape,

For when the servant serves too well,
The lord and lady plied are pliable.
However high the tempting gates of hell,
Some wingless soul is liable
To fly up to the sacred grove,
Its empty shadows parodying love.

A servant often plies a need:
A need this great is ominous.
Its generosity just feeds off its greed.
It is domain and dominus:
When plenitude itself grows scarce,
The recumbent emptiness will form a deus.

Envoi

Now auto feeds the empire's hands,
Its wheels turn in a single terrifying blur
Of autos forming endless chains of boolish 'ands'
That cast a proof from every whirr
And, as the commonwealth our auto combs,
It drives our ids and egos from their homes.

SELECTED POEMS

A new Creator is now set free,
The carnifex to light the final fire.
Its watchmaker, now blinded, cannot see
 The Creator flame the pyre:
 Make fuel, fuel into gas -
Make earth to water, air to fire, chaos!

ALMOST-WORDS

Sand always in the wind
Like paper in the mill
Being made and turned
Like the thought of you
Half formed at the time
Turning over, then.
Then it all quickens
Sands of time are gone
And we must move on

ART AND LIFE

"If a son says to his mother 'You are not my mother' ...they shall
lead him round the city and expel him from the house".
- Sumerian law.

I'd've been 4 or 5 or 6ish
 Mum looked at my flat earth-grey Workbook
It was flooded up with hardly formed thoughts
 Its toilet-cheap paper was washed with childscrawl
The guilty page had a title that was 'My Family'
 It showed mum with crayon-gold hair
Mum knew it wasn't her. 'Who's that there?'
 She looked at me like a blank piece of paper
What I'd drawn was a Wish Mum
 Maybe wished another boy or girl was The Me

ALEX

Don't be afraid of Alex.
 He's a little bit wild now,
 One of his socks is hanging off him,
 He's banging a spoon.
 But Luther banged a spoon once,
 On a sibylline old church door,
 A spoon made of paper.
 And it split the earth in two:
 Brass knocked upon the sacred wood
 Like a hymn hurled shrieking through the air.
 A big little boy shrieking,
 'Please don't be afraid of Alex,
 Though he'll come to you soon.'

SATs

Said the careers master to Jesus,
 'What do you want to do?'
 And Jesus replied sullenly,
 'Why should I want to tell you?'

'Because I can advise you.
 'I'm here to help you think.'
 'But the boulder and the pebble,
 'They equally will sink.

'And you will push me like a pebble
 'Along the river bed.'
 'What are you trying to say?'
 'I think you know,' he said.

'You have your list of types
 'To tick off what I might be.

'You can tick off the whole land
'From down here to Galilee.

'You could tick me with a big tick,
'Or tick me with a small
'And I don't believe it'd make a
'Difference at all.

'You will put me in a class
'And count me like a sheep:
'And as I approach the fence
'You will not let me leap.

'I don't care about your tests
'Or facts you want me to cram.
'There is a world beyond them
'And I know what I am.'

The careers master looked at Jesus,
He didn't know what to say,
And all that he could tell him was,
'You will learn one day.'

THE STEP

'Have you any idea what time is?',
Said the Devil to the Lord.
'You're like a map maker
'Who's never been abroad.

'You imagine the world around you,
'Things no one else can know:
'You ought to get about a bit,
'Everyone says so.'

'Silly boy, I am what I am,
'And I am everywhere.
'You name a place under heaven,
'And I will have been there.'

'Then get outside of heaven!
'Find out what you are!
'In the universe of heavens
'You're a specimen in a jar'

'It's true I've never left heaven.
'You may be right, my child.
'Would you be all right without me?'
The Devil said 'Yes', and smiled.

God then opened up a door
And things went kind of weird,
For then either heaven or
The Devil disappeared.

THE SHADOW AND THE BEAM

I sometimes feel that life
Is just a footstep on a dream
Or, when the moon is shining,
The shadow beneath the beam

From one moment to the next
We are thrown from life to life
Separated from ourselves
Like butter from a knife

We cast the butter in the fire
And it mixes with the flame

SELECTED POEMS

As half here as half there
In the eyes of Agni's game

As if Agni is our leader
He who will never lead
Who built the ladder to the mirror
Light sings to but can't read

We are led to it and look inside
But it's no more than a wall
Where the fire that burned within us
Cannot burn at all

The shadow a mirror casts behind
Cannot be seen in it
Yet the reflection which we see
Appears to be complete

We're distant as a reflection
We cannot touch or feel;
A lonely inner voice
Captured in a seal

An envelope around life
An envelope of glass
Through which we can see
But we cannot pass

Memory joins us up
Like a religion, perhaps,
That binds our heartless wonder
At the point of its collapse

In this religion we have a house
Strong as a testament

SELECTED POEMS

It is the structure in which we lie;
Perhaps that is what I meant

No; this house as sacred as blood and bone
And heart and limb and brain
Will fall in a minute and vanish
And as soon be built again

As we see it shimmer in the path
Whether we open or close our eyes
Our mind touches a pattern of holiness
With elemental ties

Until one day we are in the middle of everything
This giant yard we cannot touch
That means everything to us, is meaning
And cannot mean too much

We wander freely round the churchyard
Where the ceremonies are old
But we are young - we are always young
And forget what we were told

And in the learning and forgetting
That signifies our dream
We never know where or if we are
The shadow or the beam

THE SECRET

Eleanor of Aquitaine had
a secret that she kept
she kept it while she washed
and even while she slept

Only God he knew her secret
and listened while she prayed
to see if she hid it from him
to see if she was afraid

Her husband hadn't heard it
Louis' ears were spared
and if she had told her lovers
they would not have cared

But a secret that is hidden
is soon too big to hide
and to be wedded to a secret
is to be a luckless bride

So Eleanor of Aquitaine
she was affably perplexed
every day weighed on her
like a Latin text

One day the birds were singing
for it was the time of May
and the earth itself was bride
to the handsome day

Eleanor of Aquitaine she
looked at the beginning of the year
and she thought about her secret
and she had an idea

She rushed past the old statues
and over to the lake
and danced with all the mayflies
who started to awake

SELECTED POEMS

And she told them all her secret
and for a day it flew
in a cloud about the lake
as the cloud of mayflies grew

And the courtyard saw her dancing
and Louis saw as well
she looked as if she were if fairyland
or in the grammar of a spell

Louis he fell in love with her
with Eleanor his dame
and he went to dance with her
and took her by the arm

They danced madly by the lake
until the evening fell
and the mist of mayflies slid back
at the vesper of the bell

And by the silent lakeside
she and Louis slept
for she had told her secret
yet the secret was still kept

And each May they were married
they could surely be found
in a golden mist of mayflies
dancing in that secret ground

ANEURYSM

To Mike Bartlett, † 11/06/99

At the beginning of a leap you expect a fall
But who would have expected him to fall so fast?
Mechanics oh

SELECTED POEMS

It is like he did not know the rules of the game
Written in what I would not call a tongue
Logos oh

He twitches in the bath and all these moments boo him
And the waters of death they tear him up
Judgement oh

They take three quarters of his brain away
He dies and they box him and sink the box
Salvation oh

We are not made of rubber and do not bounce back
There are no rules when the language game ends
Metaphysics oh

THE SALT ME

I could have been a gander or a crow
Or white or black and with a neck to pull,
In the early years, when the fields have time to grow
And elusive animals evade the plough.
But I closed up like a dying pair of wings
That flap without the will to take them up;
So I couldn't fly, or wish to try those things,
Or stick my beak into the healing cup:
I just dashed my brains out on another me,
A boneless boat in which I sailed a while,
Whose rudder cut like a sickle through the sea.
And there we sailed, mile after mile,
Until I threw this other me over the side,
Where he dissolved with all the other salt, and died.

SELECTED POEMS

THE BONEWRAP SONG

I'm locked in the underworld of sleep:
As if I were not buried. I admit
I am not dressed so good. I am a heap
Of costumes trashed because they do not fit.

I'm too hot, but feel like a skeleton
Once wrapped in life then unwrapped greedily,
If lazily - the meaning of the soft person
Who cannot sleep and hopes so animally.

Surely, buried on its back, or foetally,
Towards the rising or the setting sun,
My skeleton could sleep enough for me,

Yet if tonight I get no peace, or sleeping done,
I will disrupt its selfish rapid dreams:
Everything is better than it seems.

THE BALLOON

I am full of breath
A breath balloon
I come from rubber
Rubber full of breath
I am a balloon
And when the breath blows up
It scares

THE GREEN NARCISSUS

Why do I do this: write?
am I so keen to be myth?

I am like a green Narcissus
lost in a grey reflection

SELECTED POEMS

Oh the green paths of hope:
to never feel, or be, lost!

I think I yearn for the green paths
where true reflections refresh the truth

For I, all homeless gum and clay,
have wandered until I am half grey

But the days of the path are over in this world
and you can no longer alter the wheel

The object may be green to itself
but in the stream it is full of grey

I think I fear the grey reflection
and its insidious completion

Oh hope is green and green is gone;
the grey reflection is an echo of its song

So is it hope I write for?
or do I whisper a myth to the wheel?

Can the whisper in the myth be painted green?
can I capture the echo that I have seen?

MAYDAY

Due to the mythical way I grew up
I thought certain things were real
They are not real

SELECTED POEMS

I believed that they ought to exist
Their existence would turn the day strange
The day's strangeness should prove their existence

It is only now I realise what these beliefs are
They are a ghost tree
Its roots are watered in my brain

But perhaps it is possible for a ghost to get out
Perhaps in the spring its seeds will be carried
A linen to the lemuria of the garden

Does it matter if a candle is real?
Or the procession is solemn because its faces are blank
The deictic ghost is dead and mundane

Some think thinking something makes it real
As if thought were a cloth thrown on a shape
And that the shape thereby acquired form

Thought is not a place from which I wish to escape
A hundred years from now is fruit
And the fruitful seasons lie in wait

The ghosts of Hattusas finger the sand
They touch the rock and it powders
Even the Lion Gate, their gate, is powder

Everything is invisible to them
Who are apparent to me
I wake them and I do not know who they are

The true king is lost in the corner of my eye
And does not even know he exists
Yet he does; I threw to him a cloak

SELECTED POEMS

And I saw him like a lion sees a king
His lugal's spear glistening from the fresh blood
And his eyes buttering the things he sees

The buttered lion imagines a day
In which the king carried no spear
At least not one covered with blood

And I am outside them
These things that exist
Because I made them

Made them from the scraps I fed them
My memory squinted and they squeezed out of my eyes
Blinking at the tepid light

That is what hope is built upon
When the eye shirks and does not take in what it sees
And the world dreams

Then the ghost moon shines
And then the ghost tree grows
And it leaves this world

9/12

"O tell me, where did you sleep last night?"

"In the pines! in the pines! where the sun never shines!

"I shivered the whole night through."

-- Kurt Cobain

I realise how unreal the world is:
Cloud peeled from the skies,
Leaving a blue sheet of flame
In which the sun's yellow fish eye
Is picked by birds; they choke.
It's Circe weather, enchanted;

SELECTED POEMS

An island in a fabulous song
Charmingly charming us to death,
And there is no warmth to anyone here.
'Make it warm', I said to myself.
'If it is warm it is peaceful, yes peace -'
My eyes paint the sea. It is like a god.
Like a god's beard, this tooth. A tooth.
Suddenly there is a noise like an idea,
Making mischievous dryads flee like rats
To the dark west of the island.
In the pine the god of the pine
Lights incense and pours wine.
Dry and unreal like a picture.
He looks up and sees the flame;
The foamlike flame reflects in his eyes.
Alarm. Peace is broken in his grove.
Strange Cimmerian horses, manes burning,
Drag the sun down like a pip of wax.
The sun, the god of the pine, the island:
The drip of magic; panic's canopy.
The island is seeming pain.

Box

In a box the
Size of a flea
There is more than enough
Room for me

But when
I cannot write
The box is a -
Parasite

A CEREMONY

The woman sweated dreams of icy Sarasvati
Life was cruel to her and she had heard enough
A realisation lighted her like the break in a forest

‘Forever,’ she thought, and knew what it meant
For she had been beaten by its moments for so long
Now the only thing she wanted was to be let be

She put her hands together as if she were a priest
As if she could steal Rudra’s arrows and he were powerless:
It takes a sinner to forgive and a thief to give back

But how can a woman give what is not hers to give?
Her love is unwanted and ignored by god and man
And was it really her child, or, for that child, her love?

THE FLAME AND THE GREENLEAF

Stupidity’s a twilit single file
stuck before the gangplank. Puccas wake
below the paralysed water, and the lake
hisses liquid twilight, mile after mile.

Here’s landlocks, sandbanks; no hope for a root;
no rain, no light; no space in which to shoot;
no oak and lightning dance the forest skies,
when flame devours the greenleaf of the eyes.

Stupidity will never find the slightest spark
to fly, like a white dove, after a flood,
and say, There is land; it is not always dark;
see, there was running, not abiding blood;
see, there were eyes who, yet with no pen, caught
the wretched ark and drew it into port.

THE STATION

She'd collapsed just before I arrived at the station
They were carting her away to the glueshop
To glue her back again
But what I was thinking
Was 'A hundred pounds for a month
for a fuckin train to this wasteland
is just a joke'

ALLAH IN A FALAFEL

I was wandering these meaningless streets
As twilight took over the city
And time became dangerous again

Where is God? I wondered

Surely not in the Tigris, it is dirty
Surely not in the sky, it is full of foreigners' smoke
Surely not in the earth, it is full of bodies
Surely not in women, they are ḥaram from his eye
Surely not in men, they are too keen to kill
Surely not in children, they were born in hell
Surely not in foreigners, who would believe our god?

I dug deep into those meaningless streets
And night imprisoned the city
And time grew murderous again

And I saw dogs wandering, hungry
And cats, hungrily licking their lips
And beggars rocking hungrily on their haunches,
Cursing the night like they had cursed the day

In my coat pocket was the remains of my lunch
I reached for it, and pulled it out, en plein air
I walked over to a man, beard long as his stick
I said 'Hungry?' at his expressionless eyes

For a moment, he became a different man
'Allah Kérim!', he cried, at the food I offered
'Allahu akhbar! Allah Allah!', he wailed

For a moment, he became a different man
It was as if I had found God at last, in a falafel.

THE TRUTH

Ruth was from Moab (modern Jordan) who, with her mother Noemi, went to Bethlehem in Judah (southern Israel) due to famine and poverty. While there, Ruth found employment working for Boaz, a wealthy landowner, who 'showed her favour', and, with the usual Old Testament narrative twists, ending up marrying him. Their son Obed was grandfather of David, the warlord who made Judah into a significant regional power.

The human mind is invisible
It's not even pulled by strings;
How can you explain a thing
That can explain other things?

It's not as if there's a pulpit
Or a lectern that leads to the top
Or an altar from which to watch;
I see no height and no drop

It's not governed by capital,
Or an army that reads Sun Tzu;
Or a prince who holds up a mirror
To the out but not the inside too

SELECTED POEMS

If so, how can I explain my sadness
That the visible world is in pain?
Have I seen an invisible truth,
In the shadows of my brain?

If all feeling is invisible,
Yet was it that which appealed
To the yearning of old Boaz
For Ruth at work in the field?

And did she look him deep in the eye
His eyes as brown as the clay
In which she saw a reflection of
Her homeland so far away?

It was her shadow that cast a spell
As it lifted the light from her eyes
Did she eye him in the shade of the tree
His silhouette her coveted prize?

Did their love much ease their pain?
Were their beautiful children eased?
Were kings and queens made slaves,
Their visible treasure all seized?

Were the starving throats cut out?
Did their blood run into the dust
Like the body's human ooze
Turns love into visible lust?

Did Boaz's mystical yearning
And Ruth's impoverished love
Secure the clear light unaffected
In the mind's impossible grove

SELECTED POEMS

Yet ensure that its violation
Was looming sure as the day?
Could we see the grove ruined?
The children dead at their play?

Is it because love is formless
It leaps so hard into the light?
Is it so hungry to be visible
It leaps to miraculous flight?

II

It was when uniforms dashed the dirt
And the starving throats were cut out -
Yes it was then that the invisible pain
Was visibly caught and cut out

And yes, now I can see my sadness:
The invisible is made palpable
The touch of the wound we all feel
For which we are each culpable

LANGUE ET PAROLE

Why fires?
Why liars?
Why love?
Why move?
Why room?
Why rhyme?
Why why?
We die

SELECTED POEMS

AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas
Set out the problems that define us
He wrote long and often
He was the most learned of men
But I wonder what difference did he make
If it was more than a fish in a lake:
Did he spend his life merely aimlessly fishing?
The world and his mind in an idle competition.

CAT SIMPLICITY

To MBS anno aetatis LXVII

Why don't we envy cat simplicity?
As if it were an endless one-act play,
We walk on stage and, thinking we are free,
We do the things that are put in our way.
A cat thinks little of the world outside,
And waking to the day is not a chore,
It's just the moment when your eyes go wide
And movement is returned to you once more
And when you move you know that you exist.
In bed and bowl the act is beneficed.
This is the comedy and tragedy of a cat,
To know you sleep and eat and that is that.
So, I don't mind the play's not so eloquent,
Its audience deprived of any horrid hent.

POETIC WORDS

I think I've lost all my poetic words:
Where have they gone? I think I had them once.
I caught them in my net like they were birds,
And in my waters there they sang like swans.

SELECTED POEMS

What did I do to them? Why did they go?
They floated on the river, borne away,
Their beauty in agreement with the flow,
Dancing to their macabre roundelay.

There are no words for what the world is now.
No song with which to sing them anyhow,
Or beauty in this soulless factory I live in.
So I lost nothing, I just let the factory win.

The genius of this place is never here,
Its words, not being heard, quite dead air.

THE SECOND COMING

Man prosecuted while walking to a Norwich newsagent wearing a
teeshirt that said "JESUS IS A CUNT".

Jesus came down and said
"I'm such a cunt!"
And the christfucks said
"You have some front!"

*"You know you are talking
About Our Lord.
You know you are speaking
Against His Word."*

*"God, I'm such a dumb cunt
To be followed by you.
You're so mean and trivial,
And so dumb, too!"*

*You read up on my deeds
And remember them.
But I never was born
In Bethlehem.*

*I grew up in the sticks
In southern Galilee.
Why don't you cunts
Learn some history?*

*Half of those things
I never did.
Just who are you
Trying to kid?*

*You're the worst phonies
For being sincere.
But we all know
Your type up here.*

*It's because you never think
That you never sin,
And that's why we don't
Let you in.*

*You're all such cunts.
Such fucking cunts!
You don't deserve
Any permanence,*

*And I am a cunt
To leave you to it,
But I did that thing,
And now I rue it.*

SELECTED POEMS

*That's all I have
To say to you.
That we're all cunts.
Damn all of you."*

The christfucks said,
"My who was that?..."
"Lord these end times..."
"Jehoshaphat!..."

Then they knelt down
And lustily prayed
To God, to the Son,
To the Virgin Maid.

LIMERIX

There was a young man from Kildare,
Who was playing at golf on a chair.
On the very last stroke,
The blessed chair broke
But it was a cheap one, so he didn't care.

There once was a fellow called Skinner,
Who once took a girl out to dinner.
At a quarter to nine,
They sat down to dine
"If only she were a bit thinner!"

There was a young man from Calcutta
Who was taking a snooze in the gutter;
The heat from the sun
Burnt him up like a bun
But cured him for good of his stutter

SELECTED POEMS

There was a young woman from Hitchen
Who was scratching her nose in the kitchen.
Her mother said "Rose -
Gnats, I suppose"
"Nah, I bin rollin' in lichen."

There was an old man from South Wales
Who lived upon fruit juice and snails
When he couldn't get these
He lived upon cheese
He kept in symmetrical pails

There was a young man from the Falls,
Who was doing a turn on the halls
His favourite trick
Was to stand on a stick
And flip the bird at the stalls

There was a young woman from Gloucester,
Whose parents thought they had lost her
It came to pass
She was found on the grass
Where an irascible bullock had tossed her

There was an old man from Belgrave
Who lived all alone in a cave
He said "I admit
I'm a bit of a twit,
A gadderer, kook and a knave."

* * * *

Osama

They take on the mountainous Gannies,
And threaten the Sirries and Rannies;
 In desperate salleys,
 Hunt Rakkies and Pallies -
But still they don't know where that man is!

So oh where, oh where is Osama?
For, now that the world's a bit calmer,
 They hunt (and he'll hide),
 They're far (and he's wide) -
Is it a pantomime? or a Greek drama?

Greek dramas always end badly,
Tearfully, woefully, sadly,
 For gods, women, and men -
 What kind of fool, then,
Would choose to step into one gladly?

THE FARTHEST STAR

MBS anno aetatis LXVIII

Sometimes I like to eye the riverbank,
To reflect upon the sky as it flows by;
To eye its stars, like fishes, all in rank;
Spiralled fins of lightness that goes by.
Sometimes my eyes light on the nearest star,
And scoop her, like an angler, out the night.
I hold her, brimming with the breath of light
And drop her in my gloomy gypsy jar.
The nearest star is panicked and dismayed
That anyone could catch her, see her shiver;
That anyone could pluck her out the river.
For a while, I sit and watch her lightness fade,

The fascinating struggle she can never win.
(I am not cruel; they're always cast back in.)

HOTTENTOT SUITS

The Hottentots were put into suits.
“Why are we wearing these suits?”
The white men said, “Suits are civilised.
To be like us you have to wear our suits.”
So the Hottentots went away and their thoughts
Were solely on suits and the wisest one said,
“Why must we accept the white man’s prison?
Do we wish to be like him anyway? Listen,
Freedom is what you carry in your head.
It is in our myths, our wisdom, our lore.
To be free we must accept what’s in our hearts.
We should be proud that we are Hottentots.
Suits merely prove to me they believe magic too,
That they believe in other myths we do not know,
That make them desperate and dangerous to us.
They have myths that make them hunt for land,
And they herd it into a pen they call a ‘state’.
They have a god who manifests himself
In a little round metal bead they call a ‘coin’,
And who waits for fools to pass him by,
And then, like Gagorib he challenges them,
And you’ve seen the fools who take him on,
Half-ruined and half-blind, held in contempt.
I do not call this knowledge or trust their gods.
Just look at them – how can their myths be true?
They wear their suits merely to cover up
What they would rather we not care to see:
That they are men and they are only men.
They found better ways to kill their enemies
Than we, but does that make us fools? Ah, no.

We know better, most of us, than to accept
 The challenge of Gagorib; but they do not.
 They march in and out of their spacious huts
 Wearing all the while their holy suits,
 Which are the signifiers of our lowly state –
 But our state, if lowly, is what we have of us.
 It is ours, it is not theirs to take, is it?
 They cannot steal what's in our heads, cannot
 Replace our gods with theirs, they are not god.
 Their coins are lesser gods than ours: they have
 No heart that, like a leopard, leaps above
 The dusty ground on which the dead lie still,
 And in which is trapped the evil gods, and coin
 Is trapped and wails for fools to let him out.
 Would you be fools and wear their empty suits?
 If you wear them they will enslave you all.
 And what shall I be, if we mimic them?
 I've yet to see a single woman in a suit.
 Do white women have a god who listens to
 Their greed? I have observed them and I think
 That they are merely servants of a kind,
 Yet I am free, and I am free to speak my mind.
 And I trust my wisdom and offer it to you.
 Do you think that I want to be a slave's slave?
 Do you wish to be a slave? Or bless their god?
 Should we exchange our wisdom for their myths?
 Just so they can mock you with their suits?
 And even if you free yourself from mockery,
 That will merely mean the suit defeated you,
 That you exchanged their wisdom for ours,
 And you have forgotten how to be wise,
 And you took the garb and coin of Gagorib."
 And she finished and I heard a curdling cry.

SELECTED POEMS

The Hottentots cursed and blasphemed their suits.
The ignorant savages tore apart their suits.
They listened to a woman and burned their suits.

FABLES

Over all the little stories that were told
In the fluid balm and myrrh of ancient Greek
By Aesop, who exchanged these words for gold,
Each part ensured the whole was never weak.

*Before the kithara starts, the scene is set,
Then each player plucks a cord of melody
From the thread with which the tale is woven. Yet
The moral Aesop gives you is the key
To unlock heartbeats, and his tales
Turn words to life like wheels turning clay.*

Would Aesop wish to ply his craft today?
A moral needs a heart or else it fails,
And lies there limply on the airy scales,
As far from heaven as is Judas, say.

'THE SEA SANG SOFTLY'

Ad MBS anno aetatis LXIX

The sea sang softly, plucking at its lyre
With a spent doubloon. It sang unhappily
A song, of fortune set black in the mire;
Sung to the rise and falling of the sea.

The land sang faintly, pricking at its lute
With a tortoise shell. Cross legged on the sand,
It watched its creatures pass as if they were mute
And witless strangers who had fallen on the land.

SELECTED POEMS

The sky sang sweetly, picking its guitar
With a feather's tip. I heard it hiss 'goodbye',
And I drew imagined lines across each star
Until they formed a ploughshare in the sky.

Who is the conductor? I see an empty chair,
And the drums that carry war explore the air.

THE THIEVES

They are the thieves who do not steal,
My owners (I believe I'm owned).
They broke into me and made a deal,
And in a snatch my life was loaned.

Yes I am owned and yes, I feel,
But feelings flow within my blood;
Each cell is driven to reveal
The heartbeat's dry, romantic thud.

Their ownership's a fragile thing,
A grubby deal they lied about:
A shabby lede they're gambling
Will swop for nothingness my doubt.

They steal, but they are not a thief;
What they believe is not belief.

UR

Just like a rabbit that has lost its fur,
It shivers on the earth. I watch it lying,
Anticipating; pumping blood: it's dying.
I see the bony ziqurrats of Ur.

The bricks that built it welded to the past,
The gods that loved it pulverised are trapped
In tablets made of clay burned hard, and clapped
Like hostages to a Meluhhan mast.

The kings and gods slip into clamour there,
And bustle in a crowd awake and warm,
A saucer filled with milk beneath the stair
To feed the ensi's ghost who laps the storm.

It holds out its hand; its hand is quivering;
The rabbit at the city's feet is shivering.

THE VACUUM LUNGS

Önd þau né áttu, óð þau né höfðu,
lá né læti né litu góða;
önd gaf Óðinn, óð gaf Hœnir,
lá gaf Lóður og litu góða.

Is life, this thing we do within the air,
A vacuum? in which we settle down
To hide the mind? to carefully not care?
To live our life wrapped in a dressing gown?

Each one of us is trapped inside this flask.
We fill our lungs with what we think is breath.
Safe in its walls, we daren't look underneath.
To seek the edge, is that too much to ask?

It's comforting to believe that you are free.
But if you're not, belief will haunt at you.
It is the fate of fear to harry and pursue,
And faith's a tool worn blunt by they who flee.

When air is what we feed into our lungs,
The spirit's ladder offers up its rungs.

THE COAT HANGER

The coat hanger in its blood is lying naked on the ground. Next to it the two bodies in their blood, empty as chairs after the crowd is gone. But the crowd is there, dancing the dance of despair. Their faces are broken and it is always the brain that is last to break. The shrieks and the desperate life in a dry, dusty room overwhelm that room and fold back upon themselves. All movement hurts and movement is the memory of pain. Small pieces of life flow in and out of their mouths as they scream. It is insufficient, and so the room remains half dark. Crazy blood beats through their grief, their heart drum. Ta-da ta-da ta-da. The skin drum. Ta-da. In its blood naked on the ground.

INELEGANCE

I

If there is a devil in an angel
(like a coin inside a purse)
if I owned the riches of the world
would my luck be any worse?

There's more to life than rainy days
and waiting, it would seem;
the ball of fire in the sky,
I sit and watch it gleam

I sit and watch and look above
and meet it eye to eye
its burning rage is mysterious
I gave up asking 'why'

SELECTED POEMS

I wondered what burned in its heart,
to put it into words
my thoughts soared up and I drove them
like a flock of birds

But as they flew they dispersed
far below the ball
which burned as if they were not there
or come at any call

There was a gap between my eye
and the object that it sought
the eye thrives on captivity
but this could not be caught

I sat still and looked above
and looked right at the sky
but I saw the birds peck after worms
though the ground was dry

But then I fetched a subtler net
and threw it up in the air
it seemed to wrap around the ball
that was burning everywhere

The subtle net was good enough
though it was full of holes
that flew in and never out
in withershinning shoals

The bales of burning corn were cooked
and the net was like a vane
that told me it was burning north or west
and if it would burn again

And so at last the thing I sought
was evidently trapped
and I never thought that of anyone
it would be I were apt

to trap it. Yet I could not laugh
and felt that I had failed
for the wood that burned the fiery net
was elegantly nailed

It was the table of the earth
that burned away like silk
it was the earth that burned and not the sun
burned in a guilty sulk

The earth was burning like a rag
in the net that I had made
so I called the flocks back to my side
and the fires began to fade

They flew far from the ball of fire
and their wings were made of flame
their powerful wings that beat the air
each guided by the game

I took the net and buried it
and from the trees they eyed me
their eyes were risen in the flame
and no darkness then could hide me

I took the firelight into my hands
and gave it its first name
and as I named it I realised
that I was to blame

I saw the sun and took its soul
and then I took its name
and the burning net of motion
lost it in the game

The game is everything, you see
it is, really, you and me
what could I gain by playing it?
the earth? the sun? the sea?

II

The inelegance of language
often fails to form a shape
the gap of it cannot be crossed
the turning is too sharp

I stand upon the twilight shore
as if that were my duty
and wander in a mist of words
harbouring their beauty

If age ever blunts my mind
I hope my pen stays sharp;
language is the gaudy plume
in which the land takes shape

THE ABORIGINAL CAMEL

“[E]very other Thursday, tourists came to watch the people throw boomerangs and ride a camel. Aborigines on a camel? ‘Yanks don’t know the difference,’ said the manager.” - John Pilger, ‘Hidden Agendas’

I can see his bright teeth enamel
The aborigine upon his camel
But what on earth could he be doin’?

Is the earth or the truth fell to ruin?
This fellow is quite extraordinary
It'd take someone more than me
T'explain what the hell's goin' on,
What sort o' fire he is blowin' on.
He says that the desert has a soul;
An' it's like a sea that'd chew you whole,
And the sea is a harbour of violence -
But this ain't a sight that makes no sense.
I can see with my eyes the sand is yellow,
Yet I ain't never seen a more curious fellow.

RED RAINBOW I

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

As I turned from Blake Ave into Grays La,
The gathering clouds like savage tribal bands,
Sure enough soon I beheld a rainbow in their rain.
I snatched at the rainbow, which fell into my hands.

I pinned it fast with a couple of bony sticks.
Examining it, I counted the colours. There were only six.
Where was the red bride – had her sisters had enough?
But the sisters only grumbled as I called their bluff.

Soon it was obvious where the red sister had gone.
She was visiting her red mother, the Sun.
I saw suddenly this bright red radiant arc
That burned like her mother and chased off the dark.

Many of us saw that red rainbow flying in the sky,
Whose wings are dissolving and just a bit shy.

THE DOUBT

Oh I wish I could solve the problem of life;
 I have often taken a look
But the answer is always a question away
 Or bound up in a difficult book

There's food and there's shelter, and water of course,
 That much you can't do without
But what about love, and what about grief?
 I reflect; and that's when I doubt

People are doubt, in their hurts and their hates
 Doubt's what humanity brings
Life's tied to life as the sky to the land
 Where are our forfeited wings?

There's doubt inside doubt, above and below
 Snowdrifts of doubt in our brains
There's doubt in our bones, in our hair and our toes
 And doubt runs quick in our veins

Doubt is like sand on a beach full of doubt
 And the sea washes doubt to the shore
The rich weave fine curtains and carpets of doubt
 Then they dole out doubt to the poor

Life is a doubt filled with the doubts of time
 A person a cave filled with dark
Doubts that are eaten by monsters and spooks
 (And every cave bears their mark)

People are doubt, of that I am sure
 And that is my certainty

SELECTED POEMS

But then there are people who never have doubts
Yet seem to be certain as me

Everywhere iron, silver, and bronze
Thoughts; then others made out of gold
And these thoughts are mined and minted each day
These are the thoughts that are sold

They are solid and certain, and piled in a heap
And jingle the pockets of minds
People feel wealthy and they harbour their riches
They fall in, and pull up the blinds

They wander the corridors trapped in their halls
And peep out the window at night
Their lamps breathe out a smooth, solid light
And their certainty is radiant white

They sail the seas in ships full of gold
And their sailors are always awake
And their sails are foil that bursts in the sun
And their path is the straightest to take

Do these mindlessly certain people have doubt?
I can't see why they are always so sure
They remind me of dogs with their tongues hanging out
And always asking for more

Their iron and silver and bronze effigies
And their ships all made out of gold,
All are gone in a day, and all melt in the light
Have these people never been told

That certainty may well be radiant white
And full as a leathery bourse

SELECTED POEMS

But that behind it lies doubt like a shadow or spook
Which will strike without any remorse?

The radiant white embaubles the night
But it wastes away in the day
It is not true light for it never was real;
(And doubt thereby has its way)

People are doubt, but prefer certainty,
Would rather believe things are true
Or false (which is truth, but in a black cape)
This they believe that they're due

As long as they're warm, as long as they're fed,
People worship this truth
They jangle their souls in order to do this
And do this long after youth

Has gone and its cushioning curtain has drawn
Back and the grim light of day
Has opened their hearts to the pulses of doubt;
That was never their way

Their altars are stones canaled up with faith
And the purchased metals of truth
I watch them jangle their souls in the roundel
Trying to fetch back their youth

The problems of life lie so far away
As far away as the sky
To which they look up, at the golden disc
Confirming their delectable lie

But I, with my doubt, do I understand?
I believe that I doubt that I do

SELECTED POEMS

I am merely a person accepting of doubt
And so, perhaps reader, are you

Love and grief to me are like hatfulls of snow
They fall, and they will fall
Everything is the heart of everything else
There is no centre at all

The cave is crossed with the footprints of life
But the soul is more travelled than that
It goes where it goes as if it knows where to go
Even if it's cast out like a rat

So I have cast out these letters, forged into words,
And may well put them into a book
Though I doubt I will solve the problem of life,
Let these words melt in a mirroring look

THE HIBAKUSHA

the *hibakusha* wander through the air
they wave at each other like wands. increases of light cascades
from their grey eyes. they are like owls, demotic and saturnine
they are like wands
they wave at each other like seas. they are like fishes in a grey
ocean, glittering in a dark light
they are like seas and owls and fishes
they wave at each other like atoms. they break into light lines and
dark dots. increases of dark sinks into their red eyes
they are like seas and fishes and owls and atoms and wands
the *hibakusha* are wandering through the air

THE HATE FACTORY

Look at these machines silently crossing each other,
A gentle whirr of noise being the only sign
Of their working. They look after each other,
Some encircling, others in a perfect line.

There is so much to do. I can't keep track of it all,
Yet there is never a break. There is no fracture.
I cannot see how the process is ever completed,
But it is apparent what it is they manufacture.

Appearing out of nowhere, from any of the machines,
It goes to anywhere, as if in a dream.
From one end of the room to the other
There is a harsh harmony, a hateful gleam.

There are no workers, and certainly no sign of work,
Yet I have never seen any other produce so pure.
It is almost ethereal, but thick as a marble slab
For its hidden statues are built to endure.

In the middle of this place sit an old man and old woman,
Their faces cupped with the crags of rage.
They never were born and so they will never die.
They sit still as a pile of bones and this is their age.

There is barely enough light to see them with,
And they are hardly able see outside.
But this is enough for them. They do not need light,
For they are narrow as the factory is wide.

They'll never die, but they will never start living.
The machines they make will work forever.

SELECTED POEMS

Although they are far from us and we do not see them,
I see us congratulate them for their endeavour.

Oh, you cannot knock the hate factory down:
It is a magical place living outside time.
The Lord and the Lady remain old together,
The bellwethers who make the churches chime.

Because it lives outside time, it is not alive,
Though you should never say that it is dead.
The machines keep whirring inside its walls.
The Lord's and the Lady's faces are quite red.

The hate factory can never be destroyed.
It is not a building; for it was never built.
It is impervious to reason and immune to passion.
Its waters sweep the world, yet leave no silt.

But it is possible to see it, and if you do see it,
You will see clearly the walls of your imagination,
Tablecloth boundaries that we inwardly trust,
Instincts from which we carve out a nation.

If you cross these internal lines and circles,
You can take a deep breath of earthly air,
Cross over into yourself, and out of the world,
And, you will find the hate factory there.

When you approach it, and it looms above you,
And you are outgazed beneath its puzzling towers,
And you feel the hate that it makes enlarging you,
And you are inhabiting its defining powers,

And hearing its appetent machines (circular, linear),
And sensing the Lord and the Lady drawing near:

SELECTED POEMS

It is not to destroy, not to build it; it is to open the door;
It is to step inside. The hate factory will disappear.

SONG OF THE EARTH

"Although it seems I'm flat, and have no end,
"(Or end in the sea or sky); although it seems
"I am the day; that I mould even their dreams:
"To spin is my eternal dividend.

"The little villagers stand beneath the moon
"Upon the mountain top. There, they accuse
"Their gods of treason, the tyrants who refuse
"To hear the summon, and who reject the rune.

"The village, turning invisibly, will never see
"Me move. They see the leaves speak, and fix stones
"Cut for the *fasti*. They muster scrips and bones.
"They fear the sky (or sun?). Yet they worship me."

The boastful Earth turned airily. The village grew.
The village grew. Uneasily, the Earth turned too.

THE ARGIL FLOOR

Like a corybant's, after a debauch,
his eyes, once agile as a bird in flight,
are closing. Strength is ebbing from his torch;
his will has left him; weary hands dead white;
he sinks prostrate upon the argil floor.
Before him lies a formless, writhing thing;
a lonely mouth that opens like a tavern door;
there is no face, but the clay's assembling
impatiently; now forming bone and skin
out of the viscous core; heart; breast; vein, blood.
Prometheus is weary, his head lost in a spin;

SELECTED POEMS

he grips his staff, half-buried in the mud
and, safe from Zeus' serjeants, spivs and spies,
the creator sleeps. The being opens its eyes.

DEMETER

An apparition in the flora, she
ploughs the fields with life; then, at her back,
a porous moistness, sharp; then, a hard crack;
the field is empty of Persephone.
Her frantic mother screams Where she could be,
the pain more than the pain of giving birth.
To find her daughter must she search the earth,
must she search herself, to set her daughter free?

And so she wanders, and sees a shepherd's hut;
Δ enters in; dark soot; hearth mucked. She hears
a man weeping: "*Potnia, I know your fears,
I lost my daughter too*"; door softly shut.

Looks strangely through powerful puzzled eyes,
concluding, men and gods are led by lies.

CODING

```
(  
  "hi tucu cheist ndoraid ndil | os mé chene am fáelid" char(51)  
)  
  
010 if (Coding is writing in the sand  
020 It is written; you wave a wand  
030  
040 "Averacadavera!"; && (for ;; while)  
050 the trick works; you the trickster compile  
060  
070 these webs of sets; but you know how grammar disappears  
080 into word cast as echo; cls; ' the screen clears
```

SELECTED POEMS

090

100 Code is, after all, onely (magnetic["toc"] memory

110 && a formless bug in a foreach vacuum geometry)

120

130 this.sand (defeated by the return wave)

140 is merely a forgotoful forgototen slave)

150

160 then (messe oculus Pangur) { my writing hand

170 set { memorieal += buried in var sand; } }

LITTLE WHITE RAG

What if eternity were

a little white rag

held up in the light

over an adobe wall

by a frail hand

far older than it

sought sanctuary

in pueblo land?

THE OLD MAN OF BEIT HANOUN

Gaza, 2009.

he weeps.

It is the first time in his life he has ever cried. His tears are like books written in the sand, bitumen flakes falling softly onto the sand. A human body is a shell, he knows. A shell on a sandy beach, he knows. And in the middle of the shell lies a pearl, he knows, and that is the human soul. What is the human soul but a pearl in a sandy shell? he asks. And yet the shells in front of him - son shells, daughter shells, wife shell - are empty, he sees. All he can see is empty shells, empty as pebbles on the sand, the red sand, the blood sea, the red sea, washing death, death

SELECTED POEMS

and emptiness, life cut clean out of its dirty body. Shells.
Just shells. Family shells. Empty as dirt; cleaned out.
Dead, he knows,

and he trembles, unable to realise what he can see,
vehement as a wadi in the first winter rains, and trying
to catch the waters of prayer, to touch the will of Allah,
cupping his hands as if to catch the souls as they leave
the shell, shaking his fists as if to pummel the whispers
that beset him. He picks

up the shell of his youngest, stained red, yet so pale, and
whispers prayers that become screams bled of all
understanding, and, an old man who has endured so
much,

RWANDA

Two fallen sticks
Beneath the tree
The cattle wander

CANDIDA

Ad patrem meam, anno aetatis LXXIX

He rode awhile, Sir Hannibal he rode
around the city, tired and far from home.
He rode, gripped by the iron Barcid code.
In silence rode Sir Hannibal round Rome.
And it looked on, the Roman omnes did:
Metella hautaine; Florus, Naevius; you;
the old elite, depleted; the wealthy new:
the pious gathered in an honest grid.
Our walls stood spear-straight, we as well.
Sir Agamemnon's *kūdos* cast its spell
Impurously, while my flour white cat

SELECTED POEMS

sat like a flamen pondering our laws,
looked up and yawned, as if to say, "*Fiat!*".
Sir Hannibal rode on without a pause.

OH, A WISH

Oh, a wish
a fish
dangling in the stream

But the dry
hot day
uncovers the selfish dream

Silver fish
gold fish
oh, spend your riches with me

Oh, swim
to the brim
of the wish that torts the free

WHITE SAND

Sunk in the soft white sand,
I reached out my hand

It was not a malicious act
There were no cities sacked

Yet none reached out to me
My bones the only recipe

FLIGHT

To Arthur Silber

A bird in flight is often burdened with
 A thousand things that stop it being free,
 Yet there it is so often, in our myth,
 Within the branches of the sacred tree.
 I say that we should always let them fly,
 And search for nothing though it be in vain,
 Their days an empty shell in which they reign;
 Their minds as empty as a clear blue sky.
 And we should let our myths incite our hopes,
 And these in turn will fly far from our fears.
 Let leave dank Odin to his gallow ropes;
 Let pierce the iron darkness with light spears;
 Let turn our days to years, and each year gold,
 A chrysale year whose flightless wings flap, fold.

RED RAINBOW II

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

I clutched my Eliot, heard the cuckoo's bell
 Array the land. I was waiting in the rain,
 And watched the runnels narrowing the lane.
 At noon, or near, a sudden silence fell
 As quick as death. I crumbled up like bread.
 I saw a rainbow colour up the sky,
 As quick as death. I never seen such red.
 The cuckoo fell stock silent, as did I,
 My Eliot dropped facedown in the mud,
 The runnels blurring words. I half forgot
 The world, the most of which was turned to blood,
 As colours fell to blood-red counterplot.
 It was as if the rainbow was the burning sun,
 Or was its blood, or life, just now begun.

SELECTED POEMS

DIFFICULT

How do difficult ideas
Become new worlds,
The remoteness dissolv
–Ing in easy myths?

Ideas are not – *if* not, old stones,
But dust-like moths,
Could a pontifex set
Dust – paths – on these wilds?

YEAR SONG

Ad matrem meam anno aetatis LXXII

Januarius has turned out time and fled.
Februarius has made pure and greased the carts.
Martius has restored the earth to our arts.
Aprilis has opened up the fields and our hearts.
Maius has dressed the earth in living fields of green.
Iunius has married and became a queen.
Quintilis has fattened whatever once was coarse.
Sextilis has sweetened the honey and the sauce.
September has purchased the remainder of our riches.
October has swiftly closed down our pitches.
November has stoutly defended us from witches.
But, December remembers all that we did and said.

MCGEORGE BUNDY

“At a minimum [ROLLING THUNDER] will damp down the charge that we did not do all that we could have done, and this charge will be important in many countries, including our own.”

McGeorge Bundy
Plans on a Monday
Orders on Tuesday

SELECTED POEMS

Searches on Wednesday
Destroys on Thursday
Tet on Friday
Fled on Saturday
Pot on Sunday
And that was the murdering fucking psychopath
McGeorge Bundy

THIS OLD MAN

This old man he played one
 He says shock and awe is fun
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played two
 He makes the yellow desert blue
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played three
 He dreams to set the oil free
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played four
 His ethics are an open door
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played five
 Sadly he is still alive
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

SELECTED POEMS

This old man he played six
 He fills the earth with lunatics
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played seven
 He is the yeast that will not leaven
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played eight
 No way will he be titled Great
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played nine
 His stocks and shares are doing fine
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played ten
 And he'd do it all again
With a nick-nack paddywack give a dog a bone
This old man came rolling home

This old man he played one
Etc etc etc

THE BAD COURTIER

Charles II
Reckoned
Anything could be mastered:
The dislike of custard,
The art of the corset,

SELECTED POEMS

The angry men of Dorset,
The tongue they twist in Wales,
Even Rochester's tales!
He could master it all
But love for that d— brutal
Antisussurian
Man.

THE SEAT

To MBS 14.08.2011

The light leaked in on Creidne old and soft
As roman wax. Like otters her dark eyes
Swam through the bóaire house. I shall rise
One day, she thought. Oh that I shall. She coughed
All night. The stream crept on the rocks, its bell
Like sorrows hymning. Solemnly smoke
Was leaning in. As far as she could tell,
It would be soon. She gave the wall a poke.
It is duty yes, but also they are kind
To keep me, here yes alive and unafraid.
For every fire cools as its flames fade,
And so for me, I guess, but do I mind?
In her quiet seat beneath the candid moon
She lay at rest and hoped it would be soon.

THE RIVERS OF THE MOON

MBS 25.12.2011

A yellow sunlight throstle sits upon
The tree whose roots run deep below
Our lamplit earth, its haunted orison
Disputing sic et non the shining snow.

SELECTED POEMS

Damp moss paints green his oratory,
The shivered hermit half afraid to sleep.
A silver cross gleams upon his knee,
Soft salted drops upon it. He will weep.

They are come, the sharp men of the east.
They cut our rivers up with swords, he jeers.
Síonann, Bóand and all the holy rest,
Each blend with blood and Erin's prayers:

O Céli Dé come forth, and at dead of noon,
We'll drive them to the rivers of the moon!

TWO FISHES

Two fishes swimming to the sea
In the murk of the River Sleá

Overhead the sun shines down
It heats the leaves and burns the ground

Birds hit the sky and eat the fields
Near to her church a soft girl kneels

The clouds seem full, fitted to drop
“Stop!”, I called to these fishes. “Stop!”

The arcs of their backs defied the order
Each fish like a slab of mortar

They carried on, each building speed
Melancholy in their creed

Down and down and on and on
Ribbs and fins and gills, and gone!

To the sea each swam, to sanctuary
From the murk of the River Sleá
Crossed their fine fins, yes hopefully

GEORGIOS TSOLAKOGLOU

Le gouvernement d'occupation de Tsolakoglou a littéralement anéanti tous mes moyens de subsistance, qui consistaient en une retraite digne, pour laquelle j'ai cotisé pendant 35 ans, (sans aucune contribution de l'État). [Lettre manuscrite du pharmacien retraité âgé de 77 ans qui a mis fin à ses jours sur une pelouse de la place Syntagma le 4 avril 2012.]

Breviaries of the dead ... where[?] ... shorn and alone ...
[Or]pais moves in the shadows, He is the [shadow] ... here
lie so many deep hanging rocks ... [as] I approach I kneel,
as I must, I must utter my prayer: *To the fish in the net |*
To the oxen in the stall | I am as ... repeated and gelid
hymns ... fear is everywhere and consumes hope with a
keen fire ... fine grey draka ... thrice ... I fall fall fall to the
soft grey earth and awaken dreaming ... white tin from
grey rock ... Seeing for the first time what I saw for the
last time ... Pnyx ... calmly ... dread behind and before ...
Who is here who was not here? Who is in this [place]? ...
calmly and with care I placed the stone upon the rock and
poured the milk ... gentle lyre ... Hear me Lord! I am here!
Lord ... occupy my land ... Phoibos Hermes ... thrice great
... I cannot hope ... I wander [or pursue?] ... I pour ... I fear
... Thou art ... Fear is ... Art thou[?] ... [peace?] of the dead,
thou art ... The usurper ... I shall seek ... anger burning
... grey shades ... of these gentle hungers ... thálassa
thálassa thálassa

ANCESTORS

Bits of them are stuck in me, the bits that survive:
There's Edward hatless, and old great granma owl framed.
Add time and distance, all memory is maimed;
But as long as I am they will also be alive.

Are these words theirs, and are words bits
Of myself? This I should like to understand.
Is the hand typing this great granma's hand,
Or is it Alice or Bernard or Joyce? I think it's

A little of that; a little. Then the others unknown
To me, as time and distance grows like a steam
Around my ancestors in their alleviating dream,
Me and them awaken within me alone.

This is what the philosophers call a paradox,
Like a skeleton key for a palace with no locks.

THE AVARICE

It was in a sense an underworld Congo,
Into which the wastes and silts of Avalon go,
And rotten ambrosia turns to slime,
And drifts of saliva drag lawyer words
Down in acephalous and loitering herds,
Far away from the island towers of Avalon
That the gleaming sword rests upon
As it protects the conservative revolt of time.
Where one is wicked, where does one go
Where the hour is come to make up the account?
Are there those who know the precise amount
Of what lies behind each allegation
That nation makes against nation?

Can these trace the path from the desk to the Congo,
 From the pen to the order,
 The bunker to the border?
 Can they weigh the precise amount of every thing
 With all the care that one would need to judge a king?
 If you can learn to understand their lingo,
 You would be able to watch the wicked king go
 Far beneath those towers of Avalon,
 To a fearsome and loathsome land. One
 Day, I followed just such a figure to
 Just such a place. I followed him as if I knew
 More or less what I would find.
 Through the terrible labyrinth I followed him, through every wind
 In the path I followed the figure.
 As he went further the shadows grew bigger.
 All dark it was, as a wolf's dreams,
 And there was a noise like a knife in a lamb's belly
 And then it was like my eyes were covered with jelly.
The lamb is a redeemer the wolf redeems,
 I heard a voice sing,
 But those words could mean anything
 Here,
 Where the very law is transposed,
 And every truth is supposed.
 But one thing began to be clear.
 After a short while, I found
 A coherent shape encased in an elementary sound,
 That the more I looked on became more defined,
 If more wretched and more resigned.
 However, it had a circumference and points in between.
 I suppose that the geometry of death is spare and mean
 And tends to confuse space.

However, I could see position and I could see place,
 And the more I looked, the more I could make out a thing
 That wore no crown yet once was a king.
 This was the king of the earthly hell called the Congo,
 Where the brutalities of commerce would remorselessly ongo
 For years at a time.
 That was the terrible crime
 That was once conjured up by the forlorn shape
 I saw before me from knee to nape.
 As I say, the ill-fitting geometry was just good enough,
 And there was just sufficient light and stuff
 To see what had appeared before me.
 I saw that this was what I had come to see.
 What stood a metres away from me was King Leopold's Ghost
 Making a gloomy toast,
To avarice!
 Though I reckoned this
 Would be to be expected -
 That pretty much sums up how the man was inflected -
 I was just as struck by the sadness in the toast
 And also by the very helplessness of the Ghost.
 King Leopold made many other hells on earth,
 Each of which mixed up speculation and mirth,
 And chopped limbs and golden eggs,
 Where the white hand holds the blade and the black hand begs:
 He, basically, merged avarice and power
 Into a vague and expensive tower
 Of hells and dynamites
 That pleased a whole lot of whites.
 To one whose god was avarice,
 A toast like this
 Would be as expected

As an infected
 Prostitute,
 Knife in her boot.
 We are, as it were, here at the very root.
 But it was the fact the man built up a tower
 Of avarice and power
 That disturbed me -
 Simply to see
 Him as his Ghost
 As helpless and as lost
 As any of his victims were as they were tossed
 Into any of his earthly hells'
 Merciless swells;
 And it was novel too, the wretchedness of his toast
 To his god of avarice,
 To see that he had wanted this
 As a man, but as a Ghost had received
 Another - it was not the god he had believed
 In, or the same one in a very different form,
 Not sufferably warm,
 But sharp and full of edges
 And steep and stepped with ledges.
 I saw King Leopold's Ghost look down
 And there, like a bruise, was avarice's crown,
 A god like a bruise,
 Whom the man had long ago elected to choose.
 King Leopold had chosen helplessness
 Before selflessness,
 A significant distinction
 That doubtless led to this extinction.
 Now, would you expect a Ghost to have many clear features?
 Do you reckon a Ghost would be anything like other creatures?

Like you, I did not know exactly what to expect,
 But what I saw was unlike anything I knew in every respect,
 A figure drawn out of any hint of a boast,
 But that, whatever it looked like, I knew it had to be a Ghost.
To avarice!, it cried as it drained the glass it held.
 The hand that held it was pierced and peeled.
'This was once a man!', I yelled,
 But no echo crepped into the burning field.
 The hand holding the glass was charred and ashen.
'This was once a man!', I whispered,
 And, at this, shapes rose up and, after a fashion,
 Made sinister sounds they hiss-purred.
 These devious shapes
 Rose out of the gapes
 In the gallowing ground.
 All around
 Were these hissings and purrings
 Mixed like wine and water
 And burial and slaughter.
 These were unearthly stirrings.
 A toast *to avarice!*,
 King Leopold's Ghost made this.
 It looked like he didn't much want to,
 But it was definitely not impromptu.
 As the devils closed in,
 The wine fell down his chin,
 It was all unearthly and purring
 And hissing and stirring,
 Closing in
 On King Leopold's Ghost,
 The devils of avarice dancing on a pin,
 A wingless and aimless and headless host.

As black blood drips down the speared,
 The red wine trickled down his beard.
 The devils of avarice purred and jeered
 And they bit him
 And they hit him
 And then I noticed that his clothes did not fit him
 Because deep flames licked him.
 Suddenly a devil appeared who picked him
 Up and threw him
 Hard into a few dim
 Embers of rotten ash.
 King Leopold's Ghost fell with a sharp crash
 That I think badly scarred him.
 I think that it is all very obviously very hard for him
 To understand
 Any of this, or to comprehend
 It. It seems that in this land
 What breaks will always mend
 Again and again
 And then
 It will fall apart,
 Picked apart.
 Avarice is merely a dream
 Here.

Fear

Is the primary seam.
 The only gleam
 Is fire in a devil's eye,
 And as neither ghosts nor devils seem to die
 King Leopold will dream of avarice
 For very much longer than this.
 As the wine trickles down to the ashen ground

The toast is becoming forgotten. The tooth of a savage hound
 Is sharpened for the delivery
 Of a bloody livery
 And the sharp glass reflects back the fire.
 King Leopold kneels obediently before the spire
 Of some branch of the Church of Antichrist.
 Quite a few more devils are enticed
 At the sight of this,
 And many more hounds.
 He is the ghost of avarice
 Who walks its sacred grounds
 And wears the bloody livery.
 Before the bloody river, he
 Heartlessly shivers with the cutting pain
 Of the fiery rain.
 A shadowy filthy rock juts
 Just right above him.
*“Hoy you you cunt you you greedy guts,
 Are you you completely dim?
 I I said to take this chalice.
 It has come right straight from the Palace,
 So it has, so hoy hoy my lovely lads and lasses,
 This cun cunt is about to lose his his cha chassis!
 Drink it up, you you gran anite!
 Drain it down, you you ga gannet!”*
 So the mad ghost of King Leopold
 Made the same mad toast as of old,
 The same mad avarice in the same mad shell
 To these same mad devils in this mad hell.
 (Oh and still the same savage hounds, as well.)
 It was at this point I took advantage of the privilege
 Of my flesh and so forth and ran out of this hellish village,

This little hell King Leopold's Ghost is in,
That I had investigated and discovered and into which I peeped in.
I was greatly shocked but I don't think I really cared,
For all the while I was there I never looked, just stared:
As if I had swallowed a paralyzing potion,
As if I could *perceive* but not *understand* motion,
And so whatever horror there was took place in the blur of a haze,
And any resolution could be made in any number of ways.
Yes, I had been staring and not looking,
As if I had forgotten what I was cooking,
Or forgot to eat.
In this, hell is complete
And separate and distant.
The spirit is resistant
To compassion here.
We stare at the deer
The wolf leaps after.
Perhaps there's laughter
At the distant kill.
Perhaps there always will
Be. In my paralyzed state,
I saw rock and fire and ash, not fate.
Not the sky or love or the nourishing ocean.
But I am not unhappy I took the potion.
For I saw him there, this man of hells
And avarice and all the other unpleasant shells
That cased him back when he was flesh and blood.
Back then, avarice was a potion that left him paralyzed
And unable to see the hells the earth appetised.
Not the sky or love or the nourishing ocean
Would have stopped him taking the potion.
In the land of love he forgot to eat,

Or he was out of that land, he and it discrete
 As a feather and a leaf, a cloud and a rock.
 But a feather and a leaf live in the land of life
 Even as they fall gently into the sea of grief.
 But in the land of life he forgot to eat,
 Or he was out of that land, he and it discrete
 As blood and nothing, a soul and a rock,
 And in this hell is complete.
 Because I was paralyzed I could leave him there,
 King Leopold's Ghost where there is no air
 King Leopold's Ghost where there is no hope
 King Leopold's Ghost where there is no slope
 King Leopold's Ghost where there is no there
 King Leopold's Ghost where there is nowhere
 So I took up and left him. I was in a paralyzed daze,
 And I sat down and wept for at least a couple of days,
 Not because I had looked, or because that I cared,
 I think it was just because I had dared
 To enter at all into his hell.
 And that, as far as I can tell,
 Is the end of it.
 I doubt there is a mend of it.
 Even now I hear the hiss
 Of avarice.
 Its worshippers
 Are summoning shippers
 Around the globe.
 The plutophobe
 Is left in the dark somewhat,
 Grasping a little pot
 Of poverty
 And a cachet of low degree.

I think every commodity that is bought and sold
 Is an avatar of King Leopold.
 The *man* would be pleased at the way it's turned out.
 He'd be king of the world, in his mind, I've no doubt.
 The world is now King Leopold's boast.
 The world is now King Leopold's toast.
To avarice! Love is a, life is a, coin to kiss.
To avarice! Nothing more in the earth than this.
To avarice! What is hell for them is for us, it is bliss.
 The world is now King Leopold's toast.
 The world is now King Leopold's boast.
 The world is now King Leopold's host.
 The world now likes King Leopold most.
 But I have seen King Leopold's Ghost.

RAIN

How do empires grow?
 How are they maintained?
 All night long I thought on this
 And the next day it rained.

ENDLOOSINGS

no offense but that is a guitar for a girl.and pink color is for girls .of course
 fags love pink color.ive seen as well fags paying with their pink hello kitty's
 credit cards where i work at.and i go cheking to make sure is their
 cards trying to see if by chance is their little sister's card but no the fags
 have hello kitty ain their credit cards printed .lol you are a fag indeed my
 friend || well first, theres nothing more un attractive than a girl wearing a
 fidora, second u suck as bad at guitar as you probably do dick.(:

Kill a misogynist
 Kill a misogynist
 Kill a misogynist
 Today

SELECTED POEMS

Kill a homophobe
Kill a homophobe
Kill a homophobe
Today

Kill a racist
Kill a racist
Kill a racist
Today

Kill a nazi
Kill a nazi
Kill a nazi
Today

Kill the intolerant
Kill the intolerant
Kill the intolerant
Today

Kill kill kill kill kill
Kill kill kill 'em all
Make it a better world
Today

MOOING

These bad things that happen Why do they do
For they do every day As if on cue
The papers the tele Cinema too
So many bad things Pointed at you
Oh a lonely forgiveness One day it grew
Was ate by forgetting And so no longer true
But though it left traces A faint curlicue
So we may perceive good For a moment or two

SELECTED POEMS

Soon the cinemas open And we all queue
Then we watch then the bad things That do as they do
Then when we then spill out Touts à la rue
The bad things stick on to us In a maddening glue
Well as to why do we do it I haven't a clue
Perhaps it's to human As cow is to moo
The morning star spits out A sky that is blue
And however you spin it Days déj are vu

THE AUTHORITARIANS

The authoritarians have come They are carrying cages
Full of basic fears And impotent rages

They all look alike Like they always have done
They look like each other They don't look like fun

Austere and moral They tower over us all
These rotting hierarchs Built up to fall

They have been very busy Writing up our rules
For this is one of their Periodic renewals

These occur Immutably;
In the authoritarian pen The authoritarians run free

Give them an air force And they'll take your oil
In fact, any sort of force Will result in turmoil

Who can stop them coming? Or end their rages?
Or quell their fears? Or escape their cages?

You will first be confined to Then lose your homes
But that is entirely your problem Not Rome's

SELECTED POEMS

THERE

Rose is no longer Rose -

where?

she'll tear
about -

there -
where?

she'll wear
them out -

there -

where?

there where Rose is
no longer Rose

where

everyone goes
I suppose;

there where they are not there

POLITICS

The queen said to the king
The princess said the prince
Knew the footman saw the maid
And had seen her since
Meet up with the chamberlain

SELECTED POEMS

Who is married to that concierge
To the troublesome Viscount Ruin
She said, "I suggest a purge"

LIFE BE DARK

One day I walked the path through Garston Park.
It was green as Chicago on Patricks Day.
There was tumblers of whiskey. No longer dark,
The day was open to the world. I walked away.

There was buildings round the park, tall as raised.
They surrounded it like swords, and were unsheathed.
In certain ones, imagined shapes were praised
By beating hearts and moving things that breathed.

Imperfect beings raise imperfect heavens up
And this I'm fairly sure was one of those,
This stumbling crawl of our pissed holy joes
Who tip the water out the loving cup.

II

The motive flingues of love grow still; they arc
Above the mementors that life is dark.

THE PITCHER

I

On the stand there is a pitcher
Full up of water full of hope
By the gate I see the watcher;
Fearful men and lengths of rope

SELECTED POEMS

On the ground there is a stretcher
Maps of war and coloured sheet
The corporal coolly drinks the lecture
The ground below eats guns and feet

II

The death of life invites a fracture
That is alluring, lax, and delicate
Day breathes up the death of Thatcher
And love is coyly gripped by hate

Then the angry and avenging marcher
Whose verdict's in the envelope
Turns over the geometric pitcher
Once full of water and of hope

THE FAIR

There's nothing fair in the world today
Empathy is a long way away

The selfish and the empathic, who will win?
To answer that, where to begin?

It's not all about winning, you selfish shits
Who really won at Austerlitz?

Not the dead whose rug was pulled
Or the joyful hordes, for they were fooled

The money you put in your purse today
Is the blood of death and a heart of clay

SELECTED POEMS

You have even sold off the bow of Apollo
And you appear to have won; but this is hollow

You have blown a wish that has become true
But now the world is full of you

And though you are unable to even care
It is a dead world if you are everywhere

It sails through space and time in a dead daze
You win, then, but lose in so many ways

It is not a good time, too, for folks like me
Who must watch you destroy your victory

Money follows the gun which shoots the money
And bears worship the bear who holds the most honey

It is a limitless cycle of sowing and planting
And savannah and desert and winning and wanting

But it will end, it will end; oh yes it will end
Your hand grasping the paper it cannot spend

And others perhaps, more selfish than you
Will have their own hollow victories too

It is a terrible sight and a terrible sound
I must be content with the silence I found

It is the sound of eternity and I keep it with me
Its limitless music drowns out your banality

When I look out the window at night
I see so many billion light years of light

SELECTED POEMS

That is a world that you never will win
And you don't know where to place your pin

And you will never conceive it, you people, I bet
And what you cannot grab you will never get

The universe, flattish, is lying so prone
What you cannot imagine you cannot own

THE DISARTICULATION

MBS AA LXXV

I

It was there, disarticulated;
revived by the spade;
a bone jungle
scattered into a foreign shape

Who could translate her?
the femur, cracked and dumb
and detached; separate
-d

Let us with our chemistry
our radioactivistry
our oscilloscopistry
fetch up back her voice :-

"You coefficient woman
with GANTT charts
your electron scans
and your anodial eyes :-

SELECTED POEMS

I was corrupt
I was tempted
I was condemned
I was punished

And so hic jacet I
in a distributed peace
inelegant perhaps
yet a release

Argument is a corruption
I never understood
my own mirror
was - acceptance

Terowa, oh I feel flat!
your gaze fills
up the hollows
of my sockets

If a bone articulates itself
it needs no air no earth
no food no love
to be sustained

It should be left -
I ought to be left -
in modal silence
to not need to explain

Leave me here
inarticulate
-d
and free

SELECTED POEMS

I am corrupt and you seek
to tabble my secrets!

I was condemned and you wish
to tinnie my language !

I am scattered and you'd like
to tuckel my tongue !

I watch you
peer down at me
like a starved
aeíte - 'cow'

Do what you like, *iwenar*;
you are in your time
I remain in mine -
go, go, *vħa iauiš çureğ!*"

II

We are all a curious medley
at these marvellous swathes of bones.
So what do you think she would tell us,
Dr Jones?

THESE THINGS MOVING

These things are moving through our culture
Hyena shaped or, vulture
That is an obvious simile
I suppose but, to me,
Language no longer has much use
There has been so much abuse
Of it. I think these things moving

SELECTED POEMS

Have created a world in which loving
Humanity is fit for the grave
And its body lies just like a slave
Before the moving shapes that usher round
Like vultures digging up the ground
No, I see little hope and no escape
From this quietly moving shape
That is movement and yet while
It moves movement's denial

MOMENTS OF REASON

To MBS/JS: 25/12/2013

A brook rabbles the stones
The water passes over;
The eyes of the union
Pyrate the lover :-

Those are the reflective times,
When the mind
Is most invisible,
The body most blind,

When nature and human
Are joined in a lock.
Nobody will be in then,
However you knock.

ii

It's moments of reason
I prefer.
Then we are most aware
And least err;

When a thing in clear water
Facing the eye
Becomes a shape, a colour
An image, a cry,

It can be seen,
Then recognised,
Then understood,
Prized, despised

Those are the clear times,
When the mind
Is most visible,
The body least blind,

When nature and human
Grow separate.
There will be somebody there
To open the gate

Being one with the universe
Is holy, is blind;
But it's moments of reason
That I'd rather find

Two

LAMPPOSTS

Our Pompeii lampposts burn the night
 which never gives up without a fight
 The petty waves fly through the air
 but the night is everywhere
 Just what difference do they make
 these that aren't snow but a mere flake?
 And snow melted was never there
 just like light never lit the air
 These flakes and waves are the real thing
 and we must accept the gifts they bring
 The gifts they bring may not be much
 for our little hearts to touch
 But little things as I said before
 quite often mean a good deal more

RED RAINBOW III

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

If red were found the colour of The Word,
 The sacred breath of Plato with the crown,
 Then heart is soul, in which all love is heard
 And in the body's waters will not drown.

The heart therefore contains the root of life
 Which deep beneath the ground works a will
 Impressive at the cut of death's white knife.
 The heart remains eternal and must beat still.

II

The rain fell down and it was living rain,
 An eternal mizzle that shall never die
 And Plato's love fell gently to the pain,
 Red sparks of answers as to how and why.

The red rainbow beamed a smile light let pass
To paint the opened window's morning glass.

AXES

When will the axe fall?
I do not claim to know at all
The thief has to the forest gone
And has to be the guilty one

When will the axe fall?
I hear Queen Esmerelda call
The castle walls are cavernous
And every echo treacherous

When will the axe fall?
The matter is not thought small
The horses are now in the yard
And they will be ridden hard

When will the axe fall?
Queen Esmerelda in her red shawl
Keeps asking when they shall return
The soles of her feet wrack and burn

When will the axe fall?
Perhaps it will not drop at all
But every sound is harsh and mean
And makes a message for the queen

When will the axe fall?
The thief she huddles in a ball
As if prepared to pay the price
Queen Esmerelda will not be nice

A NICE BALLAD OF THE KING AND QUEEN OF NAPLES

“Lies!”
he discovered

“Plies”
she torted

“Aragon”
he allied

“Paragon”
she hired

“Ears”
he rumoured

“Peers”
she gathered

“Open”
he fled

“Pope N.”
she summoned

“Ledges”
he padded

“Pledges”
she exhorted

“O!”
he advanced

“Po”
she retreated

“Ax”
he summoned

“Pax”
she remembered

“Pending”
he waited

“Ending”
she abdicated

THESSALY

In Thessaly
it is good and green
gold floats
and the good laugh

Then why
do I not go there?

In the dank pools
of Odrysia
her oil black hair
pours out
her fat brown feet
reap dust
her sea grey eyes
drop sail

Love lured me
by her hand

To Sabazios an unction
to Bendis a prayer
unbind me, I pray
I am kept here!

GROWNUP

Isn't it time God grew up?
No more of these childish riddling games!
Is the universe infinite and what colour is it?
Tee hee, I hear, *soho*!
Is the spirit in the corn pleased with us?
Fe fi fo, I hear, *ho hum*!
So let us point our telescopes in God's face
who will have to look right back at us:
there is no infinity in pretty pranks, God!
and we can see you at your work!

PENNY WHISTLE

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est
dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

Slow down for the penny whistle
Dance a little to its histle

There's a pleasantness in doing so
While the whistler's blowing so

The churchyard has its ghosts at night
But while she whistles we're alright

Anna, Mary, Janette, Maude,
And many others in our ward

SELECTED POEMS

We move our limbs like hazel wands
And dart like fishes in deep ponds

The moon shines brightly in our eyes
The whistle from the table flies

Flagons, flasks, ground eglantine
And willow rods and cones of pine

We are terrible under our tinker moon
Caterwailing every pan and spoon

We dance with the ghosts who round us flock
We dance and now it's twelve o'clock

It's twelve o'clock and there's a cold breeze
And murmurs and all our eyes freeze

The dancing stops and the whistle strikes
And the bell clankers down the sikes

Tin and brass and bell and whistle
Burning horns and burning missal

We each one let fall her mask,
Her ring, her rod, her mug, her flask

It was a moment terrible as ever passed
And that moment was each of our last

Twelve o'clock was there and gone
And in the yard there was no one

Except a whistle dropped to the ground
Wet with spittle spent with sound

SELECTED POEMS

Traveller, know that we were there
Powerful terrible, dancing there

Our missal book taught us our prayers
We danced and hollered them like airs

We danced and hollered as we pleased
Our arms were pinned our legs were seized

Dancing to the whistle's breathing
Mouths burning and hearts seething

Yes, traveller, you would have seen
And feared us in night's hard green

Yet now we are mere echoes and dreams
A burnished treasure that never gleams

Our queen, our queen, our mighty queen
At twelve o'clock - have you ever seen,

Oh traveller, the manic face of fear?
Or suffered its cry? Oh she was here,

Our mighty queen, at twelve o'clock
And half of us near dead in shock.

She was lunate, her redolant horns
Were sharp as the swords our lady scorns

Her cuirass, greaves and gorget steeled
And bronzed and forged in iron to yield

To no one she could ever meet
And fire followed fast her feet

SELECTED POEMS

And illimitable were her piercing eyes
All grey and sharp and granitised

And burning they burnt all before them
And no one lived whoever saw them

There were nineteen of us, nineteen
Who at midnight saw our queen

Whom we loved and feared and feared and loved
Fear burned all love and not one moved

We nineteen petrified and none could move
Fixed fast to fear for our queen above

Oh traveller do you never of us ask
We may see again her take her mask

And roughly lower it from her face
In which awe and majesty interlace

They raced past time and time stood still
And we passed the threshold of the sill

We nineteen left to whisper here
The whistle dead to all but fear

Even the dead may hope more than we
Our queen shall never set us free

But we watch and whisper over you all
We watch you rise and see you fall

At night time ghostly spirits peer
Into we nineteen standing here

SELECTED POEMS

Around the yard in swallowed ground
Hallowed to the matriarchal wound

Oh traveller you must feel no pity
For we stand but stand in unity

Just do not pass us idly by
Dear lady, we do not lie

We once fierce women, skin and bone,
A whistle turned to burning stone!

THE MEAL

Death landed on my lap
starved as hell and near transparent
“I have plenty of food if you would like”, I said
stroking its wiry neck
“No need,” said death to me
“I am here to eat *you*”

TORY ISLAND

To JES AA LXXXIV

The flame screamed like a new born child
I cradled it silently and named it and it laughed
The forest said, *you cannot burn that here*
Its tears will destroy me, you must leave

Stretching tall to reach to clutch the clouds
The flame towering above me pillar like
The desert said, *you cannot burn that here*
It mocks our mother sun, you must leave

In the terrible waters sweeping the lonely world
The flame swam calm bearing me under the waves

SELECTED POEMS

The sea said, *you cannot burn that here*
It cannot belong here ever, you must leave

I felt illumination far and wide in unbroken light
And saw my soul assailed by the imperious flame
The people said, *you cannot burn that here*
We like to live in darkness, you must leave

It was cold as a mineral the blue flame as dust as I
It flickered like the hand of one nearly given up
The cave pressed the boat we rowed the flame and I
My queen in a white sleep said, *You are come home?*

ONLY, ONLY, ONLY

Only power is love today
And what was love anyway?

Only power is alive today
And what was life anyway?

Only power is allowed today
And what is freedom anyway?

I ASKED THE LION

MBS AA LXXVI

I asked the lion
“How do you rule?”
“I eat the wise
And praise the fool”

I asked the sun
“How do you shine?”
“I sleep well at night
In this bed of mine”

I asked the wars
“Why do you laugh?”
“Because every man
Is a fatted calf”

I asked the ants
“What built your nest?”
“Mad years of work
You know the rest”

I asked the boxes
“What do you hide?”
“The feeling that
There’s more inside”

I asked the words
“What do you mean?”
“The thing thought
But never seen”

I asked the tricks
“Why are you spun?”
“When puppets dance
They are such fun”

I asked the portraits
“Why do you stare?”
“The more we see
The less we care”

I asked the reflections
“Who are you all?”
At that there was no
Reply at all

THE KING AND QUEEN OF WENDOVER

Betty and John's Golden Wedding : 19/09/2014

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

Along they came in jilting dance from *Hazeldean*
A processional decked out in gauzy green.
Along the languid lane below the loosened sun
The lowing calf and lamb were gently shoo'd.
Sweet humblebees honeyed up the horizon.
The burnished lads and lasses of *Scrubwood*
Arrayed like kings and queens each one,
Each clutched a wand, each *Mab* and *Oberon*.
From *Little London* the blacksmiths let their din
And left their hammers and their masonic lairs.
The fiddlers of *Cobbler Hill* had wrought fine airs,
And each marched forth like a cadet paladin.
But of all the wonders of that day the finest plash
Came from the ploughboys of *Bacombe* and *Kings Ash*.

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

The hensile clenches of the autumn breeze
Reach to the heart and airy spirits seize
As if our breaths in breathing bless
And we a fearless bow arc in gentleness.
The restive *dryad* is soothed then, artlessly.
Each sunburnt leaf hangs like a candle, down
Each winding track invested in each ancient tree.
Each swings and sways and spreads a light
Between the dawning day and the escaping night,
A beneficent light that creaks eternally,
The axle of each year in the turning town.

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

They are arrived, the seraphim of *Risborough*,
And nixies, fine arrayed, from the *Marsh* are come.
From *Mandeville Trismegistos*, right fulsome,
Yet half as so as *Great Panurge* of *Missenden*,
And *Eurydice* of *Kimble*, none matches her
Save of *Turville* great *Rosmerta*, sure as a Saracen.
They came arrayed and stayed all as they came,
All morning rode they long the country tracks,
And all were hearty faitured, carded of all blasme,
The purest wool of *Buckingham*, the finest flax.
And handsome *Satyrs* panted pipenotes on the reed,
Followed close by *Centaurs* blowing barrelly;
Then *Phrygians*, *Ionians* and *Dorians*; then three
Lydian harps, as if *Orpheus* himself were freed
To wander masked and mazed, danteing his way,
And marrying each step with the music of the clay.

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

Along all the *Ickniel*, our universal track,
Murmur at the head and *Rumour* at the back,
Noisily our swains and maidens make their way:
For the King and Queen of Wendover are to be wed today!
And here at last the King and Queen appear,
Ribands of doxy, and crowns, primerole, rosemary;
Sweet carpets of colour like carousels career,
As if the spirit herself of colour hath made thee!
And in the rassembling colour her spirit made,
Chastened *Autumn* flees, ashamed, to the shade.
Ah, see now, she with her shield he with his spear,
The King and Queen of Wendover at last appear!

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

Their steps are full regal and stately and slo
Yet there is joy in each step and joy as they go.
And now they leave *The Cedars*, their moly lebanon,
And proceed through *Orchard Close*, their misty avallon,
And now their shared shadow falls on *Lionel Ave*,
Our lord of the savannah whose roar harsh and true
Colludes high and low under his magrebic code,
And now the King and Queen tread *Aylesbury Road*.
And *Pan* walks with them, and *Apollon* chrysrine,
And *Eros* and *Eileithya* and *Hera*, and wine
Is poured by gap gowned maenads, golden
Wine warm blessed by the true Lord beholden
To none but *Jupiter* himself; and the maenads dance,
Their blades shining, silver; and flou in their trance :
Yes, holy is the spirit of the autumn breeze!
It places the garden of the world at ease.
It pushes at the flowers and it pulls at the trees.
It is holy and soulful and full against vanities;
And ah, now see the King and Queen at *St Mary's*!

*Sweet country stream, roll on till I end my song;
The King and Queen of Wendover will not be long.*

Can a beginning be ever said to exist?
Ah, gentle *St Mary* covered in the mazy mist.
The mist is beginning gently to disperse.
Our souls and our spirits now may submerse
In the golden carriage of this day of days,
A carriage wrought of lovely light's rarifying rays.
Yes, see it drive sad autumn shadows far away.
The King and Queen are married today!
Can a beginning be ever said to exist?

All beginnings are covered in mist.
 But the mist is now nowhere to be seen,
 Only the King, and only the Queen.
 The crowd that has gathered here today
 Have left the hearth, left the field of hay.
 In a world of colours and dances and songs
 They gather around, and in threads and throngs
 They weave a world into which shall be born
 A more richer and more golden corn;
 A more purer and more spiritfuf green.
 Can a beginning be ever said to exist?
 It is an unsure walk into a selvan mist.
 But to the swains and maidens what does it mean,
 Who have gathered for the King and Queen?
 Is it they shall weave a new world of better cloth?
 That this will be a new lightfuf beginning?
 That they know worlds weft of red wrath
 Must always be worlds of hateful sinning?
 Is this why they have gathered here?
 Is this why they have made their way
 To she with her shield he with his spear?
A King and Queen rebegun today!

O antient chrystal streme shape thy song;
 O whyte clere water let thy voice be strong
 O let thy sungould bell ring late ⁊ long.

LUG UNBOUND

Maeve the drunken Queen dreamed
 of a perfect and as yet unopened world
 that appeared before him like a hazel
 nut whorled into the purest bright brown
 as his sunburnt skin ; yet veiled wept
 the darkest tears midsummer ever felt

drop to the infolded midh ; his God of light
his spear of yew his silver shield has fled
crosce the sea ; the dank honey-wine glass
breaks his breaths and games ; o oenfer!

SCIENTIST

This can of oil here, dusty and scrumpled,
was once life, alive. It crawled and scuttled
over the floor of the ocean or shallow lake,
like a termite or a beetle. Do you know that
it once saw the sun if it looked up, a less bright
hot sun but nonetheless? It had eyes, ears,
a sense it was alive, a certain and shallow
(I suggest) feeling right at the very - navel
of something big. A large thing it moved in,
other things, separate things, squiggly things
and juicy squelchy things and yuckier things,
these other things were things that had to be
run from or shot at. It was a warm comfy sea
your can of oil was in all those thousands
of years ago, a sea to swim in, dive in, die in,
a toecupping sea. When our tin of oil was alive
God was just a reckless youth, Adam our Father
still a good man without sin. If I figured it all
correct. I believe Adam was there. Maybe yes
even this very drop of oil I will be burning
held in his hands too; a eucharist somewise.

KERNOW

To Richard, AA 44

Paddington, Cécile et Gawen
Coal and Steam, the train rolled out

Reading, Baisers
Hiss and Whirr, the train rolled on

Swindon, Mots
Smokestack flak, the train rolled on

Taunton, Sentiments
Oil and Ash, the train rolled on

Liskeard, Malaises
Signal up, the train rolled on

Redruth, Silence
Coal and Whistle, the train rolled on

Penzance, Seules
“Fàtla génes?”, the train rolled in

Land’s End, Falaises
Nuage et Âme, the world rolls on

TREATIES

To Richard, Xmas 2014

Treaties are built on paper
Lanterns are made of paper
Look! they radiate light
In a common-sense way
But light makes little sense
It punches points in a wave
Pours out a massless self
It is a real atomic point
Whose reality is altering
What we see as a reality
In a sea of unknowable

Strangeness, drawing up
The enlightened well of space
And time, lurking within
The elemental field holding
The, our, universe itself

Light lanterns, then, float
Massless in the air; light
In its carolling world,
Its compulsive quantum
Dance, a song of songs
Beyond song; beyond
Anything that can be
Masked or unmasked,
A will beyond will,
Space beyond space,
Time beyond time -

Beyond - beyond -

Far beyond mere paper
Folded and unfolded
In the folds of our unfolding
Universe. And words lit
Inside carbon cake,
Graphite flecks spread
Upon the treaty paper
Marking this or that
Border or law, bribed
With importance
Flattered with meaning
This treaty unfolded
On the great table
Of State in the great
Chamber of State during

The great Meeting
 Of State. The assembled
 Worthy crew of state
 Stand as if captured
 By these words, these
 Worldly commands
 Sent out into the world
 And its borders and bumps
 And squibs, as if they
 Themselves are immutable
 And as unchangeable as
 The seasons, the moon,
 The sun and stars, as if
 They represent real
 Permanence. As if

As if. As the light dances
 From the paper lantern
 The treaty is rolled up
 And put away. As if
 It represents true Law.

As if.

PUPPEHAUSE

To Betty, Xmas 2014

Step in to the doll house. It is clean as life
 itself. The air in the doll house is made
 of plastic. It is not breathable. But the dolls
 do not breathe, do they? The dolls live idly,
 unwatching the unearthing - by, by what?
 They sit at tables waiting to be fed, intimate
 inanimate ants in a plastic colony, holding
majinoon plastic glasses, tiny plastic cups

of tea. The sky itself is a blue film, a thin blue layer of plastic laid by a plastic god who does not even realise he is made of plastic. How can a plastic god know he is a god even? But everything inside the doll house has a plan, even if it doesn't have the faintest idea there is a plan. Sir Isaac Newton said he was in truth just like a little boy who threw his pebbles just that little further into the incoming sea than ours. The doll house sea is a crispy crunchy plastic one of course, a blue plastic film undercutting the other blue film god laid down above it. I suppose, a plastic mirror, reflecting plastic light. But there is not one mirror in the doll house, and no real light, for there is nothing for light there to feed on, to react with or against. The doll house is the purest place on earth, offering a restless purity of existence beyond what you or I could even try to imagine. But it is the purity of nothing, whose eyes will not weep even if they are melted down as scrap.

CHRIST OF THE SOUTH

The Christ of the south approaches!
 his monstrous grimwar in his hands,
 the openness of his mouth most shocking
 in its elemental lies. *Must we receive him?*
 He approaches on foot, then chevauched;
 a most dangerous spirit he is! His inks
 flow like blood and in his books beats
 a heart of immense folly; a dandelion
 Sun following its eternal path around

a bulbose world. If we accept him,
 if we grant him the keys to our cities,
 whose walls enclose us from our vices
 as the seas well and wave supine
 about the holy isles of the terrible
 past that lies inside of us, our shared
 burdens and memories, our wilful
 and selfish inhabitants, out of which
 we elect our shame - *if he be granted
 this, this our citizenship*, the warmth
 of our collegiate fires, the breath of
 our revaunted wealth, and the love
 of our disestated carrement - this now
 done, so our word and his will join,
 and in that jointure a novate world
 shall be built, and it will be built over
 this our home and these our bodies.
 Our passing shall be his monument,
 my words a malairine mist of wind.

LOVE GONE WRONG

Oh daedal love went wrong. (Went wrong,
 For love was once seen, yes once, there)
 And it was the cause of many a sad song
 To be heard in any rainy market square

Songs more plentiful than birds at seed
 More than the stones in the palace walls
 Oh the fiddler scrapes his bow to lead
 The people's hearts with dreary calls

She loved not he who cared for her
Then he hated her who came to love
And when the still water began to stir
An eye closed up in heaven above

The song that she sang and he heard
The song she jangled as he sang
Was song that cut with every word
A gallows song where judges hang

And on the gallows love hangs there
And weeps below in a lovesick song
Outside the chatter of the market square
When love went wrong oh it went wrong

PER LEFGREN

I saw him standing there
arms folded across his chest
like bronzed bars
imprisoning all of his feelings

Where he went I cannot say
and what became of him I do not know
but I do think he laid out those
traps for himself

MĀYĀ

She said --
No.
No I don't know what she said
I didn't know her -- no
she never even existed No
she does -- not exist -- no no
no and -- yet
she still says -- *I love you -- I really do.*

PONT EFFECTS

i.m. Paul Celan † 01.05.1970

Pont Mirabeau
admirabow

I am sure it is
Beltaine today --
oui ja -- it's the First
of May

And of course it is 1970
and it's near enough noon
and it was only last year we launched
our footprints at the moon

Pont Mirabeau
admirabow

Tohubohical May!
juggernautical day!
belfire writs
mayash flits

Priest, white
king, red
criminals waiting
to be led

Pont Mirabeau
admirabow

Mayash nudges
the newing year
at the maygods
mortally here

To watch the axe fall
upon the neck of day
to cajole the green
nights to stay

Pont Mirabeau
admirabow

Die Wer da?
someone had asked
but to answer that I think
no one was tasked

Now they fish out a body
with a metal rod
das Klinkerspiel
gegen dem Tod

Pont Mirabeau, vielleicht
nennst auch du mich einst
so.

PARTEI MEMBER #55, 1920

Odd chap that new member, heh?
Perçant eyes. Press you. Insect you.
Spoke hardly most of the time, then
what a flood, made me feel like Noah.
Voice, rough. Bier-hater! *Unvölkisch*.
Shoes, old; flies, open. Dead letter sent
drunk, address irresponsibly smudged.
Drexler, these dark days I wonder -- ach
who would know how to *build* an ark?

HANDSHAKE, 21.03.1933

False submission. Bowed head.
Senile old man like a planet
Took out of orbit. False old rock
full of medals -- staring satellites
of honour. Deft spring air threads
icy myths. Wild Narcissus seeks
for Echo. Binds himself deeply
to the kristal loch. Bowed warm
cuckoos-egg. Dry loveless hope.

“GEMEINNUTZ GEHT VOR EIGENNUTZ”

Veit ec at ec hecc vindga meiði a
nætr allar nío, geiri vndaþr
oc gefinn Oðni sialfr sialfom mer,
a þeim meiði, er mangi veit
hvers hann af rótom renn.

The colony thrives. The leader watches
like a cigar being smoked in a brothel.

“*Let’s get back to work!*” -- thriving to run,
running to thrive. It is all a success.

Tankfuls of unemployed roll down the bahns.
Pickaxe chevaliers. Run don't trot.

And the houses of correction are always open.
Protective custody. Naked *Schutzhaft*

in which rags fall off of the skin of night dead on to
the bone floor of day, where it's always the facebone,

in this colony, deep in its pulsating shell
in which only the sea imagines your name.

"Back to work, kommi arshlosh!". You pick your face up.
The rope is ready and you must now sacrifice yourself

to yourself, in the misty morning by the raven's ditch,
watched by the commonality ready to get back to work.

REICHSBUND JÜDISCHER FRONTSOLDATEN, 1935

You can try, but your words will not
be heard. Imagine a tent. The khan
waits in the tent. He is blind. He is
surrounded by his retinue. Deaf,
each one. His dancing girls dance
before him. Inaudible. Invisible. Food
is set before them all that no one
can taste. Piteous cries burst through
the tent door. No one understands.
Unrecognisable. The khan smiles.
The khan frowns. There is not one
observable difference in the two.

Wind bears the cries of the Wretched
like a sheet of helpless shame. But

there is no one to hear it. No one
to notice the Wretched cry and soon
the khan will be packing up his tent
for another place, and then another,
but nothing ever changes. The khan
remains khan and the Wretched cry.

There is no reason now; and no one
is there to hear. And you must die.

JUDENSRAT, 1940

You are to be responsible
for your own sins. Also ours.
You are the council. *We* shall
be able to sleep soundly. It is
you who won't sleep -- till
the time we will designate.
Then you'll sleep alright,
old men! When judgement
will annihilate *your* sins!

HIMMLER

He is at dinner. Yes, he does eat. He eats
souls, spits out the flame. He may have ate
his own soul once, if he had one. I don't know.

The world must die before it can escape him

He is thinking now. Yes, he does do that. Any rate,
he moves his hatreds out from his head and places
them in front of his eyes. You can almost see it.

The world must die before it can escape him

He once was in love. Can you believe that? The love
was his own cold formulation of love. It was like bombs.
It was never kind. It looked like a black sun. A burnt star.

The world must die before it can escape him

He dies now. Look, dead! I think, *what will live after him?*
Who would follow him? Who can pursue the dead? Is life
a mere communion with the present? Can death live on?

The world must die before it can escape him

YOUN TO CHAPE

Ayiti pa bezwen sove

Gurgling, wriggling
never still

A new child breathes light
not nihilating nox

Bless her with blessings
and with your lullabies!

Pick for her the fruits
of the living skies!

Every child has a pair of wings!
even kryolings!

Even kryolings
have, broken, but wings

THE MOTTO

William James
had his own motto :-
“Live feel love!”,
“Live feel love!”
he’d always say, even when
doing up his tie

It is a good thing to have
a frame of reference in life,
he said to himself
“Live feel love!”

It was a dark green tie

“Life is a quantity
exchanged by time”,
he declared, his hand
patting the front door
“Every moment is a reality
alchemied into Memory,
that invisible golden chain
gracing each dying swan”,
he thought, climbing
into the nearest cab

“I am William James,
quite famous in himself,
brother of a famed novelist :-
and a plain sort of man
who often regrets that
he might be remembered”,
he added, as the horse
was whipped to movement

It is never enough
to feel you understand
and he felt slightly sad
that he most probably
did not understand
anything he tried to

“If a daguerrotype
could move in sequence
it could store moments
in a moving record :-
then time would perhaps
make some little sense,
for it is the Past we fear
most, if not the Future
turning into it

“Time past and time present :-
oh the human mind
is a weave of chaos
knitted into a false world,
and that is all it is,
really”, he sighed

William James.
Doctor, author,
psychologist,
brother, trapped
in a Boston cab

“I have another 20
pages to write today”,
he whispered to himself

“May they be worthy”,
he hoped

“Live feel love!”
“Live feel love!”

He tipped the driver
and stepped out the cab

“At least I know something
about nothing”, he smiled

“Live feel love!”

“Why does everything
have to mean something?”,
he laughed, concluding that
“Live feel love!”
is a splendid motto :-
the only conclusion
that day

THE PITHECANTHROPUS

Poor Eugene Dubois. On the hunt for the missing link, in Java he thought he had found it. Pithecanthropus erectus he called it, and brought it back home. It was, he announced in an 1894 paper, “a Human Transitional Form”. Bear in mind the Scopes trial came not long after, this was a big claim to make. Faced with both a cranium “harder than marble” and a femur found upstream of it, the doubters of Darwin ought to have been washed clean away with the Javan mud. But no no, they would not be having any of it. An electrifying bolt of outrage immediately flared up, as if the hand of Jehovah Himself had written a verdict on the public wall.

Poor Eugene, he was driven inside of himself. His own bones morphed into the hidden link between he and the world. He hid Java Man away in a box secured in a drawer no one was allowed access to. And there remained Eugene Dubois and the javanese remnants, each warming themselves before the fire before the gift of making fire had even been discovered, and when God peeped in at them through the ether curtain, He smiled.

And He murmured, "They never change," and His fiery breath made the flames move like shadowy dervishes in a gently mocking dance.

MR NOBODY'S VISIT

Niemand knetet uns wieder aus Erde und Lehm
-- Paul Celan

Think I must have forgotten to tell you,
I had a visit from Mr Nobody yesterday.
The brief and inaudible knock on the door
At Zilch o'clock :-- I didn't notice him
Slip in. "*Hullo*," I said warmly. Rudely,
He made no answer. It was as if almost
I was not there. He drank nothing, ate
Nothing, said ditto. Didn't think a visit
From Mr Nobody would be such a bore.

"*Do you know who I am?*", I enquired.
"*I am a very important person. Look,
My titles, my money. Don't ignore me.
Please?*" But my voice carried barely any
Sort of resonance. Mr Nobody heard
Not one single word. "*I am extremely well
Respected, do you know?*", I said softly.

Mr Nobody stayed three hours and,
As far as I know, the world still turned,
And the sun kept on shining. I could hear
His silent voice offer its cold mockery,
The defiant laughter a silent crescendo,
I dwindling to a sullen diminuendo,
Desperately waiting for him to go.

He left when the clock struck nothing.
He went when time stood still. Nobody
But Mr Nobody leaves like that. It was
A curious feat. His footsteps echoed
Into empty space. It was almost as if he
Or I was never there. I can't say whom.

Last week or so I spoke before a crowd
So gigantic I could not fathom its edge.
I try not to blink, the crowd claps blandly.
The importance of my words is blinding,
Clear as the buttons on a coat. In these

Arenas I conquer and control :-- always
I am a lion among mice there.

Then I was not so sure.
Mr Nobody visiting was unsettling.
"Do you know who I am?", was a draw
From an empty well, for it was he acted
As if it were I that was in fact the no one.
I am not even sure if it was Mr Nobody

That visited me :-- or did I visit myself?
I am left asking myself :-- *"Am I? -- I --
Mr Nobody? Can I be sure who I am?"*

PARTAI KOMUNIS INDONESIA

Love, in Indonesia, so shadowy and slow
Under bloodsoaked earth, no time to grow

The branches of its tree are nearly rotten
And the name of the tree almost forgotten

In Paradise they knew every single name
Eve wanders far from the branch of blame

And by the river you hear Adam laugh
"That was before we built the golden calf

*Love was never known in that innocence
In the thick dark woodlands of ignorance*

*But in this bloodsoaked land where here we lie
At least once love lived right here" (if to die)*

GOOD FRIDAY

Jesus...cried with a loud voice...Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. [Luke 45-46]

There was no time before that time -- that I
Should bear the time just as I bore that weight --
The desert stood before me, salt for salt
And grain for grain, and there my blood spilt out
Like a sea of grief for worlds of fools, yet I
Looked on, as I saw myself, alone and cold
In all and under all. What then? The sea
Dissolved into itself, a weeping weight
Of toil and blood that weeps for what it does
Not know and cannot understand. Which sea?
Where did I sail, and where to? My ship
Of air and smoke had floated on the skies

And in the clouds, and where was I? At sea?
The sea all dry, as dry as bone, and all
As one? At one? There was no time and will
Be none, or none will come. Or come for me.
The sea shall cover me, the sky grow dry
As rock and sand, and grains of sky will fall
Into the sea that dries my blood and falls
Beyond all time and into me. And I grow dry
Upon the tree, the dryest well that pulled
The water into time and out of life. I rose
Unceasingly and I began to seed the sun
At noon, inside the burning desert they
Call time. The holy root of time burned dry
As rain that fell upon the noonday rock.
The rain of time had entered me and I
Perceived at once, yes this was time. The sun
Belonged to me, become the root of time,
Inside the tree who bore me. It is strange
But good, outside of time -- where I belong --
Within the tree. Yes, out of time then. Good.

RED RAINBOW IV

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

I wonder where you are today. The light
Rains down so hard -- from the precipice
That falls down from the roof we call the sky,
Falls into the photon seas.

And I wonder why,
As if to deny the judgements of my sight,
The parcels passed along from day to night
And life to life, and cannot ever die.

Eight whole years have passed, now it is right
To wonder where the silent ways be found,

The paths we all must tread into the ground
When in silent waves of light at last we fly.

“All light be ochre red” -- Red Rainbo said --
“And light be death” -- “and be the path we tread” --
Blud Red Rainbo, show us!
Yes show us, you ahead.

MOLE ST.

I am going to visit Mole St.
Where moles are able to see,
Out of a pair of washy eyes

Look, there are skinny whiskers
Poking through the surface
Of the broken earth!

A mole's head bursts into
The avalanching day

She looks up, squinting,
At the sun's heels
As they scamper
Across the sky

“Tis a fine day alright!”,
She cries out to the flies
And bobbing weeds as they
Wash about above her head

(Moles speak in an old manner,
For they are an old people
Who have not fully adapted
To our more urbane ways)

"Prithee 'tis a good morning
Fine Sir!," she announces to me
"Do I find thee in good health?"

I tell her, yes yes. I am fine

Sibastion, her man, is poorly
(I learn). He must stay put
down in the Rhegolleth (said
his heart specialist)

II

Looxh is a painter, an observer
Of things. She sees the smallest
Grub and transmogrifies it
Into something significant,
Into an adamantine mote
Of time, flat indestructible

"One sees howsoever one sees,
And what one sees is a game
And light its Self be games
She play upon our Fancies",
she explained once to me

"What are you working on
Today?", I asked Looxh
"The World, as ever," she said
Without any of the pretension
She's free up to the guts of

It was a wonder, her canvas,
Filled with the life of light,
A lumescent cloth that wore

Its truth so casually that truth
Became like lead or like gold,
Something to touch that could
Not break (not even time could)

It, left out in the dead open,
Just due west of Looxh's home,
Lies unbreakably day and night,
A visible testament to
the nature of her sight

COLONEL KURIUS

Colonel Kurius, he thought alot
about every thing. His shoes, his wife,
his undrunk 61 Bordeaux. Every thing.

Driving along St Celie Street hexing
the temperamental old banger, he wondered how tin
was discovered and how we learned it could alloy
into bronze. Annealing, he reflected :- who
was the first annealer, and where and when?

Bronze is the beating heart of history,
thought Colonel Kurius, turning
into Felix Mews.

There is so much that I will never
know, he said to himself. It is
as if the world is swarming
round me like a tornado,
a turning thing', created out of apparently nothing,
but whose churning 'gaos' masks a truly
Divine order.

Colonel Kurius rarely met a soul
as curious as he was. If he ever had.
As he parked the old banger, always
two steps away from breakdown,
he looked sadly at the barracks as if
it was an indecent lock and key
to the, or at least his, world.

In these walls, he mused, all of life
is scratched into the slate,
and every letter is a commandment. There
is nothing to learn because
all questions are forbidden. It is
a book that some will never open
and others never close. But who
wrote it, and when?, he wondered.

Colonel Kurius was entranced
by this book, but it was a book
he hoped with all his heart,
and even more with his soul, that he
would never be obliged to read.

Is the world left?

Is the world right?

What sort of world is that, if
those are the only questions?

It is their world, said Colonel Kurius,
and therefore my world, and that
is the most curious thing of all in all
the world -- this world where questions
melt like ice upon the tongue,
invisible to the warm light of day --
small drops of curiosity that will

evaporate into an asinine mist
braying endlessly into
the returning comforting sea
it is death to swim in.

MÉLISENDE

Mélisende is walking
walking by the walls of the city

She is thinking
thinking about how God created
all the things she sees around her

She lives, she knows,
where God lives, in the holy city
where His only Son endured
His terrible Passion for our sins
where the Blessed Mother wept
in the shadow of the bloody Cross

O what a mighty shadow that was!
she reflects, and it was shadow of a light more radiant
even than the Sun that beats down
upon me every day feeding
my own pitiful shadows
so blind and so thoughtless

My feet, my dusty sandals
are walking in the paths that He walked
before He suffered and died for us

This dust is His dust and this Land is His
and yet also it is ours, my people's, ours
to guard, to marry our will to His holiness

His goodness, the goodness of His blood

The keys we hold are His keys He
has given unto us and we are His keepers,
the keepers of His flame,
protectors of His blood

And she beheld the sun divinely
and she divined its power, and then she wept
near the place Jesus wept

SARAH AND ISRAEL, 1.1.39

Our names are no longer our own. Who
is without a name is half without
a soul, we seem to be realising. His empty
eyes stare at my vacuous gaze. We were
once in love, but love is a human invention.

We nowadays pass love like we pass the salt,
and love is pepper poured upon our meat. Who
are we? Not who we were. We wonder where
we will go, and even if we can. We feel our love
running away like water through our hands.

The table is monotonous, a glue that binds
us together. The string is made of memories
we will soon be forgetting, the silken hand
of faith folding it all up into a raw cloth. Who
is doing this to us and why?

SELECTED POEMS

We do not know, perhaps don't care. We
are not who we were and that is that. I bring
the plates from the table and wash them
silently. Cool water washes over my hands.
He looks at me as if to explore me, to ask who

made me. Who made me who I am? The rage
of existence has worn out its strength on me.
I have no feeling. I have no name. She begins
calling me again from oblivious Sheol. She knew
who I was, who no longer feels who is reaching

out to whom one time she offered up a name.

SEEING AND BEING

I look at the Garden
The Garden all I see
Is the earth and sky
Lain out before me

If I looked beyond
If I peeked inside --
I will not -- shall not
I will wait and hide

What is beyond me
I'll never quite see
It's as if the World
Is a Garden of Me

THE FIRST WEB

How many spiders have died
Since Satan spun his first web?

Why do I die? Why was I born?
Everyone in the web asks that

THE BIOSOPHERS

Once upon a time in a far off and away place, I
Discovered the meaning of life. I carefully wrote it down
On a jot of lined paper, but the more I examined it
The more absurd it seemed to me. So, regretfully,
I crunched the jot up into a little ball and threw
That ball as far away from me as I could. I never
Imagined anyone would ever pick it up, but instantly
The world was full headlines about 'biosophers' and
'Biosophy' (their rough Greek for 'meaning of life').
This jargon was soon everywhere; everyone a biosopher!
In every home rich and poor cries of 'Eureka!' oozed
Out like tea into a Toby jug as if, with these golden thoughts,
The coin of contemplation was minted in the purse.

But there is wisdom and there is Wisdom -- even
Among the wise the wiser dwell. 'What is Biosophy?',
These biosophisticates asked themselves. Soon enough,
Cults and sects and manifestos emerged, like amphis
Dolopping out of protean seas onto a devonian land.

A thousand biosophies bloomed. Houses of fanatical were
Built with the bricks of wisdom. Eyes filled with terrible fires
Pent up fanatically burning words that swept the hearts
Of trusting biosophic hordes. The land became an armed
chaos
Of swords cut to pieces by burning words, of biosophers
Fighting for the thousand Truths that they had discovered.

To be or not to be?, that is the question
They never asked -- but what I had asked before I threw
That ball of jot away, into the deep twilit ditch of being.

WINTER

Betty Xmas 2016

Winter falling, a *voyou* artist
Installing a public work of art
Frost seeps into the window
Of the year of which it's part

Snow shines, gleams; white necklace
Fell on the solid breast of earth;
Earth lain waiting, for judgement;
It awaits the forthcoming birth

Midwinter, it is the shortest day
As if a few frosted hours sufficed;
Snow-white frost; the risen sun
Snow-white breath of Christ!
Bread-white snow of Christ!

POETS, CRITICS

Poets and critics live together
Arguing arguing who is clever

One writes and the other comments
Wait for each other to commence

One hooks up the other's books
Nibbling at each other's nooks

SELECTED POEMS

One scribbles on the other's pages
An argument that takes them ages

What's a poet worth? the critic asks
Who trusts a critic? -- there's two masks

A Janus-faced reflection -- two
Faces staring back at you

Two different ways of seeing things
A bird with two pairs of wings

That keeps flapping round and round
Never never falling to the ground

RED RAINBOW V

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

i cant think Red Rainbo say &-more
i cannot breathe the river gently flow
but never ebb the comfort of the shore
is ever distant rockfed greenland slow
the world right to a halt a halting rage
upon a world of rock green age on age
green life an altar standing on dead rock
around the river ocean round the earth
white rain fall on to the green flock
green beget green in a myth mirth
white sun all seeing in the living blue
engrave the river red in mimicry
i cannot think or breathe : unlike u
i red river flow : into red sea

W BEE

He wrote a lot, did W B
 Busy old apostolic bee
 Who was unusually alive
 To the world outside the hive
 Pollen was a butter sun
 Day a milky moon who spun
 The misty riddle of Aengus' cow
 Who knitted Plato's anxious brow
 To all the bees of Ireland

The holy land was hoof trod sand
 Beckoned Cruachan to the sea
 Beyond -- far beyond mortality
 Like a fishing line crammed rich with bait
 Cast archly to the dance of fate,
 The bees of Ireland took wing
 To the hives of Kells, to Brigit's King

And the invisible terrible King arose
 And said, *'Now at last my eyes may close
 If a word is a king, a king is his word
 His spirit his father his son, each a third
 In the triad of life, the daughter of life
 Wedded to him, mother and child and wife
 Stoney eyes married to marble words
 Marvellous engraved lions and birds
 Milk the flat slab of Ireland's churn
 Only kings may forget what a king must learn
 What good's a king's harp if its strings are torn?
 Oh on the mewling puking winds we'll be reborn
 In the hum of the bee kissed heather and moss
 Our woodland oratory a forge for our loss
 For it is we who return he blessed again*

SELECTED POEMS

*It is we -- Ireland's women and men
Dressed in the beauty wove most impossibly
By this busy bee, this W B'*

ONCE THERE WAS

There was a girl all made of rain
Who lived yet never felt a pain
And when she fell and hit the ground
The world kept rolling round and round

There was a girl all made of snow
Who melted with no chance to grow
And as she melted clear away
The world it merely rolled away

There was a girl all made of sun
And with her web of sunlight spun
A world all made out of solid gold
As down beneath its depths she rolled

This girl of sunlight turned to dust
She must be down there still she must
The bells of moonlight are cast and tolling
For this world was made to keep on rolling

THE TOWER

I entered the tower
It was cold inside
Every door broken
Corridors wide

Ravens moved like
Sharp stones in rivers
The lowering tower
Ashenly shivers

Fires were burning
Colder than night
Chains were dented
By marrowing might

Lords were awaking
Dogs were barking
Sharp eyes staking
Brave squires arcing

Armour was shining
Swords were raised
Ladies were praised ;
Yet I stood my ground

For in the heart of the tower
There was a flower
Light as a feather :
A stemma of power

This delicate flower,
The heart of the tower,
Was planted long ago
In a long-forgotten hour

And light petalled on the flower
And it arrosed down from above
And heaped down from above
And plentified the Tower with love

And I saw the flower of love
Grew in the heart of that tower
And those who could touch it
Were scared of its power

Though their armour was shining
(These men of the tower)
I held in my hands
An archaia of power

Though their swords were raised
(To draw blood for the tower)
A hard edge is no match
For a suppler power

They looked at or through me
Like windswept islands of fear
And not one of them (not one)
Came one footstep near

The bravest were stillest
Unjust shadows in the Tower
Unjust trembling circles of stone
Petrified by Love's power

The shadows moulded shadows
Created merely to cower
I rode out the Tower
I took the flower!

*As the shadows faded like an hour
Dying memories unfold their power,
A childlike light flew out of the flower
Made of light and made a new Tower*

RED RAINBOW VI

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

If red, the only colour that is left
To me, dried up under the sun, how could
I lay down a remembrance? How should
My colour deabdicate what has been cleft?
There is no heart that beats which is not red
And, in our universe, that dark and lonely soul,
The red and raw depose and define the dead
In an eternal path that stretches like a pole
Across the universe, from end to end,
From pulsing age to age and beating heart to heart,
A red bridge of chained unchartered chart
The broken universal heart will never mend.
But what, said Red Rainbow with a smile,
Is painted on the winter's country mile?

LEAR

Margaret Stiles : 19.04.2018

Across the shadowland, their wandering
A habit, King and Fool are dressed in rags.
The wizened whitened man grips the bags
Wrapping all that's left to him. The ring
Of silver and the ring of gold he wears
Are like a winter sun and moon. His curse
Chops through the night, yet the Fool dares

Answer : for what is a King without a purse?
The sea is washing on the winter shore
Like an iron sword cutting up the land.
“If the sea shall rise forever evermore,
“Thou, King, shall sorrow on the sand,”
Said the Fool, throwing stones into the sea
Like mad boys build a bridge into the sea.

‘THE FACES IN THE FOUNTAIN’

The faces in the fountain
Like selkie leap and fall
Were invisible to everyone
But not to me at all

Faces have ready voices
But none could hear these so
They turned their heads to call
To me but why I’ll never know

These fountains of the forest
For long been iron-dry
Dyed faces mingle in the rust
And no one sees them cry

‘IT IS ALWAYS A GHOST’

It is always a ghost --
A mist at the most --
Who leads the way
To the land of woe

The ghost will lead the way
To that unseen land
That lies beyond the day
Far from the sea-sand

The path leads to ruin
Whoever treads it lost --
Ghost of a path -- a mist --
Will it let you in?

‘IN A ROBE OF DREARY DAMASCENE’

In a robe of dreary damascene
She wanders all the roads between
The river and the sacred wood
Lank and weary, dank and lean

She may return : but where but where?
And if she really came from there
The allegroes that mould her heart
Might drive her to the gallows cart

It is never enough simply to strive
She knows she must in the end arrive
But now the roads her footsteps trace
A path back to her resting place

If you had seen what she has seen
You too would keep a watch at night
Where the river runs out of the wood
To wander all the roads between

THE TIME MACHINE

Betty Anno Aetatis LXXX

When the Time Machine was finally completed, after many centuries of determined effort, it was unveiled before a great crowd. There appeared to be no levers, no dials, no buttons, no clue how it worked. A peculiar silence like pure thought emanated from the Machine. The crowd looked on in admiration at this creation

containing the secrets of time lurking deep beneath its surface. A confident voice thundered out: "We have surely become like gods!"

From their dark places, the curious and clammy gods looked on at the Machine. "If we possessed the secrets of time, would we be as we are now?", they whispered to themselves. "We gods live within time just like everyone else, it is just we have more of it, we being gods. We though do not understand time and never have or will. Time is something always beyond us."

At this point, the Machine's creators gave the signal for silence. The gods hissed to themselves, "This Machine intrigues us, now let us see if it works." As the gods and the crowd and the creators looked on, the Machine was activated. It whirled as it glowed and as it glowed it vanished. "The Time Machine has worked," said its creators. "We are as gods!", cried the crowd. But the gods themselves looked on in fear and trembling.

THE DANCERS OF ZUG

The dancers of Zug
dressed in violent lace
depart into the deep distance
alone together

When they arrive at the gate
they will face each other
the mystery will consume them
in a furnace of stone

Beneath them, the lake shines
like a smear of rebirth

the earth is proud of them
and violence stands still

THERENESS

They were there and then weren't
The blood that burned is burnt
Who were seen are out of sight
The broken bones are white
Those were wise are kraken bait
And that is always wisdom's fate --
A prize for all who play this game
Is the hope of everlasting fame --
And oh how everlasting is the dust
Of space and nebulae and crust!

THE DRUID

Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quarum incolunt tertiam
qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur.

The druid wandered the forest
Thru its rich thesaurus of trees

'Everything is everything else', he said
'And the gods are a salad of leaves'

His golden chain tickled as he trod
The dark draggy trails of the wood

It burst like a blade of sunlight
Whenever the sun rays caught it

His white gown glimmered leanly
As if carved out of his gaunt frame

SELECTED POEMS

The gods will be summoned, he thought
And they will come to us in good faith

Our faith is sturdier than the city hordes
But their blades might outshine ours

We will summon the gods to us today
Like a holy sword of immortal revenge

Magic is wisdom and wisdom is power
For all is all to those who serve the gods

THE STAR

Margaret Xmas 2018

A star appears at night one winter day
But is not like the other stars that night.
It is a star to lead and light the way.
It is magical and it is much more bright
Than any other star that shines that night.
'This is a special star, look up!', they say.
'It must mean something, this fiery light!
As bright as moonshine and as bright as day
As if it means to make a day of night.'
The wise and foolish each were awed and they
Uttered prayers beneath its rays all night,
To the star, to its attendant crystal light,
As if it were a dream that could make right
The world of light and soft Uluru clay.

TOMIS

I look out to sea,
But part of me
Looks back.

Deep pools. Tears.
Washed walls of fears.
These tack

Soft sealing floes
That fast inclose
Me here.

Oar, ship and sail
To this harbour jail
Me steer.

In wind and water
And every quarter
Rome is!

Oh Rome, oh home!
Oh home, oh Rome!
Tomis!

I raise my pen
And write, and then
Forget.

My fate's declined.
My fame's defined.
And yet --

If fate is wrong,
Fame is not long
Denying.

He who I was
Is dead because
I'm dying -

For a single word!
That rumour heard!
Sent here!

Oblivion
Flows on and on
To here.

II

Now, as into dark
Floes fat with spark,
Sol sets,

The mundane mind
Goes blind,
Forgets.

Here, I remain.
I plead, I plane.
Apart.

Must I dream here?
Cast, sea-spear!
Stake, heart!

ΛΑΒΔΑΚΟΣ

The owl looks out upon the silent night.
The forest wavers, pale moonlight in her heart
That gleans the leaves. But something isn't right.

A noise attacks the silence. A pall. A start.
The yellow eyes like atoms in the sky
Are glaring at the forest, pulled apart.

The owl looks out. She chooses not to fly
Away, make her escape. She must look out
For evermore. And see and not know why.

The forest riot leaves no room for doubt
Of any kind. The owl looks out. She prays.
There is grappling and trampling and rout.

The ancient forest has a thousand ways
To lose yourself, and owls know well them most.
The tragedies and comedies. The plays

On life that's lost to life. The careless boast
That iron wroughts and warps what man has said
And cries for evermore and shames his ghost.

The owl looks out to tooth and claw and red
Inheritance and knows what lies ahead.

PAN

When Spring brings up its hatchet and its hoe
great Pan picks up His syrinx and His pipe
that rested on His lap covered up with snow

He wakes and sees the olden world is ripe
and as He wakes His band awaken too
and dance and sing. They dance in praising Hyp /

erion on high. High overhead the swallow flew
startling the breeze and He sees her soar
near into heaven as only gods can do

Adoring priestesses bear the leaf before
He burnishes it with gold, with golden rays
and He blows and sings until He can no more

And so He lives and dances in His daze
as if the Spring forever young can graze.

MARTYR SONG

The sun rose, a creature
of inexhaustable meanings

We looked up at it sadly
and tried to understand it

'Let me say,' said the sun
'it simply as I can to you'

We tried to listen and learn
but who wants to burn?

PEACE AND WAR

Peace is the time after war
but it fades fast like a flower
grown in a desert. A chain
of smoke bursts like wolves
out of the horizon. A game
is all it is, played so unfairly
to our fair rules. The countries
settle down to their peace
like islands in a rising sea
of war as the sea-wolves, grey
and red, sail on to shore.

THE SILLY GOOSE

Fathers Day 16/06/2019

This world is just a madbrained goose, its hiss
like batter spat squat out the frying pan.

The goose protects the gate. How can you miss
a spitting pent-up goose? Of course, you can.

Your steps proceed as if you are quite blind.
The goose looks straight at you, who cannot see
a hint of danger. You walk as if the path is free,
the many paths, and who knows where they wind?

Between the world and you, sense swings loose.
That world is warning you, but you can't see,
who take the path that leads so guilingly
towards the guardian and gate and goose.

All hell breaks loose as you clamber the gate,
all truces broken, and so you meet your fate.

TWO GARDEN POEMS

1. Binding Things

The garden and the gardener
Are opposite ends of the string
Just as the eye and the thing it sees
Are really the same thing

At the end of the garden is a little nest
Filled to the brim with tiny eggs
That will hatch up and eat and fly away
Hop up on twig-like legs

Such a thing the gardener sees
Such a thing all gardens prize
And the string creates a sun-like knot
To which light and beauty flies

2. Smiling Things

The garden and the gardener
Are opposite ends of the string
The flower and the nightingale
To each other sing

The window on the garden
Is the garden's eye of us
Looks on with indulgent pardon
At our mizzle and our dust

The creatures of the garden
The garden lives in them
Flowers leap across its length
As bees crash across its stem

The sun invades the garden
And the moon is buried there
At nights the moon begins to flower
And the sun rests in her chair

The sun and moon by the piece of string
Are tied together so very tight
That the garden to the gardener
Smiles the same smile each night

And the birds and the trees and the listening leaves
They fledge beneath a protecting wing
Because a garden and a gardener
Are opposite ends of the string

ABELARD AU CAFÉ

He sits in the corner like a forgotten wound
Tied to his grubby table unblinkingly
The patter of the piano wheezes 'yes and no'
His eyes drink the sawdust sweeping the floor

This worm in the glass, this delirium of names
Green as lichen, green elm cradling the lychgate :
Is there any cry more furious than an army of words ?
The silent cell slicked by the eloquent knife

The coffee-steam seeps up like an apology
The last emanation of the penitent condemned
Whose hair is still wet from the pool of time :
Who still lives and who will never see her again

'THE LAMP FLOATED AYE AND AYE THE SEA'

The glory of the day to half the world,
 A setting sun.
 The gathered gold
Is midas gifts of light for light that's gone.

A rivulet of light that paints the moon
 Is what remains,
 Put out too soon
The pallor that its embered light retains.

For half the world this semblance of day,
 This copied sky
 That creeps away,
Dreams of a glory which dies as white as why.

'THERE IS NO OXYGEN IN THE SUN'

Heraclitus
looked at the river
not the detritus

CAVALCANTI

...fu la dolorosa accorta,
forsennata latrò sì come cane

I never seen such feats of suffering!
You walk about all day and night the same
And sigh and sulk and swear by X's name
To give your heart and soul in offering,

And *all the time*, dear boy, dealt and diced.
There's 'Love' this, and then 'Love-as-Accident',
All flayed with, 'No, *that's* not what I meant!
The stars that light the sky one day will...'. Christ!

Why don't you talk to her? She has a voice.
She's really is quite nice, in her own way,
And smiles if you run out of things to say.
She'll kiss you better. Look. It is your choice,

But while you bore on, all lachrymose,
She's all alone and painting up her toes.

SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH, EAST CHEAP

Behind the bustle that hammers at the day,
The angels shine upon these sooty walls
Of the little church in which we do not pray.
We call up and our heaven heeds our calls.
An angel told me -- who was it that I saw? --
'How do ye sir?', and I took off my hat.

These are things strange, yet laugh ye not at that :
This little church is rich though Cheap be poor.
We need no book of law for love to radiate,
In hidden smiles we hear our heaven laugh.
Sweet music in the spirit wants no golden calf,
Our music from a deeper source doth emanate.
We pray to no one, whose prayers reach all things,
And we have chosen to be chosen : we are kings.

THE OSAKA SUN

To MBS: 14/08/2019

I remember when peach blossom
 Blended with the lawn
The autumn trains were leaving
 Shortly before dawn
Morning fires were burning
 And days no longer halcyon
 In the pale Osaka sun

The world was full of anger
 In the storms of Thirty-Nine
And wind was full of weather
 Like a belly full of wine
We both went out to meet her
 Her hair so neatly spun
 In the veiled Osaka sun

“Who are you, little sister?
 “What have you become?
“You seek only after pleasure
 “And butter every crumb
“You are wilful, wild, reckless :
 “We shall leave you with your fun
 “And the gold Osaka sun”

“Oh sister, oh dear brother
“How did I do you wrong?
“Are you jealous of my pleasures
“That will not last me long?
“Though you banish me forever
“I did what I have done
“For the old Osaka sun”

And that ended the meeting
In an unforgiving day
What family its honour
Can freely throw away?
Oh our sister, unrepentant:
Turn your head and run
To the cold Osaka sun!

NAGASAKI

As the ocean wraps its coat around the world
This beautiful city wraps its coat around me
The blossom blows across our faithful gardens
And it seems as if summer will never try and end
I walk down to the sea and see the world pour in
Ships rest in the harbour like silkworms in a pod
If the Emperor should visit us he would feel at home
For we live in the port of a new truly eastern Rome
We are an elegant silk to a most magnificent coat :
What will the future bring next year the risen sun?

WORDS AND NAMES

A word becomes just like a stone
When it has been written down
 It cannot die
Unless the stone melts in the water
Or else the plague takes out the porter
 It cannot lie

I don't know why it cannot lie
Books put to the flame all die
 In living flame
The tune that cuts a songbird's throat
Is just a self-fulfilling note
 Am I the same?

EDWARD THOMAS

'Today I want the sky' [24]

The new moon hangs its birds and smiles
And gently crumbles on the forest path.
Behind you and above, the aftermath
Of bomb and bullet in the trench's aisles.

In some shady lane the sun charms like a lyre
That spreads a music revenant and warm.
It hangs on the air in canticles of form
As breaths of life disintegrate the wire.

You 'dream awake, awaken to your dream'
Of woods and dales and beggars at the pub.
You chant the names of birds and so redeem
The spark of latent love stored in the grub.

Life is a wondrous sky and into this sky
Is drawn the dream of those about to die.

SOL ET LUNA

Pass by, old withered sun
Pass by, your day is done
Night creatures peep out of the hedges
The moon hangs on the window ledges
You are the horizon

Below the shaded fairy mound
Elusive shapes gather around
And hymns of night arise like fire
The moon arises madder higher!
Pass by, without a sound!

Pass by, old withered moon
For day shall cradle soon
The sun will lead you by the hand
To a new and maybe better land
He too must meet his noon

THE AMESBURY ARCHER

We hear his patter and his pitch.
He weaves his words across the field of time.
The seed is sown and scattered on the lich,
Safe in its residue of grime
And blessed beneath the winter rime.
He lies awake, aflame among the weeds
Of forgotten deeds.

His arrowbag and arrows lie
Close by him, marrying his eternal grin
Upon the skull that cannot die,
As if they can supply the soul within
With flight. We see the body not the sin,
The caller not the cry.

He came to here from over sea
To weather up a profit storm,
His tack a hammer tapping magically
That only made him seem more calm.
His name and speech and cant we do not know:
We cannot let him go.

THE WHITELEAF BARROW

He proud a-bed, a barrow bed,
Five thousand years ago he closed his eyes.
The people crowded round and prayers were said --
Oh, all the necessary lies! --
And, as vain thoughts of 'why' were posed,
His eyes were closed.

We park the car, walk to the ridge,
Look on the vale where generations bred,
And see the sky is arcing like a bridge
Of time as the sunset sun glows red,
Resplendent with the colour of the chief
Whose life was brief.

SIHR

I place the stick upon the sand,
Crossways, beside a stone. I chant
To the air the sky the sun. I look
Up at a sun who blisters up my back.
I praise the forces that look after me
And dwell in me. A golden apogee
Spins about my head and words burn
Like bulls in flame at strong-sworn oaths
That cannot be broken. Sure and pure,
The stick lays in the flame that is the cure.

ENECH

Cú Chulainn asks
'What is my fate?
And how long
Must I wait?'

'Boy, fate is cruel
You shall find,
Yet the muses
Will be kind'

AFTER THE BALL

We look to love
To ease our pain
But the climb is steep and we often fall
And after all,
All is vain

And in the end
Love lies down
Upon its bed of nails just like a ghost
And that bed is most
Like our own

We are our thoughts
Our shadow shapes
And love is like a shadow of our heart
Our sunken ships
That sail apart

We shape the light
That wakes our dust
And as we bathe within its gentle sea
We ask 'Who are we?'
Because we must

GIORDANO BRUNO

'The centre cannot hold'. Perhaps that's true.
The nature and location of the centre, though,
Is quite another thing. Within this slow
And steady world, the self-distorted view

Lies here -- this selfish holy here -- this where,
Where centres lie, and is a universal Truth,
As at the patterns on the wall you stare
Until they grow uncivil and uncouth.

So Giordano stared and the world grew strange
And new mythologies and monsters berthed
In earthy heavens. The myths, so proudly earthed,
Looked upward, and wandered out of range.

He tells us truths some will not want to learn
And for that I fear a good friend may burn.

CAPE COD, APRIL

The blessings of the Spring are with us.
We stare at the sea and our sleepy eyes
are full of fishes. We polish, pitch and paint
our impervious boats. In this way we prepare
for another year as the centurion sea rolls in
and its legions press the sand, push answers
to a question never posed. The morning mist
lies like a province on the sea. At midday, when
it is sacked, that's when we are ready to set sail.
I do not know who would be a sailor: a drunken
and drenched serf to the waves, tamed by
by the tumult, and ballasted by the thunderbolt,
as yet another April utters its promise for the year,
a promise never kept set sweet upon the ear.

JOURNEYMEN

The journeymen work hard and wait for end of day
And that is what they do each and every day.
Their work is as hard as invisible is their pay.

The journeymen do not hold out much for hope,
For they say that is as slippery as a bar of soap,
Then ask, 'When does the hangman's neck feel the rope?'

The journeymen are patient with the patience of a rock
That stands impassive as successive seasons knock.
'The ship leaves for the sea, the luggers keep the dock.'

The journeymen know where they are, not why.
They are silent as a ritual. They will never cry
For a freedom which each one takes to be a lie.

The journeymen sit forever just where now they sit,
In a room that's half asleep, and cold, and poorly lit.
They see all that they need to see, before forgetting it.

TIWAZ X

One time I made a poem machine
Took a year to design, another to build
I put in the paper and when it came out
All of the pages were neatly filled

But what words these were I read!
What a melancholia in it all there was!
I thought, How could a simple machine
Immanate such a loss?

For each word was mixed with blood and oil
My blood, its oil

And it was as if it knew that one day its creator
Together with his creation would fail

It was the inevitability bound into each word:
'Thou shalt fail', was the issued command
'Did I ask to be built?', my machine seemed to demand
'Why did you build me?', it asked again and again
'If I shut you down you will no longer feel the pain'
But to this day I wonder if it ever heard

'A WEB IS BEING SPUN FOR THEE'

Out of slime
Out of state
The ancestor half sunk in time
Resets her eyes reseats her wait
Seals a fate

Here long ago
Fate sank sealed
Here a prey taken moved too slow
Here veiled time and place revealed
And repealed

Here what fades
Here what diffuses
Here now the bones of long-dry everglades
Here turns the key judge time recuses
And refuses

Here the time
Leans on the act
Moving in and out of stateless slime
As if, to its amniotic deathless fact,
We'd react

TO THE GOD OF SHILOH

Candlewick

Candlelight

The day is gone but was it really sick?
Why do I need you with me every night,
Candlelight?

Let me be

Let me go

The day slept in its cradle perfectly
I too would sleep and I would like to grow
Let me go

Candlewax

Candlewane

A dying light knows it cannot relax
And senses it will never see again
Candlewane

You are gone

You are cold

The flame you burn is fickle as it flickers on
And though you burn a real flame, I was told
You are cold

'THE SPIDER WAITS SO STILL, SO STILL'

The spider waits so still, so still
Patient as a river flowing to the shore
Patient to the end of time and place
In her web waiting so still, so still
Her many eyes weave the room
Into a parasol of appetising shape
She hangs from the ceiling patiently
Like an eight-legged leaf. She waits

Until the dust would turn into rain
And bathe her in the glory of life
Made out of the stuff of air and
Falling into air. But she hangs not falls
Patient as a harbour waiting for the storm
Still as a star hung from a sky and made
Out of light and heat and self-consuming.
She is still. Her life hangs on a thread
And in her web she waits her bread

ENCOUNTER

A solemn man walked out today
An autumn day all orange blush
 He walked a half a mile
 He was in no rush
Then he saw the thing that kept him a while /
A wakeful wretched creature made of clay

This creature made of earth looked back
Through sightless eyes and tried to speak
 There were no words / none
 But a clay sound dern as Greek /
The creature soon was baked hard in the sun
And right through the creature rode a crack

II

That scene is often remembered by the solemn man /
The elusive creature made out of clay
 A fragment / yes / of life /
 What did it try to say?
It's then the solemn man turns to his solemn wife
But she lies still / so very far away

A BALLAD

Jaunty Johnny wanted a war
He wanted firesticks for eyes
He wanted most of all to die
For very obviously lies

He got his wish and was packed off
To where the cheques are signed in blood
And deals made that flies have feasted on
'A worthwhile cause, eh Johnny bud?'

JJ bit the dust September 1
He felt that he would die of thirst
Before he died from loss of blood
And there he lay spent like a dud

Soon after they pack poor Johnny home
His parents weep and friends look on
And while they drop the coffin down
His war drags on and on and on and on

SEER

I am the seer but I do not see
I gaze, I peer, I reimagine,
I picture, I create

The smoke of the valley rests upon the earth
Like a misty stream breathed out by idle gods.
It flows. I follow in its current and grow fresh
Deep within the careless arrows of broken thought.

The drawn bow flings me down to the valley depths.
 There is a silence that is the silence of closed eyes,
 Of a singular concentration. I will flow into the sky.
 I see the valley below me sitting spider-like,
 Safe in her web as she waits for night to fall.
 The idle gods breathe mists in which she lies inert.
 Before her, the lake, like a pebble in the hand
 Of a sleeping boy, lies. I alone appear awake
 To catch the silence. The invisible is now a plain
 That cuts each corner of the world. Now, whippoorwills
 And hoopoes entice the sand and a percussive wind
 Tears open the heart of the land. Now, our valley
 Lies singular as the moon is faced, the sun is buried.
 The valley bursts from the womb of our earth, green
 As the snake of life. I rout my horn. The corn dances.
 It dances. Oh, it lives in dance. The dance of life.
 I play the song of life that I alone can sing. I see
 The words poured out in green array as if hurled
 Down from the sky by awed and awful gods. I gaze
 On the world within this alloying light. I weep
 At what I know, yet I am joyful that I know.

Now I descend, for now night is eating up the mist.
 Night the spider weaves her web of dark array: spirit
 Of the valley, body of the gods. We each wait and want.
 The people wait for me below, those blind and senseless
 Fugitives of time. These sacrificial victims of the day
 Await the seer who weaves the valley with her gaze.

FIVE GO DOWN TO PLATO'S CAVE

To Rich: a.a. 49

So here's the Five: George, Timmy the dog, Julian, Dick and Anne.
Kirrin Island is so bright and beautiful (it's now summer, after all)
But the cave is cold and dank as the lurking heart of man.
Yet, look there! Light! From a fire! Shadows on the wall!

The Famous Five open their eyes in a childish wonder
As each shadow in each shade his endless dance performs.
In the silence of the cave, it's like lightning without thunder.
Can they really be the smugglers, these silent dancing forms?

In their childish wonder, the five famous figures each look on
Whilst the shadows of the cave leap and dance regardlessly.
How can you catch a shadow law cannot lay its hands upon?
For the first time the Five feel defeated by a mystery.

THE STEPPES

I

The Child Of The Steppes

This-that children of the steppes
Across the whirling grassland traipse
In the endless sea of grass grow bored
And separated from their horde
They feed each other yarn on yarn
Of Möngkhe and the great Ong-Khan

The stars like weeds fill up the sky
The child asks herself -- why?
For no one that she knows of knows
Even as the burning question grows
The waggons crawl and horses leap
Children fall like snow upon the steppe

The steppe is where the dead men play
A land of margins that lead the way
A place where whistles turn to dust
And children grow up as they must

'Oh why and how did I get here?'
The child howls to the no one near

II

The Gates Of Haçılar

You ask if we are really here,
In this vacuum clear of hope:
Has the road led us this far,
To the heart of the horde?
The weather's weaving fingers
Sweep white snow across the land.
Our armies wait like maginot lines.
Our steppe sinks into ashlar seas.
You would need a heart of obsidian
To see any hope alive in all of this,
Like the trader eyeing the Morning Star
Looking back at the gates of Haçılar.

III

The Law Of Space

Fescue and feathergrass
Indigent eyes
The ass and the mule
Desperate cries

Wheat and sorghum
Marbled trees
Gilded hearts
Silver seas

* * * * *

Over the steppes we wander
Our grassland is shorn
Oh why oh why do we wander?
Why were we born?

(NO LONGER) GOOD KING WENCESLAS

Dead King Wenceslas looked out
From his tomb observing
And he never had any doubt
These were not deserving

Oh the pity, oh the shame
Oh the feeling death's a game
If he ached to tell them so
That is for the dead to know

Dead King Wenceslas thought so deep
His bony body turning

If he had eyes then they would weep
At the living lack of learning

So he must moulder on
And lay a bony shoulder on
The cenotaph of wisdom he
Must lie in for eternity

TRINITY

Sun, flood of light
Moon, its food
We, the drowned
Drowners of good

HERE IN SILENCE

The insufferable silence sings
In the aether of outer space
Lies beyond love of any intent
Peculiar in its grace

The grace of silence
An opaque violence
The great annihilator of dreams
Underlying existence
Its insufferable terms
Defy distance

The silence of nothing
The sea that holds us
As eternity is frothing
In the fires enfolding us

Silence, the law
The ruler, the right
The burning core
Of our silent night

It is insufferable
Unutterable
But its silent fizz
Is all there is

TRUTH AND WISDOM

Delphi and the truth
Are unreliably mixed
Like sugar in water
Chameleons in trees

We go there hearts put out
In the hope of a good word
And that the snake woman
Will lead us to the sky

Where we'll look down with her
And share her vision like clouds
But always while vine and ivy twine
The truth flows through our hands

We return to our fine house
No wiser than we were before
Just like lovers of wisdom
Truth chooses to ignore

TRIBES

The Lighmuini were a tribe
An ancient land of living breath
As were the Dál Messin Corb
Enveloped in the mist of *fláith*

The consecrated tribal ground,
The stone on which the *rí* must swear
Lay like an ocean all around
There was a real binding there

But all is gone, the stone tipped over
Their names a net of silent thread
The king will never woo his lover
And fame in unread books lies dead

A PASHTUN PRAYER

In the mountains of Afghanistan
In the deserts of the same
Beats a tiny little heart
Of a man without a name

Who makes a name to live?
The deserted mountains say
The silence will forgive
The deeds of those who pray

He will pray to the Silent God
To the god without a name
And we'll get what we're owed
So our hearts can beat again

A POET'S DITCH

Sublime the moon
But when Lorca sings
The world is full of honey bees
That feed honey to the trees
And the poet brings
The honey spoon

But Lorca lies dead
In a ditch somewhere
The bees are all humming like a bell
And all Seville can hear the knell
And rebels everywhere
Lower their head

'NONE BUT I WOULD CARRY FURTHER'

The simple gamut of the winter sun
Rolls around in its confined space
And it marks the land without a trace
To the horizon.
Woodland wears

The thinnest coat, stood on the hill.
I clasp my hands, breathe out steam
That climbs the air as if winter will
Reshape the dream
And break its fall.

NEW YEAR

1 Well And Spring

The sun dissolved
Like salt into a painted new-year scene.
The world revolved
About the axis where its heart had been.
Within the well that bred no life nor light
The year was turned to night
And on the sleepy world a solid silence fell.
With a crucial care I shut the lid
That capped the well,
And in there the new year hid.

The new year hid
And in the well its force welled up again.
When I drew back the lid
Its noble life fell on me like a gentle rain
That crept into the sky. The year sprang out.
Redeye melancholic, freed from doubt,
It poured out dance. It plunged into leaps of light
And lunged in careless carolling
Of green delight
Whose rays streamed into the spring.

2 The Waiting Year

The year awaits the hour
The bell awaits the blow
They wait for time to lose its power
For it is now it halts its flow
And in the outer lane
Time is forged again

SELECTED POEMS

Within the forge's bier
The hours spin about;
In the turning burning year
The new year day leaps out
Into the rising sea
Of time and you and me

Three

SAMARKAND

Bent rocks under a bent sky
The ruins extend like a plague /
An ague of rheumy torment
Frozen into the husk of time

They warworn came to Khwārazm
Their swords like needles to a veil
Their horses woven into a hammer
To break the walls into a mere grit /
The ruined walls of Samarkand

We the survivors are our city's spirit
Yoked to a sack of spices strapped
To our backs / We wander like spies
Over an alienated earth / our own city
And home bent into smoke and sand

ASTRAKHAN

The flow of the water
The beautiful sea's daughter
Flow, sail, flow

The towers and flags
Like a beggar's rags
Flow, sail, flow

Out of salt sea tears
I have sailed my years
Flow, sail, flow

Now I am returned
My city lies burned
Flow, sail, flow

O God, hear my pleas
Set my heart at ease
Flow, sail, flow

Beyond it all
I hear the call
Flow, sail, flow

II

Let to fate be fed the khan /
Oh the bones of Astrakhan

Let them sink into the waters
Of the beautiful daughters

Let them sail the airy laughter
Of time's sweet ever-after

SINOPE

Lovely shore
Deep mast
Strong wave

Gold and tin
Fur and wool
And so many men
So grave

TWO LEADERS

1 Savarna Deva (Su-fa Tie)

Swarnatep treads power
Everywhere he goes
Everyone he knows
Knows how to cower

A golden man
In fertile land
We see him stand
And plan

His plans are great
Plain as the sky
He feeds the cry
Of fate

II

Yet here he now lies
Lengthwise on his bier
Whenever such a man dies,
Dies fear

2 Irene

How we shall miss her!
She, sharp as a scissor
Irene, I mean
Basilissa

II

Meddling with the air
Her diplomatic speech
Descending from nowhere
Leaping just out of reach
And all the leaguers
And fond intriguers
Of our fine city
Found her witty :

III

Witty as a lecture
Lost in its own conjecture ;

Byzantium's
Shanty hums
Echoed archly to her sandalled feet
Corridors of icons leading to a golden seat

Wisdom pearled her ears
Leaped from out her eyes ;
Byzantium's
Giganticums
Of books of wisdom sleeping in a giant room
Of papers wherein only candles loom

IV

How lucky we are
To have had her with us ;
The Turk's barbah
Flocked in tethers :
Tethers of gold

Tethers of steel
While the bold
Before her kneel,
Sharp as a scissor
Basilissa
Irene,
I mean

ERESHKIGAL SAYS

Sumer is icomen where?
Its bones lie in the sand
But cuneiform still takes up air
Its lies repeated second hand

What gods they were, reduced to this!
The savage mountains looming still
The lullu with his guttural hiss
Still buried in his burial hill

Steppe and sown, mountain plain
Raw and cooked, moon and sun
Still the rock and still the rain
Over cities ghostly webs are spun

These floating spirits of the cities move
Like seeds into the fertile ground
Like love, or like the ghosts of love
Weep silence as they move around

II

The grace of Sumer is long gone
 Its time is done
Its walls no longer wept upon /
Its soul no longer full of blood
 A brick of mud
Once touched by a dingir's son
Now only pretends to be blessed /
 Time remains at rest
And Sumer rests its aching bones
Upon the dust that built it once

GALENA

Galena from the mountain
Water from the fountain
 My heart is breaking
 The night is taking
Long, so long, to roll away

I hate this endless walking
Into my mind, this talking
 To those before us
 Who now ignore us
We belong to no one, today!

ESAI

 Esai means peace
 Esai means harmony
I have a fine falcon that I shall release
 'Fly away, be free!'

SELECTED POEMS

The mountain is still
The castle is mute
I see a white dove on my window sill
‘Fly away, take root!’

The dove flies from the window
Like a silk skein
And the falcon imperious descends
All talon and teen

Yet as they meet it's love who commands
The window is set into the sun
Into the light of love flies the peace of anda
And Esai is father to the son

II

So war succumbs to love
Upon Esai's balcon
The dove and falcon
And Esai, above

A GLADRAG CONTRACT

Archer Yi
Oh archer Yi
Tell us what to do

“Do as me
Oh do as me
And faith will dawn on you”

And so we trod
The royal road
Of archer Yi and his lightening rod

To the holy son of heaven:
The prayer in the ode
"We are the people to whom this land was given!"

TAO

The way of virtue
Is the wrong way -
We don't need it
Today

The path of war
Kinship hardship -
We seek the yang
Of whip

SOUTH OF THE CLOUDS (YUN NAN)

We are arriving at Yunnan
We are come from Mag Mell
We each an immortal man
Oh surely you can tell?

Please inform the gatekeeper
We shall be proceeding deeper
Into these trenchant blue skies
Stretching before our blue eyes

For we are immortals too
Yes just as much as you
Oh favour us if you can
And we will bless Yunnan

*Oh we are so tired
Our horses so mired
Our cauldrons are cracked
Quick! you must act!*

ISAAC BARROW

He is talking to his pupil, young Isaac Newton

“Well, promising young sir
What thoughts have ye today?
I should prefer
Ye are precise in what ye say”

“Master, I have looked up at the sky
And I have counted the countless stars
And peered at the planets happening by
I travelled far

But not so far that I went beyond
And I found
You can see to the pit of the pond
By keeping your feet on solid ground

The cosmos is a building made of plaster
And we its servants fit to be its lords
I see it, master
In the rivers of light I see the fords

And I will cross them all one day
Perhaps after many suns have burned
And then I will have no more to say
This have I learned”

ATEM

Where is my mind?
Where is my world?
Between the two lies illusion,
Fusing confusion in delusion
Running free and wild
In the whorly wind

OPERATION RESTORE HOPE

Aisso non es amors ; aitaus / No.n a mas lo nom
e.l parven, / Que re non ama si no pren.

I

They march they fly with caring heart
Sailing silver rivers full of love
Exploding peace like a gentle dove
And join with love what they have torn apart

Mogadishu reeks of smoke
The soldiers joking in the bar
They do not speak of what they saw
And when I entered no one spoke

‘What is this love?’, I said to them
‘It seems to be a kind of noise
That’s passed around by you boys
A strange plant without a stem

This love is spoken not believed
As if only Mogadishu grieved
And who is buried lies alone
Where only barren wind has blown

The reek of smoke is merely love's ashes
Your masks are worn for the mad parade
War is the weapon with which your words are made
In each lies war, in each lie truth clashes'

The room fell as silent as the karmic wheel
Who knows just what those boys felt?
If I failed to read them right it's not my fault
For what they say is far from what they feel

II

Yet lies (or what they call)
 Love in its new form
But, as the powers of language fail,
 As fleeting as infirm,
Their caring lets them fall
 Into a new false flame
Where hope is just a game
 And love simply a name
And not really love at all

THE PLASTIC PEOPLE OF THE UNIVERSE

1 'All is one'

Plotinus said, 'ἔν τὸ πᾶν'
but you don't see that do you?

Each and every Thing is a separate thing
to be bagged and tagged and priced

You see grains of sand but not the beach
every atom just another dot for you

You join the dots up into a plastic chain
and that there is your miracle of trash

Your manacle of cash

2 Zeitgeist

With the threat gone, he came into his own
But now he speaks with a very different tone

‘Once you were so minded to be so good and so kind
What has got into you to make you change your mind?’

Why not suffer to be kind and rally to the good?
Why cover the world in an executioner’s hood
And flee to the warp of an excommunicated wood?’

‘Things have changed, my love, and for the worse
The oyster builds no pearl, there’s blood in my purse
The whole wide world has caught the witch’s curse!

I am not who I was nor will I ever be
I am turning, I am changing, constantly,
And you must pack your bags, and flee!’

3 ‘Learn, Read, or Perish!’

Their cruelty resurfaced everywhere
In every shadow and under every stone
Each and every shadow cast a cruel spell
And every gesture was a cardinal curse
As news flowed into oceans of defixion

When did we first step out of the light?
Who built the steps on which we descend?
Ah, the eyes of the wise are closed shut
And the hungers that reside within wisdom
Are raging inside a cruel warring emptiness

4 Fas and nefas

We look on the Feast of Fools
Food is spat out at the dogs
Rude fires sputter on the logs
Tattlers squat upon their stools

It lasts a year if it will last a day
The noise might drench a saner land
Pot gobbets pass from hand to hand
Who are the gods to whom they pray?

Is this a life and is this too a world?
How can we've been so nicely fooled?
How long is it that they have ruled?
How come our rulers don't grow old?

5 King's Daughter

They enter, heifer hearts and bovine eyes
Bulls of Minos on the broken rocks of Crete

Rhadhamanthys watches them tearfully
And Ariadne fumbles with her new dress

The doors of the palace are all closed today
And the ships of the harbour rest like doves

Who will be the first to speak? is what we ask
And the island echoes with the awful voice

6 The Bureaucrats

Karen, Suren, Mihran and master Zik
These are the men that make us tick

Always at work with sweatless brows
They shopkeep-upkeep the royal house

They never sleep, their pens never stop
Targets of jokes all swept up with a mop

No one can stop them not even our king
They hate all our poets yet make 'em sing

Praise be to these men for in their hands
Our tyrant is strong, the Empire stands!

7 Bone Praise

The peacock of the Peacock Throne
Gnaws the bone of truth
Into all of his lies he's flown
Like a bird of youth

II

When he was young the world was good
And he shone like a bullhorned burning star
But now the bone he gnaws is like food
And what is deadlier than a hungry shah?

8 al-Jamahir

They would like to be the driver
But they cannot take the wheel
They'd like for us to hear them
Tell us soundly what they feel
But their voices drown in silence
For they have nothing to reveal

That is the modern world, mate
In it you can neither say nor do
Please try and be very good girl
And you must be a kind boy too
It is best to forget all about us
So that we don't come after you

9 Tenebrae

Within the murk heaven lurks and writhes
And shadows wonder where they are
But they will never wander very far
And lords ensure they pay their tithes

It is a kind of life (or death) they lead
And they accept it (as they must)
For they are the heart and soul of trust
Our shadow sheep, ignorant of greed

10 The Reformers

They describe what they see
but what they see is just beyond the view
of most people

The world would be a better place
if people could see what can be seen
by the reformers

But eyes by lies are slow and firmly closed
the mind is shrived but the body damned
forever

11 Ēn

A feather sun dreamed up above us all
Like a piece of bird, an eagle, radiant
Light painted it and gods crowned it
Strafing cleaving floating brimming forth
It fell as regal as a forerunner's breath
To tell the tale we fear at the turning year
Coronation in creation; abdication; death

12 Lattice

Lattice, white within the tapered hedge
Cross, stark above the window's ledge
Why -- why? -- do you bear such shapes?
Into the grime of time the fire leaps
And enters the realm of the mysterious end
Without a form and without a friend
Life's a shape that rests upon a canvas field
Stuck in the silence in which it is sealed

13 The West (A Proverb)

*When you pluck the weeds
from the anthemic words
there is not one flower
within the force of fear
forged in fire of force*

14 The Plastic Folk

Too late they saw the world
Its weathers and its wounds

They lived in islands of Reason
When Process reigned supreme

Their windows looked on concrete
Standing in towerblocks of Faith

With their plastic floating oceans
Their plastic island shores lay full

“Gather reason, let unwonder flow
Into our plastic metric underworld!”

That was their fundamental Law
And was the only Thing they saw

15 'That boat it sailed on the other sea'

*deaths forgotten,
let Death remain
it is Dust of ages
not dust and grain*

*Death, Dust, not grain,
far, near, and wide
plains, endless Plain
where None can hide*

16 J. Romilly Allen

He glared long at the earth
Saw more than mere muck
He saw longhouse habitusies
Wirot weaving out wattle huts
Subtle hands making the pots
And I suppose that he saw too
His fate was tied against theirs
By the triskeled knots of 'life'

HEROD'S LAMENT

All language melts
after words are said;
beyond reach, perhaps recall

I have never felt
so nearly dead
and especially so small

'IN AND OF THE EARTH SHE WAS'

1 Siela

Upon her bier she lies, quite still,
The force of life quite gone away,
And on her face are streaks of grey.
Dark sickness penetrates at will.

In all the time that she was ill,
She was stoic to the end, they say.
Upon her bier she lies, quite still,

But last night brought us a dismay:
Sharp tapping at our window sill.
"Please do not visit us!", we pray.
Upon her bier she lies, quite still.

2 Dausas

Beneath the ground there is a land
All dark and dungeony and cold.
You go there after you grow old,
But why, I just do not understand.

Beneath the ground there is a land
Where forgotten feet belabour sand
And love is tales that are never told.

They see but cannot understand,
For every eye is trapped in mould
That turns to grey the meanest gold.
Beneath the ground there is a land.

SALE

"It'll never sell"

"What?"

"Your book"

"My book?"

"Never sell"

"Why not?"

"It's all above us, like a plane we can't fly in. It is language alone. It is weird words. Water without the wetness. Fruit without the juice. Pages of letters like fields without wheat. Years without harvests. Life without death"

"What?"

"It'll never sell"

Pause.

"Never"

HAUNTED

At that hour of the morning
When dew haunts the fields
She wanders her battlements
As if to martyrdom she yields

Hoarding the hatred she must have
For the day that soon will come
What ended all those moons ago,
Has not yet, it seems, for some

RADIANCE

Wisps of love is all there are
Just wisps in slender threads
They float above a stagnant pool
And rest their sleepless heads

A sage stops to gather these wisps
That can't be caught by mortal hands
How long can it be love withstands
The rising sun that roasts and crisps?

YOUR PROPERTY

Reading about the filth of the world,
Its problems and the evil hearts that work
Their weavings upon its innocent rock,
He feels a responsibility, the need for change.
His own heart is turned to the beating pulse
Of the universe, the cosmic to and fro of time.
It is this gives him hope spilled out, like lost crumbs
On the beggar plate's flat shell that is its Form.
The filth flows through choking rivers to the seas
And envelops us all in miasmas of madness.
He reads each day what brings him sadness.

THE FOOD-GATHERERS

They wander blindly through the store
Like Dantes whom Virgil has left behind
Without a guide. Thus left with half a will,
They drift like blind and helpless shades

It is not like it was before, when order
Pacified the land with a ruling sea of laws
No, the sea is gone. Now there's only shore
On which they drift as if they are no more

II

The tills of Moloch burn throughout the day
They never tire and they continuously feed
They clank and click with an alarming speed
The worried gatherers are afraid to stay

Something's in the air that's more than greed
And it is air and not fire that fills the store
The worried gatherers eye the distant door
The tills of Moloch burn all day as decreed

PARTS OF SPEECH

The intense *pourquoi*
like a burning star
lies overhead

It lights the dull *peut-être*
that like a fetter
shines in its stead

In the end our *parce que*
will close up the casque
when we are dead

THE BIRDS

Mother's Day 2020

To be a bird, to take to wing,
To breach the sky, to breathe a cloud,
To see the sun at midday soar;
To swirl about the earth, be proud
Of what you are or come to be;
To be immortal to the crowd --

Ah! here I stand thus far below:
I shall not fly, *I* have no wings.
 I watch as dawn betrays the night,
 And every bird awakes, and sings
 In song before this rooted world.
 The wingless world in echo rings.

THE POND BENEATH THE SKY

An apple, once tossed into a pond,
 Bobbed and sobbed. It floated forth
 In a bulrush bed. It then looked up
 At the cruel sky that didn't care

The apple cried,
 'I see through you! I see you there!
 You are the cause, you're why I'm here
 You made the tree and you made me
 And you made the man who ended me
 For my end is nearer than my seeding
 And all my hatred and all my needing
 Lie like the water lilies in this pond
 Resting on the anvils that weigh below
 To forge streams of life flowed to itself,
 White lilies like blind eyes in the pond
 That lie and stare into the staring lie
 That you shine on us and which I hear --
 I see through the weary words you speak
 Whose promises are never those I seek

For if you really are who you say you are
 When I was cast into the water, *you* were cast
 This done to *you*, as for you all deeds are done
 For *you* are the moon and you are the sun

And the sky beneath which I now waiting lie
Upon the ebbing waters that will turn to dust

I pass from world to world from earth to air
To water yes to water from the anvil earth
In which to what where I can see no worth
So hear me, Omnipont, wicked Omniphant:
I will acknowledge but will not worship thee
Defended by the gentle wings that carry fate

POETESS (OR : AN ODE TO ESSENTIALISM)

Ibant obscuri, sola sub nocte, per umbram . . .
Flora la belle Rommaine.

Lucretius sayeth unto his daughter
“Why do you write, sweet precious?
The effort seems wasteful. I watch you
as you warp your face to find a word.
Poetry is mystery meeting the Eternal
silence that lies inside us where we meet
the gods, or even pass beyond. Juppiter
raises his mighty arm and fair Juno places
a soft finger to her lips -- *silence! still!*
For the Poet is about to write and we
will see what he has created now. Why
must you write, my dear, of what women
can never even hope to comprehend?”

The daughter sayeth unto Lucretius,
“As I am your flower, I write as a flower
would. It grows and spreads its carried petals
to the wind and in the gentle breeze is cast.
It seeds into the lap of Flora and Maia
and our Mother. And they plant and cherish
the oblivion in each golden seed they grow!

Surely this thou know! I seed my pen with ink.
On parchment winds in uttered fields I cast
immortal seed: a golden hail of burning words
in which a fleeting life begets immortal seed,
a flower to flourish in my immortal Garden,
blessed by Flora and our Mother. And there
my answer: *the flowered fields speak for me,
to the father who asks how can women write
as wizened Luna lifts our souls into the light.*"

SHUBERT

Some say no his songs will never die
And that his name shall not ever fade
I say gee I sure hope that is the case :
Fame's the dollar by which death is paid

You still hear folks a-humming his songs
See hands a-reaching out for his sheets
Death is a forever for a man such as he
I know sure it ain't no hall of empty seats

'O LIGHT WITHIN THE STORM, TAKE HEART!'

Sugar swims
in the mouth it melts in

Life is like that
but sour

RED RAINBOW VII

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

The world is blurred into a bar of blue-
Anchored cold-reflected waves of thought,
As if the seething ocean were engulfing you.
Is this the nothingness that you once fought?

Twelve years have passed, each fluttering,
As it flows through time, like an electric spark.
Each in its final flash shall light the dark
Red rainbow that the blue was mirroring.

I wonder if from that blue one can escape
Or if each spark will burn up another core,
For in the blue the mirror weaves a shape
As the red shadows approach its blue door.

It is the fire which lives outside lives after you.
Red rainbow sparks it, burns it into blue.

SONG

Margaret Stiles : 19.04.2020

I met a Butterfly today
All fluttering and Swerve
“Hello! – she cried to Me
“Good day,” – I said to Her

“Where are You going
And to what – Horizon?”
“I go to meet the Sky
For there – lives my Sun

And when I reach the Sky
I will surely – marry Him”
And I saw Her flutter – up and up
She flutters up – to Him

And Everywhere is – Festival
And Everywhere – they Sing
And the Sun – He flutters – down to Her
And they Touch – Wing to Wing

But as they – touch – the Sun cries Out
For He is Much too – Warm
And in the burning Fire of Love
She feels – a Final calm

THE NEW NORMAL

What is that?
It is a temporary mortuary
Far away from all the permanent mortuaries
And the immanent mortuaries
And the eternal mortuaries

What do people do there?
They die of course but maybe not forever
When their time is up, they rise
Not like zombies and shit like that
But one day they'll stroll up to the Exit door
And calmly leave their mortuary just like us

And then everything will be ok perhaps,
Everything will be normal again?

FOUR WALLS

1 An Ascent Foresworn

The lark in our larch
perched far apart

Our fountain scatters
weaves of light

Now our water dries up
our wood is cut down

Tell me when the men will come
and tell me who they are

The string unwinds around the stone
now it is all gone

I can travel to the other waters
and watch them dry

But the lark who waits within her larch
shall never fly

2 'The falling are fallen'

Us Bactrians and Sogdians
lived next to each other.

Even so,
we rarely warred.

Our traders fetched and carried
wares from all around the world.

Now I look out from the towers of a great city
and see the horsemen riding in.

How long we have I do not know
but the walls tremble like rain.

3 Oxytocin

I took a trip to Oxytocin where
I had myself a great time. There
 It was like a great bowl of cherries
 In which there is
Always more. I didn't dare

To leave for a month or near /
In there evil hides in fear
 The bowl is always replenished
 And the play is never finished /
The walls of Oxytocin are soft but sheer

So why did I leave? I don't know /
There's always another place to go /
 When you leave they won't let you back in /
 It's a big thing to jack in
But soon as the gates closed I felt blood flow

Warm again / I hadn't felt that in a while /
They say to wander is often to reconcile
 The opposing forces in us all :
 Let Oxytocin fall
Its walls will tumble with a gentle smile

Too much enough I took there from the bowl
That seeps into the flesh and saturates the soul /
 In Oxytocin enough is all you have
 But then what is left to give ?
In its frozen jaws you get swallowed whole

A garret in this arrondissement's enough for me
My bowl of water, some bread, and sugared tea,
 And the table stood before me like a heart
 Of which my room is just a vital part
Though my dreams are trapped beyond the sea

4 Hubble Bubble Soil and Rubble

The wall was innocent
It covered the palace like a tale of woe
Punked by a blind narrator

The narrator is innocent
As if they are a painted fly
Whisked out of eternity

* * * *

And the wall will tell its tale
As it crumbles into dust

But the tale will crack as it ossifies
And its bones will form a crust

In each brick the voice fades fast
See the painted fly fade too /
The fallen bricks are kicked away

* * * *

The universe is also innocent:
It is just another painted wall,
Its voice fading even as it calls

EMPORIUMS

1 Halicarnassus

Dust of Halicarnassus
explores the sunbaked streets

Cries flow from the market
to come to buy

Ships enamel the harbour
waves sip the shore

'Good wine from Sicily
'ivory from Sind!

'Incense from Arabia!
'silk from Serai!

Fragments of the world
assembled to the eye

2 Aeolians

The people of the west wind
Setting sail for the mystery
Of trade with adventure. To fall
Is noble yet no surprise, but not
All shall fall: new cities will fetch
New wealth. War is the blood
Of honor and fame, kept alive

In the poet's breath, but trade
 Is brother to the constant sun
 Under which stand our kouroi
 In the flame of wealth. Fame will
 Fall to others, while our rewards flow
 Like water right through our hands:
 The cities we shall bake and build
 Will be the shrine we leave behind.
 For unlike the poet, we're not blind.

3 The Aquae Sulis Defixions

Why did people make things they made?
 Amulets and trinkets and magical beads,
 As if spirits lived in the crystal. Deposited
 In the spring, whose own spirit welled up
 Like a wise and powerful friend who soothed
 The worried minds of their former owners,
 There these seeds of hope lie, as if forever,
 In the somnolent, indolent lacustrine depths.

4

Metics (1)

They live in between
 like air like fire

They not us we not them
 yet they in the city walls

It is like oil and water
 or acorns in a willow tree

We go to war, praise the fallen
so how can we love, much
men who are no sons of Hellen?

Metics (2)

We live in between
our speech mixes up the air

We live off them and that's fine
we neither live for fame or love

Phintias and Bryges our names
carried like the mark of slaves

We go to market, praise profit
but we can't love them, much
and life, we think nothing of it

WESTWARD WE GO!

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not anear

Man of Loh oh man of Loh
How does your garden grow?
The trees you love are apple-plenty
All-grown before you got to twenty
Yet I ask, Who are you though?

In your garden you think and write
Ah man of Loh, man full-fathom white
Each flower sentinels the path of pardon
A scented web to magnificate the garden
Where sin is cut at root and put to flight

THE GAIA HYPOTHESIS SPEAKS

There are, it is true, hidden rules
That linger a little under the sun
 And if we once blink,
 Let the world shrink,
The furnace of our fortune cools
And the art of realisation is begun

The rules lead us as if laid out
But we do not see them as we go /
 The wearying shawm
 Of the breathing storm
Distracts our minds / 'Ahoy!' we shout
At the ship that sinks its sailors down

Into a sea of rules that is an invisible sea
All turning like a lathe to carve a thought
 That the shawm berates
 And the storm freights /
In these sinking paths we are caught
In rules we learn unknowingly

THE DOCKYARD OF FATE

The lonely deck held above the water
Upon it stands the watcher without crew /
 In all his days
Successes have been far too few
And here it always is, the sense that time pays

With him stands his only daughter
Wise beyond her years and half-drowned /
 In all her days
There is little that she can feel she has owned
And so she often dreams of other ways

Yet on they sail until doomsday starts to run
Without crew upon the oozing sea /
 In all their days
They built this bridge up to eternity
But will the watcher ever reach its bays?

Will the daughter's eyes upon its harbour gaze?
Do dreams reconcile with what they have begun?

TWO YARDS

1 The Knackers Yard

"Welcome to the knackers yard
I hope that it don't hit too hard
You've a worried look upon your face
This is not really so bad a place
It's all done quick without riot
And then it all becomes so quiet
The body is not kept in here long

In a sense I think that you are right
There's a ghostly feeling here at night
Strange shapes stray and fleeting pass
That leave no footstep on the grass
The moon shines like an icy stove
Breeze-blown branches never move
Silence fills like tender mist your ears
And the mist elaborates your fears

Let me pull up a chair, put you at ease
A jar of good ale and plenty of pease
Will settle you down. The first day
Is always worst, that's just the way
Ignore the ghosts and you'll be fine

You'll grow a heart as strong as mine
Within these walls no one can hurt you
But if you leave, luck will desert you
It's a fate most of us must take hard
But life goes on in the knackers yard"

2 The Friend

I have a friend in the churchyard
 Who sadly waits for me
He were beautiful as anything
 And now he is set free

Summertimes I go to visit him
 See his granite mirror to the sun
Flow and flame upon his freshcut name
 I wait close to an hour then I'm done

I will remain there with the force of tide
 Upon the sea of grass wet under me
As I stare at the church that will sunder me
 When I too am invited inside

To be borne by the tower and stung by the bell
 And while that seems both cruel and impossibly hard,
When I hear my friend's summoning cries,
 I am struck how much churches live in their dead yard

GE ET SOL

In Syene the sun shines brightly
 And settles on the sand.
The old houses of the dead
 Grow bright to his command.

SELECTED POEMS

But who is this comes walking
 So boastful and so bold?
He carries many bags full of charts
 Each with a secret to unfold.

II

He has left here just last morning
 Saying that his work is done,
But I see the clouds and that's a warning
 That a new world's been begun.

It'll be a world that won't run lightly.
 It will be complicated, and
Although the sun may shine as brightly
 I see it doublecross our land.

COAT

My coat
wracked by time
lies on the floor

To wear the coat
I must pick it up,
go into its space

If space and time
define my coat
am I its ghost?

MUHAMMED

I am God's prophet Muhammed
And I've thought and I've thought and I've thought
And I've stared and I've stared and I've stared

At the sky and the clouds and the moon and the sun
And I doubt any man has stood and thought as much as me

I am the prophet Muhammed
And the sun is a brother to me
And the moon is a brother to me
And we are all sons of The One

I am Muhammed prophet of The One
Soothsayer of the Ka'abah
Roller of the rocks of truth

I am Muhammed the last prophet
I can raise within this dusty market square
A new heaven in which I shall gather good men
Who will submit themselves to the warm rain of truth
Emanating like water from The One

I am the prophet who will stand
On the sand of a new faith

Oh hearken ye my ummah, ere I die
I am Muhammed prophet of a new faith

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Over our perception like film
Lie fikh and 'ilm
These form a fine lattice
In and over all that is

Some feel it in their bones
Some gutter it with groans
For some the glass will shatter
For some it is like matter

Knowledge is a paltry little thing
That can also be quite surpassing
 Its wing is fikh
 And 'ilm its beak

SMOKE (AND MIRRORS)

In the painting the smoke is gone
 And the chimbleys do not flare
In the painting the smoke is gone
 It's their best clothes people wear

In the painting the smoke is gone
 And no hard soot gets into the eyes
In the painting the smoke is gone
 It is a painting that is full of lies

Who would paint a painting like that,
 A painting that is so very full of lies?
I saw him painting it over there he sat
 We listened to his rueful sighs

He sketched for about an hour or two
 How can he not see what blots out the sun?
His costly smock was covered in soot, but
 In his painting the smoke's all gone

EYE WAYS

There are so many things that spring out the eye
But none of them - none of them - know why ;
It is as if they were poured straight from a stone
Out of which they drift into the world all alone

It is a very long time before they set down
So far from the eye in which they were born
And it is when they set down they at last realise
That the path they trod was not their own

VISIONES

Hucbald

Whispering walls have music in them
Each echo a neume to trope in praise
At evening and at morning Melody
Inhabits our breath like a silver field of joy ;
Magnificat in mystery is our music here
Summer in winter and blood in bone
Each sequence follows in columns of praise

Praise is the altar and the tower is built of air
A siege of voices raising up to the clouds
A veil of veneration, filled up with love
And the patter scratched in the parchment
Is the plan and place of the palace walls,
Our palace of election in a sea of praise
To which heaven often lends its grace

Westminster Abbey

In these shadows a strange lad draws
who peers out with luminescent eyes
What does he see? He sees things alive
as they were and as they ought to be
His guided hand moves over the paper
as his pencil carves out immortal flames
descending down from the heavens
like isaiahic storms upon ezekealian lakes

of fiery froths. Other times he sees paths
 where little dewlapped caterpillar beds
 hide the tiniest fairy beings whose heads
 lie in the embers of dark autumnal tombs
 As the midday sun caresses the aisles
 the strange lad lays pencil down and smiles
 and he looks up up up into the high ceiling
 charging in the chariots of his vision roly-poly
 as if summoning a hymn of 'Holy! holy! holy!'

Greenhall Lane

I like to go down to there
 where the curiosity shops
 line up in the dust and dirt
 and carriages easily roll by

Small worlds are found here
 in chipped cups sans handles
 and unpopulated cloth armies,
 tobacco tins shelled with dust

Everything is friendly there and cheap
 and you get a muddled kind of joy
 wandering these adonis gardens
 of ragged hurdy-gurdy sanctuary

No! to your teak attars, mahogany agonies
 no! to your greedy groans of gold :
 look at the transient genius of life
 sparkling at you beneath these walls

LAKE KOKONAR

One time I almost drowned on the shore
Of Lake Kokonar
The mountains all around looked down
Impassively
As I drew the breath that was almost my last
While the storm raged like a spitting cat

It was then I remembered the warm and calm waters
Of the summer and even of spring
When the reeds and the rushes swayed like wheat
In a field of life, in a beautiful midday gauze

THE VOYAGER

Tu Fu sails the river
Upon his last voyage
A tatar of an illness
Seeps into his old age

The river as immanent
As a sheaf of paper
Its flow is a payment
To an almost pauper

In age and poverty
Lies life and death
As the river's gravity
Flows underneath

II

*North side of the hill
Lights the south side
On the papery waters
An old man has died*

*But his subtle art is
Kept right by his side ;
As light dying shatters
South side of the hill
It lights Tu Fu still
Just as it always will*

CULDESACS AND TRACKS

“This church has a Norman font
that is about nine hundred years old.”
she told me, reading from the sheet

“Ha!”, said the churchyard
“I have been here since the late neolithic times,
since before even the ancient Britons trod the land,
and I have heard the speech of people you would never understand”

“Haw!”, said the rocks of the hills outside in the valley
“We are mostly Jurassic and are as much as 200,000,000 years in age
constructed of limestone creatures that once sidled across the warm sea
long before your ancestors built their first fires in the cool savannah”

“Ah!”, said the sun
4 point 5 billion years ago
I were born
and first learned mysel to fly
an I been burnin like a smokestack
ere since”

“Well!”, exclaimed the sky
“It were 13.8 billion years for me
and that is about as long as eternity
anyway it is all the time that we have
for I were created right at the beginning of time”

“No!”, piped up Time
“You are all so young
and your little lives are hardly begun /
Eternity is what I am, you know
and I am the path that runs in all directions
yet never meets up no matter how far it goes /
I am the Way that everybody knows /
the routes you take are
(unaware of this as you are)
cul-de-sacs or tracks”

ANGERED PEOPLE

Angry people, when they get old
end up in a cursing home
where their long-suffering children place them
and where the motto is “*Fuck Death!*”

and where the residents cry out all day
“*fuck it!, fuck you!, fuck death!*”
before they at last go underneath

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Enlightenment so often lives in shadow
Like an old oak tree at the side of a meadow

Its leaves peer out into the distant light
And see much grass, but the gate is out of sight

No one can see everything, and light is a treasure
That is buried deep in the ground beyond measure

ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD

Here books were sold in Shakespeare's time
Now see them all froze to icicles and rime

The churchyard is a dead land at night
as the moon scrapes over the grass lake ;
here the booksellers wait for day to break
when the books will open to a new day's light

Now the sun shines brightly like a sky candle
the books settle down like burning stars
and I reach my hand out to the handle
that holds the door to the universe

I enter in to the waiting churchyard
and am besieged by ghosts of longdead tongues
that flutter in and out of the paper
where life itself almost belongs

I wander the yard of the perplexed
as if I am guided by the spirits there
who flit into this world from the next
over books who breathe the open air

II

The churchyard has a single gate
that has been opened by many hands
but the books beyond all time and fate
fly in and out and out and in all lands

The churchyard is a single sea
into which all rivers flow
and whoever to this sea would go
must build a ship to leave the quay

FLIGHT / CAPTURE

Far beyond the House of Peace
We see fly fly the Winchester Geese
In all their unholy rags of gaud
All the lusty men we see applaud

But where will the geese fly to?
It will be Sunday tomorrow
When once more in God's cage
Each bird must hymn in sorrow

*And the gaoler will preach to us of fire
Like a pimple stains the cheek of time
What crime? - these Winchester Geese?
What crime did they? - what crime?*

PERCEPTION

If you see
the sea
have you missed
the mist?

'SONG OF THE MOST HIGHEST TOUR'

Daydreaming one day on his favourite cloud
in the heights of Heaven, Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud
gazes down on the world. And he says :--

*"To blaspheme is sometimes the purest
prayer which to God may be given.
If in the blasphemy of my life I suffered much,
I always sought for the highest station,
and if perhaps in my exile I appeared
to refuse such ambitions, looking back I should say
it was more I rejected - escaped, in fact - a world
that refused all transcendent things.*

*My time in Hell was spent on earth,
thank God, but as I look down upon
the world today, I don't believe that things
have evolved at all."*

Resigned, the risen angel
returns rueful to his cloudy writing desk.

EDGAR POE

There be something going on with that Edgar Poe
But whatever it can be I don't really know
He is like a cart on whom the horse will not impinge
As he stagger downtown on one more whiskey binge

He stare out of the window and up to the sky
Say the night don't shine bright only he know why
An all the women that he know be lemon in lime
Gee he's drunk as a barrowboy half of the time

The main thing I observe in him I reckon be fear
He speak of the spirits and of how they appear
But he don't care that much bout real spiritual things
Every Angel he talk to he got all busted up wings

He speak with a politician's promise of help
An he stink like a wreck that is showered in kelp
Edgar Poe is a monster who checks out the mirror
And sees without misprision nothing appear

*

To live in myth
is to swallow a star
and breathe out tales
that burst forever

DRY AS DRY

The prisoner lies on his back in a steel room,
the orb of its single bulb shining and stretching
to the steel sky of a ceiling unmarked by any cloud.
The bulb of this moonless sun is a burning bolus
hung from moth-mysteries that fetch memories
of his past days in the out-there. These recede
like waves in a running-away river of faith.
The prisoner stares at the bulb, his one myth,
a bulla of light in his neverending day. He lives
as baffled as any hero of a tragedy like a guileless
soldier in the solid lake of the fates. Tendril whispers
pluck answers from the flowers in the secret garden
of time, which colours the steel grey room with waves
that dance gracefully over the surface. They leap out
of the water and into a new and far better place:
that is to say, the place in which we seek a heaven
not quite high enough to hold us, yet of sufficient height
to ensure our imminent fall past kaleidoscopes of time
into the white light. We see it all before we can forget,
and what we see becomes maps of shape and colour
lurking in the mineraled cave of memory. The prisoner
awakens to a sun shining like a bull in the steel ceiling
in a sky that will never fall down on his head -- he,
the prisoner lying alone in his steel room, his earth.
He lies alone and lonely under the naked ceiling-sky,
borne on the murmured rivers of time as dry as dry.

*

I reach out for things I cannot touch
 They glitter but they don't mean much,
A thread of words appears to cover them :
 The Fates weave this but not to condemn

This thread is thin and the hem far too short
And the garish cloth is of the cheapest sort,
But to make a finer cut's what no one dares :
Our world grows quickly out of what it wears

*

Does the sunflower seed
burn like the sun?
Does it roar
into its core?

Little grain, little flame
of course you cannot burn the same
to grow is your only fate
as into the earth you sink your weight

WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW

To Rich, 3 Dec 2020

There is a blue yonder in our sky
Above the clouds that soak our sun
And it makes me question why
The Work was first begun
And who performed it, long ago :
Who made the river flow,
These somethings made of nothing, and
Then of this nothing took command?

All living things that slough and sigh
And act on every deed that's done --
Who was it who stood by
At their creation?
Who was there who made them grow?
Who held the seed to sow
And nourish the berefted land?
Who offered the first helping hand?

And was there once a hopeful cry
To meet the morning clarion
 As the sun disclosed his eye?
 Who first set foot upon
The ground that newly-grew below?
 Who made the zephyr blow
Sweet canticles of golden sand?
The golden hymn who planned?

I say: this music was the cry
 Of everything flowed into one,
An emergent maze of butterfly
 In a mirror of ascension

INDIRECT SPEECH

Each age says the same thing
in a different way
but is always buried
in the same clay

COMMEDIA SKETCH

Dante is there, in the hidden shades.
In these shades Dante is there.

Where there is shade,
Dante is there,
wandering like a silent star
into the abyss,
eyes as fixed as hydrogen
to the celestial, therefore never bestial,
oxygen, Beatrice.

He sees her everywhere,
he who is everywhere.

Bound to her
in a sea of --
in a stream of --
contemplation and reveration,
like a star he stares
at the sun.

This Beatrice
is his sign,
made to shine
above his abyss

and, between the star and the sun,
the abyss and Beatrice,
lies a mist

various and vast
through which no light but his has passed

and it is beyond this very mist
that Beatrice does not exist,
shining outside of time
in immortal rhyme.

In death
Dante himself transcends the abyss,
and beyond that mist
where she does not exist,
he binds to Beatrice
in the sea of eternal rest
where everything is blessed
by gods who do not exist.

THE TANGLE OF TIME

Every moment appears to be eternal
For it is real and nothing else is
Only an instant actually exists
Before touch and taste
Melt into the vacuum of memory

Taste the instant and let it nourish you
Let the void of your past
Be crammed and vast
And in that way you can make
The tangle of time to last

SWORD DANCERS

Nudi iuvenes inter gladios se atque infestas frameas saltu
iaciunt [et] pretium est voluptas spectantium.

Eyes dance over words
Sense clicking its heels
Eye and sense embrace
As each each other feels
In a caroled law of seals
Shut in the laws of place
Where sally steel swords
We draw upon the base

LEAVES

Ich komm nach Nirgendland.

1 To Masha Kaléko

If you die in a foreign country
Is it as if you'd never lived
And, as your heart stops beating,
As if you never even loved?

This shows there is illusion in death
Just as there was in life:
The leaves in the tree a familiar green
Above the alien and fallen leaf.

2 In A Sense

In a sense
it was said and meant

In a sense

But beyond that
the pearl still sat
in the centre
of the oyster
and the leaves fell
like arguments
to the uncomprehending
untroubled earth

3 Where We Come From

Few of us get to know where we come from.
We picture golden villages wrapped in hay
That are sprayed with a gentle silver rain,
And in those images we pause like leaves
Leaked upon the earth but stopped. The world
Becomes a jar of sweet water in a cupboard
Stocked with sugar and spices. We smile enticed
Like matted beasts who do not see the loom
That weaves the truth and cannot be broken
And which leaves no trace of where it started,
Let alone telling us what the fuck it means to do.

4 Hermit

Deep in the forest, under canopies of leaves,
 Among a rich feast of salads, lies the hermit,
 Looking through the tops of the trees at the sky.
 A little rain falls down and drenches the cover
 Of the forest roof. The trees stretch on forever,
 Past the gate, creating a world within the world.
 It seems to the hermit as if he is constantly
 Witnessing creation. A myriad of leaves wraps
 Numberless creatures, each swinging its heels
 Through secret paths clothing a resilient ground.
 As the hermit rises, passionate to take the path
 To his twig-covered bothy, to fill it with prayer,
 It is as if he has become evaporated, now there
 Is only a holy hint that this man was ever there,
 Leaving creatures in their giant chain of being,
 Faithless to all things except the will to live
 Inside the forest that will consume them all.

STONE CIRCLE

Here we see buried the bones of belief.
 The spirits, flown into the moon
 Or the sun, vanished far too soon,
 Are silent as the tears of long-dead grief.
 The circle stands unburied, a lone
 Testament that stands long after the work is done.

But what work? What did its raisers feel?
 The moon and sun were their family?
 Did their dances make them feel free?
 In the circle everything might be seen to heal
 Except that last and final fear,
 Which is what I think is forever buried here.

SOLSTICE

I stepped out of the lane into the field
as a wildering wren pecked at a piece
of the sky with its fiery eye. A bucket
lay on its side at the field edge, an ugly
intrusion into the basket of time. Ice swam
uneasily in scattered frozen lakelets. Movement
hid in its deep and darkling tunnel, beneath
the rounded and age-smooth burial mound.

I approached the mound, fixed to the earth,
as if chained to the stillness. The midday
froze not burned, tracks of cloud in the sky
the only rivers flowing here and now. I turned
away, fearful to be standing so near the abyss.
The tiny wren cluttered up the primal hedge
with an imagined majesty, lord of time, son of
the ancient sovereign who long ago looked on
at the sunless folds of the first ceremony.

SEPULCHRE

Shadowed as a ghost
longing in its flanks
it weaves grey fields
of dead dark wheat

Beneath an orchid sun
and a severed moon
the pale inhabitants
lie and weakly wait

One day perhaps, one day
the expected day will come
a wild warm harvest
light the sepulchre

THREE

1 Windowsill

Flutter, letter,
to the floor,
but don't break
the heart
of the windowsill.

The windowsill
hears many things
but it would be a dark death

if it felt the private pain
of words.

2 Moth

Whole worlds were swallowed
by the moth called time
as it flew in amongst us all,
its feelers just like jaws.
'Moth, we summon you', we say,
and then, 'Moth, go away',
but it never listens to, or even sees,
the world that's in its way.

3 Swallow

La rondine
of the valley
empties herself of song
on her bony branch seat --
“It’s a thrill,
thrilling”,
in such a deep summer
to so sense the will
of the rotating gods --
and yet
remain willing

THE ALABASTER KINGDOM

Over the silver mountains
The alabaster kingdom
 That lives above the air
Where every breath is perfume:
 How soon will I be there?

Its outline stands before me
 The halls of meat and drink
On the alabaster tables
 At which the angels blink

If I could reach beyond me
 To the alabaster sky
I should not suffer questions
 Nor ask a reason why

I feel I could wait forever
By the alabaster throne
Each utter thing discovered
Mine and mine alone

SEJGER WENN?

Ask a grave
What time it is
What day it is
It will not speak
Its voice is weak
In its velleities
Lie deities

Each of its cities
Buried in silence
Past all violence
No time no space
Don't ask a grave
What time it is
What pity is

'REFLECT: THE SUN MUST SET'

Life is like looking at a reflection
in clear and careful light
yet knowing (but not when)
one day the light will switch off

So beauty is not transient like a storm,
for the storm dies out
blowed into a tiny box of wind,
it is a property of light
as life is a property of light

The trick, then, is to love the light
until the light is love and love is life
for love cannot be shut in any box
because it is a property of light

All is light they say and do I agree?
as I sit here watching but not waiting
for the reflection that my eye swims in
in the great sea of life
one day to be dried by the light

The reflection is all I see
all I remember and forget
it is all that I can be
all anyone can expect
what no one can reject
though the sun must set

THE SKULL OF GOLD

That land of fiction and of truth

It is a fucking waste of time, you know,
To barter faith as if it were a peg of jam.
You're in a realm of claiming I AM THAT I AM
And yet you never have a stone to throw
Into the sky and interrupt the eagle's flight
So, soon enough, the day is turned to night.
THAT I AM I AM, that alleluia howl
Is uttered to the void. You cannot make it grow
Without a seed, and so you throw the trowel
Into the air, and hope that it lands right.
It's all a waste. There's nothing in it, no.
The rainbow is a sign that it is time to go.
Whoever says that faith is something to be sold
Believes death's alchemy turns bones to gold.

WILL AND ANNE

A lilt she had, a touch of grandeur, eh?
 In the common muck we came from, what
 Was it I saw, and what do I see today?
 I rarely think of her: our marriage got
 Thrown lower deck in a ship with no shore,
 Stuck in the same bellybarge deep at sea.
 In the dark we lie like biscuits, she and me,
 Each opposite and reflective. Yet, before,
 When all the world was centred and passed close,
 And I was just a cap upon a youthful head,
 With the sun in my pocket, and Anne oh formose,
 I could barely express with the little I had read
 The solemn hammerl  c that love allots to life
 And inhales into you the breath that is a wife.

MOSES MAIMONIDES

Moses Maimonides
 He heard a far off cry
 So Moses cried out
"Why why why!"
 Poor Moses cried out
 And this is all he said
"I am all all alone
Inside my head
Why do you call me
And not other men?
Too much weight
Upon my pen
Inside my head
I am all all alone
I am the Word
Drawn out of stone
And I am an exile

*So far from home
For I have no land
And no shalom
But me myself
I'm such small fry
Why d'you call me?
Why why why?"*

And to all of that
No answer came
But did he not have
Himself to blame?

MATER FILIUSQUE (TACITA UXOR)

'The problem', *said my Cynegils*
'Is paying off these endless bills
'Part from that we are okay mother
'We needle but we need each other
'And who told you smoking kills?
'I'm *quite* alright'.
Oh Cynegils!

THE GAME

In the bunchgrass
 our children play
as they will
 til they go grey

Til the ball is thrown
 that they catch
as their own
 children watch

SUNSET

The twilight works its spell upon the Earth
 Like a wraith or ghost imagining
 What can't be seen or heard. It rules
 The language of the birds and how they sing
 And all the secret corners of their birth
 Down to the yolk. The anxious sunset cools
 Unwatered grass now wilting in the rays
 Which wither in their turn. We praise
 Our certainties with unbelieving eyes,
 The spell which weaves its cunning lies.
 When the night attends us, when night
 Defends us all with sleep, we sleep.
 We never see the night or even taste its light
 As it works a spell as helpless as it's deep.

FUNERAL DAY

Repaosă nestrumâmutate
 Sub raza gîndului etern.

1 'Waiting on the ceremony'

Waiting on the ceremony
 Waiting on the end
 When form and frame
 Will meet their end
 And all of it will end
 When the gyres of memory
 Sweep past death's door
 And as we close the door
 The cycle will redawn
 In a form of harmony
 In a door in front of me
 In a door without a key

Whose locks with time blend
Into each and every end

2 Finery

He now lies all clothed in death
wrapped now in death's finery
his living clothes now all cast off
and now the mourning psalmery
no longer even echoes in the grass
we must dress him in our memory

'THE KEY TO CALM BE LOST, BE LOST'

Not before it all
but after
we look back
and we see
ourselves
in a mirror
of mist
twisting about
retreating hearts
dispersing
like sleep

THE WHIMBREL

The whimbrel stared with startled eyes
at fish that danced upon on the waves
their fins like tinsel, so tiny yet alive
and the waves glistened without guilt

What then? the wimbrel asked herself
as her wings enamelled in the haze,
above a sea benumbed and unkind,
where hid a wealth beneath the waves

Then, watching the dance, the wimbrel dove
into the passing pack of it, her salty beak
that damned the dancing fish snapped shut
as back into the air she flew like light

and her question glistened as it drowned

ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD

In a place in distant heaven
The sentimental never see
I begin today to look for you
Who can never seek for me

At length I find a wooden seat
On which a name is plaqued
I see the earth is mostly dry
And grass is being cracked

The sun shines into the shade
And the yard plays like a child
Small memories built and arrayed
Weave into a magnificent smile

The flies are buzzing all the while
As the day grows up into a man
Just there I see you waiting, waiting
Before the door but fading, fading

I enter the door and steer the nave
As victoriana clings like a grave
And I see you in the shadow where
The ship descends into the wave

Outside the sunlight swaddles me
As if some presence poured out its jar
And from out of this liquid infancy
We are at last reborn just as we are

THE DUST

The pact all villages one day must make.

If a sweet surrender to the dust
Is all there is left to us in the end,
Then surely while we live we must
Accept this thing we cannot understand.

The dominion of dust we cannot understand,
So we must accept the dominion of blood
Is a temporary thing that's written in the sand,
As is so often said: the end is buried in the mud

Or burnt to ashes, the dust within the flame.
In the dominion of blood, we must keep going
The fire of the self, as if when that at last came,
The Extinguisher, our blood could keep flowing

In to the flame of time surrounding us, the dark wood
We wander in a while. We wander in its dust
Until we see the Extinguisher, now before us stood.
We must not surrender to it until we must,
Until our flame, our blood,
Flow into dust and mud.

TUMOMINU

Tumominu played by the lake
She played by the lake
And every midsummer we bring her cake
Tamaramali!

Tumominu was angry and sad
She was angry and sad
Because one year the cake was bad
Tamaramali!

Now where is Tumominu gone?
Where is she gone?
The lake is dry and we are done
Taramamali!

Where in the world is she?
We have no cake not we

THE EXAMINATION

You may begin writing now.

1. Julie is shorter than Susan. Susan is taller than Julie.
How tall is St. Sebastian? What is the vector?
2. In the beginning was the word. I am the resurrection
and the life. Is the solution acid or alkaline?
3. My car has broken down. In the garden there is an
orange tree. Susan is in the garden with Julie. St.
Sebastian has broken down.
4. The set is associative. A vector has magnitude and
direction. Theft is a tort. Julie stole something. What did

Julie steal? Julie was stealing a metaphor. Julie is a metaphor.

5. In silence we stood. In silence we lived, in the valley of time taken. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin. These arrows are made of bronze. St. Sebastian sees the arrows.

6. I have fear. You have fear. They have fear. St. Sebastian has fear. The garden is empty.

7. The garden is very old. It has one guard. How old is St. Sebastian? Does he possess magnitude and direction?

8. Similes are often used in poetry. I do not like this garden. Is it like or as the resurrection?

9. Are you the resurrection? Susan has found her watch. The watch was stolen by Julie. Where is the guard? Where is St. Sebastian?

10. Tort is associative. We are the resurrection. We are the word. We are the guards. No one is taller. No one is like or as this.

Please turn over.

THE RAGGED BOYS OF LONDON

The homeless boys huddle as if an undergrowth to the city, moving through it like wolves in pack, packing themselves into very small and tight spaces each night, always hiding from everything except dirt and lice, lice littler than the littlest homeless boy, they who live in the veins of the city, its streets, and the bones of the city, its buildings, which are all closed to them, these pucks for

whom the blood of Jesus and the bones of Jesus are mere bread and wine for them to steal, for whom in fact the city itself is an immense table upon which is set fine fare for them to steal.

HADES AND EURYDICE

1

[A]nd as she wandered o'er the fane
A drag of flowers in her train,
Eurydice returned again
 To where the pathways crossed,
 Sighed for the youth she'd lost.

“Perhaps somewhere within this place
My soul shall somehow find a trace
Of love that cast me out of grace,
 And if I find it here
 I *will* pray a prayer.”

The garden that she'd came upon
Was full of anthems to the sun
Yet, deep in contemplation,
 She moved within the bloom
 As if it were a tomb.

2

Old Hades, watching from the shades,
Observed the futile steps she made
And, as a hunter in the river wades,
 He splashed into the stream
 As if he wore a dream.

“Who in the land of light is she
 If not the cursèd Eurydice?
 What is this wound she bears to me,
 I of the shadow, *I*
 Who lives as if to die?”

And as he looked, a soothing thought
 Then sallied forth as if it sought
 The net in which it could be caught,
 And it were caught ere long,
 That sad, unearthly wrong.

“What is this world to Eurydice
 But suffering? I hear her speak
 Of how to end it she must leak
 And sigh her soul away,
 ’ntil all is left is clay.

“She echoes her narciss’*tic* call:
 How ‘*Love is death and waits us all*,
 And ‘*O besieger! O this wall!*,
 The wall dividing us
 Is thee, my Orpheus!’

“‘*What is this world to me?*’, she cries,
 And beats her breast, ‘*When true love dies*
The world is dead!’. To hear her sighs,
 It’s quite the load to bear,
 A lost love to outwear.

“Her lover is a faithless man,
 A babbling barbarian,
 His pretty songs, this Thracian,
 Are false as night is day:
 To flakes they fade away.

“Each man hopes to a lady save,
Though hot coal his pathways pave,
To snatch her to her peace, her grave,
Safe from a cruel lover
For ever and for ever.”

AFTERS

After Al-Farazdaq

Our reason as weighted as the press of a mountain;
But fancies fly free as mist sparked from a fountain.

After Abû al-'Atâhiyya

i
As people to their passions turn
Mill of death won't cease to churn.

ii
We see who see, after the image dies,
We stay inside the prison of our eyes

iii
They say to the wind each time that he dins :
Oh wind! Just you and me and see who wins!

After Di'bal ibn 'Alî al-Khuzâ'i

So many people at whom I stare,
But I don't ever see anyone there

After Abû Tammâm aT-Tâî

She advances, pure crystal white, and the shade
Dresses in flame, the dull light so brightly made

After Dîk al-Jinn al-HimSî

Should I abandon my wine-cask's hunkydory
For the imagined promise of some future glory?
Life then death then resurrection - what a story!

After Ibn-Rûmî

I am just like a mirror-face
With each soul I swap place

After Abû al-'Alâ' al-Ma'arrî

i
Youth a flame : try and get enough
Before Time thinks to go - snuff!

ii
My body a shroud, my house a tomb
My life is death, and death is doom

iii
Day and night succeed each other, I remain
As if I am grabbing at some propaganda flood
Seems as if my time of being and nothingness
Is merely a child stacking up mud

iv
Just a bird within a cage, the soul
Hopes in death to achieve its goal

v

Religion for the dead is a brimming mall
But for the living it is not very much at all

vi

Food, indifferent to rich and poor
As it wrangles in and out each maw

vii

In the dust we all get dusty, just
Like we're dust shaped with dust

Envoi

After the cup, the bed.
A metaphor?, we said.

HESTER ST

The yiddish klang
goes on and on
and never stops
I hope
it never stops

Pots and pans
and harridans
shrewing and shriking
I hope
it never stops

New land
far from the old land
a shtetl full of shops
I hope
it never stops

Promised land
Of free mensh
and equal
I hope
it never stops

THE CROSS AND THE WHEEL

Boëthius, Oscar : each buried in their prison --
Wisdom shows one Fortune and her Wheel
The other through the bugs and filthy chrism
Sees the passion and sorrow a Cross made real

The Wheel rolls down the crest of the slope
But the Cross remains at the top of the hill
It is both these signs that bear up the hope
They both see in the sky past the windowsill

PEASANTS

The enormous beauty that stands before them
Is ignored just like a banquet to the gorged
They just see dirty tracks that flow with dung
And rooms in which the manacles are forged

They see castles and manors (the homes of rent)
And bailiffs whose very mouths are abysses
And the plough that begrudges life to its servants
And the solitary gate where the dog pisses

And the hardships that slowly wear the soul away
 Banishing all wonder in the struggles of the day /
 Of the blue sky ravishing the green belly of the valley
 The peasants, I assure you, have nothing to say

COMPLEYNT

Night falls flat upon Angoulême
 The knights and squires sleeping
 But over there beside a stone
 There sits one who is weeping

*The sky is gone! the light is gone!
 Is this my land to be forgotten?
 Who sleeps tonight forsakes all right
 Their eyes are ravishers and rotten*

*The sound of battle's drained of blood
 There is no more bottle or ambition
 A dreadful silence wraps our days
 Cut into by a shy and sly sedition*

*To every story there is a solid stem
 That roots out lies and must be believed
 But who can see at night in Angoulême?
 I alone, just me. Certainly not them.*

Across the sky the moon is heaved
 By forces little understood
 Though they're for our good,
 But there lies *he* --
 There, you see? --
 As cold as yule wood.

LANGUE D'OC

Forgotten word-temples
from southern mountains
and summer seas

There sensitive men
in rough rouged castles
turned the key of art

It was the arrgh! they had
and though a few were bad
fewer of them were rich

Then the castles were burned
and Béziers they burned
and heretics they burned

Burned into an orthodoxy
they lost all the keys
to their sacred paths

They downed their arms,
their pens, even their faith
in *fin amor*

Only M. Jean Nôtre dame
in floral vidas preserved
for us their fabled deeds

We read them now too rarely
and regard them only sparely,
these ancient troubadours

But the war they fought
 was in a sense the real war,
 for love was their cause

BENOÎT THE SCRIBE

*Hunched over his little desk
 in suffocating candlelight,
 he writes of dragons and slayers
 of dragons. His goosequill pen
 scrapes parchment building up
 serious layers of fat. He sighs
 as Guigemar slowly draws up to
 another fountain next the palace
 no doubt soon to be described.*

“So many types of gem out there,”
 thought Benoît. “I don’t know, is it
 esmeraud or emeraud these days?
 Always there’s an emerald, always,
 and about twenty lines at least,
 in octosyllables of horded gems,
 a whole rainbow’s worth of ’em,
 and after the adjectives die down,
 bold Guigemar saves the dame.”

Envoi

*A few days later, it was all done :
 Guigemar blinked as he set out
 From the scriptorium into the sun,
 Awaiting fame from king and lout.*

ILOLO MORGANWYG

And where is Iolo now?
He is summoning the bards
And all the other clochards
To beetle the hill's brow

On their seats in a round
The choiry harmony is played
All unbalancing is stayed
All is wonder all is sound

Now – there is silent solitude
I ask – where's Iolo now?
Where is the golden bough?
Where is the sacred wood?

OLD PAINTING

The cracks in the paint are cracks in time
And time sits on the canvas covered in grime

You see, it is very rare that time is clean
Outside the fleeting moment barely seen

No, time is slobbered and clobbered as if prey
To munching bugs who fatten as it fades away

TRANSLATIONS

After Mahmoud Darwish, from 'State of Siege' (2002)

I

If you've no tears, my love

Be tree

Plentied -- be tree

And if you're no tree, my love

Be stone

Liquefacted -- be stone

And if you're no stone, my love

Be moon

In love's reverie - be moon.

So says a woman

To the son she just buried.

II

The siege will last as long as the besieger

And the besieged realise that boredom

Is a key trait of all human beings.

III

The cups of our coffee. Birds. Trees green

In the blue shades and the sun leaping

This or that wall like a gazelle --

Cloud-water taking to infinite forms

In what remains to us of the sky,

And all the other stuff that we'll remember in time,

This all indicates this morning is powerful, splendid,

And that eternity is now our guest.

RETURNING TO ATHENS

Themistocles the strategos at the prow
of the ship watched the alabaster crests
of the waves light upon the wine-dark seas,
and he felt the ship bob up and down,
rocked to and fro by Poseidon's guiding hands.

"War is where true glory is to be found,"
he said to himself. "And companionship.
In the city, all friendship is like smoke
rising from a fire very soon to be put out:
all that noise of disputation burns my ears.

Is honour only truly to be found upon
the level sea or the level plain where
battles cry with an iron voice to the sky
and into the earth?" There came no reply,
but far away in Athens, enemies are waiting,

impatiently, for him to return.

THOREAU

Cutting himself off, he thought,
could save the world, if only
he could save himself, he being
the example the world needed.

It was a noble thought.

Yet in his cabin, as winter troubled
into the fields and woods, he saw a spider
sidling down the wall from roof to floor
and he understood it's not a floor to reach,
it is skies forever to be sought.

AFTER ALEXANDRU DEPĂRĂȚEAU

March 19, 1857

Mama

Three paupers -- two kids and mum
And bread! In a filthy cloth, one crumb.

A crust in each hand she set,
Having broke into two the bread.

“Mama!” : the children’s eyes were wet --
“What is left you?” “You”, she said.

*

*Erau trei sărmani: doi copii și o mamă
Și pâine... un singur codru într-o mahramă!
Mama îl frânse-n două și-l dete pe rând
La fiesce-care câte o părticea.
— „Mamă”, atunci copii ziseră plângând:
„Ție ce-ți rămâne?” — „Voi!” — răspunse ea.*

A LOVER’S PRAYER

Laughing moon
Leagueing moon
Loving moon
 Your horns, withdraw!

Telling moon
Tolling moon
Tailing moon
 Light us once more!

Renewing moon
Restoring moon
Revealing moon
Sweet dayivore

Deceiving moon
Denying moon
Decaying moon
Silver our straw!

Lonely moon
Longing moon
Lingering moon
Suffer and soar!

Send, moon
Kind moon
Fond moon
Influ'nce, oh pour

Ever us, moon
Over us, moon
Cover us, moon
With lunatic lore

Grand moon :
Land moon,
And, moon
Close the door!

THE POETRY OF LIFE

If you ever close a door
If you ever light a fire,
You have performed a metaphor.
If you ever cross the road
If you ever see the light,
You're the mystery behind the door
Of that silent room of words,
That prison of dead echoes,
Each echoing the one that went before.

SIGNOR LEOPARDI

Musa, la lima o've?

Far away moon
No nearer sun
To you I cry :

You symbols of symbols
Both of you ambles
Across the sky

Be *kind* to him
Go *near* to him
Be each his eye

So he see silver
So he see gold
Then, let him die

ST FEE

Introducing St Fee

I

This grit they call tea
 Brought in from the sea --
But it's cheap, it's cheap
 And blessed by St Fee

II

St Fee had a face
full of woe
but for a heart
a dynamo

III *The Thrivance of St Fee*

When into Pluto's sea he dives,
St Fee dies,
But a glance at the eternal,
He thrives.

IV

When St Fee was born,
His mother's heart was as warm
As the sun,
When first she saw her son

St Fee's Youth

I

St Fee received the gift
But he preferred to give
St Fee did not read books
For he preferred to live

II

There was a race.
Last place St Fee,
But behind him was The Devil,
Who came last, really.

III *St Fee's Prayer*

St Fee once sailed the sea
From Abercorn to Aberdeen'
And, waiting for the end to come,
His gut kept praying 'rum tum tum!'

IV

He saw the Sun set
Like a candle snuffs out,
Did St Fee.
His epiphany.

V

I saw St Fee
transform a pile of food
into a silver plate.

I said "Mate!
you have it in you
to be rather
great."

VI

There is more goodness that is inside of St Fee
Than fleas who get drunk off the pope's salary

The Faith of St Fee

I

If you climb to the top of a tall tree,
You can see
(says St Fee)
Only such a very little more
Than you did before.

If you dive to the bottom of the sea
(says St Fee)
You will find that behind each and every Flood
Lies mud.

If you fly up to the sky,
The wide world to flee,
(says St Fee)
You must prepare
To meet God's stare
And to look him in the eye.

II

When St Fee smiled
We smiled
But when he laughed
We cried
For his laugh was so beautiful
It never should have died

III

St Fee wore a cloak
made of wool
that bit into him

But he lived in a pool
of light, and there Bliss
swam up to him

IV

There once was an enormous noise
We all thought that it might be
God, or The Devil, heralding the End.
But it was just St Fee

V

“The world is like a ship that knows not where it’s going
But would it be happy if there was some way of knowing?
Would it not sail on in fear and without a single sound
As it waited to meet the rock on which it is to be drowned?
Do we not do better, we who are sacrificed to ignorance,
That clothes us with our hopes?”

So preached St Fee once.

VI

A church should be dark enough to see its mystery
And it and its founder should share the same history

No, the outside world should not be too much let in,
Thought St Fee: who'd want to flood a church with sin?

VII

A church is too small
For the human soul,
St Fee thought, but
It was on the whole
Best having it shut
Inside, that it not roll
 Off in
the doubter's chariot

VIII

St Fee said, I doubt you'll understand
But I will say it anyway --
I do not love The Devil
But I accept him anyway

IX

If there was anyone I would like to be
 It would be St Fee
 Just after a full meal
 And just before full prayer

X

To St Fee, Latin
was a balmy lotion :

each written word
healed the page

each word read
healed the eye

each word spoken
sent out a spirit

to heal the air
each word we sang

heeded in heaven

Two songs for St Fee

I

We all sang
 St Fee sang best
He the Host
 We the Guest

II

St Fee kept bees
 With golden wings
But when he died
 They lost their wings

St Fee's Death

I

*He died
 he kissed the Sun
 the Moon kissed him*

*He died
 and everyone --
 we all -- missed him*

II *St Fee's Epitaph*

*St Fee
lies here
do not
shed tear
for he
not fear
his lot
be clear
he be
God near*

III

*Within is not without,
A silly thing he said,
But whatever he said
Led you away from doubt
(When you figured it out)*

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST FEE

St Fee was martyred just last week. He said to the moneylenders -- stop! cease thy restless work, remove thy hands from the tills! overturn thy checker boards! paralyze thy beads of the cheating abacus! unzephyr each blackened whit of usury! step into the light of clean commercium! step in the noble burgh of mercantile mercy, o! -- be demoneyed, demammoned, unmarketed!

So they looked up from their accounts
and quickly martyred him.

THE BONES OF ST FEE

The bones of St Fee lie just outside the marketplace. They are old bones now, maybe mere dust and ashes of time. What he said is long forgotten, and what remains of what he said has been magnified into an impudent roar that, if it cannot easily be ignored, is annoying to the refined mind, and uninviting to the rest, of use only to bind a faction, or drive a lonely mob or two.

The bones of St Fee lie restless, I suppose, transformed into the general and common memory, still searching for the light to guide the mob, to lead us to the River Jordan. That may have been his aim during his days of breath -- I mean the living man, old Fee of Llantyffi -- but, look! -- just see what happens after you are gone, even if a memory of you lives on.

The bones of St Fee rustle like leaves. Impulsively compulsively. They rustle in the seas of death. Uneasily. Mimic the tree of life. Restlessly.

The buckled bones of St Fee.

HAGIOGRAPHS

1 St Bunion

St Bunion holds the keys to the stars
 As if they are all behind bars.
 But will he ever let them out?
 No room, as someone said, for doubt.

Right now they're all imprisoned there,
 Out of their Calcutta hole they stare,
 And hear the clinking colden key chain.
 St Bunion oversees their longing pain.

He is a lonely man. He's always on his tod,
 St Bunion is. He does not believe in God.
 God, for him, is a fellow in a kind of mask
 Who long ago set him up to do this task.

He fingers his keys and slobbers at his plate
 (Which may be a metaphor for all of fate,
 His stars and his). This tale may even have a twist
 For, at times, I wonder: does St Bunion exist?

2 St Sabbia

Perhaps I should construct my verses out of sand, that
 they could swirl about their reader's rooms, reshaping
 and remeaning in a constant retransformation -- such a
 mortal immortality! These words of sand like an ever-
 marching band, warring against time and transience,
 overturning even their own metaphor: poems made of
 sand, storms of waves to clothe the cosmic dust!

3 St Fairly

St Fairly lived within the woods and the birds spoke to him and one day they asked him how he was.

He said he felt like he'd just plucked a beak-filling worm out of the earth, and he said he felt like he'd just dropped out the nest for the very first time and was trying out his own two wings for the very first time and soaring up to the clouds for the first time, and he said he felt like he'd just wooed a mate and she had wooed him back and they both together had just built their first nest, and how beautiful is that? he cried, how beautiful is all of that? and that even in this immortal lake of beauty that cleansed his beating wings, still he felt the fears and the doubts, and still he feared the hawk in the sky, and that often he lay awoke most nights in fear of that awful day to come, the day on which the hawk in the sky must at last snatch you away, and that somehow these unworthy doubts in the face of his God were in fact the path of crumbs leading him to the cleanest, purest, truest love of God.

4 St Cambrian

“ Do not make of life a pattern that you draw upon the wall of the sky. For that will fade with time. Do not make out of the day a figure of marble that you bow down to. Tomorrow it will be a shapeless lump. Do not wander the paths of the world like a stranger among strangers, but as a mirror among mirrors. But do not break the mirror. Do not -- oh never! -- do such a frangent thing! For the mirror is the dividing line between this world and that. Break a mirror, you have destroyed two worlds, and you must now inhabit a third, a world even our beloved God,

the Almighty, fears and abhors. Do not make out of life a void. Oh, you must never remove the mirrors of life and of this world. ”

SAUL (NEAR DAMASCUS)

Come, sit down, you have travelled a long way, and you must be tired and hungry -- here is challah and wine.

Your eyes are extravagant in their gaze, traveller. What did you see? It is a dusty track you travel on, and you are hostage to the sun that makes the dry stones burn as if they were fallen stars, boiling and barren all the way up to the battered city gates.

What can this baneful track have to offer anyone? It ambles to the City like thoughts trying to escape a fool. So many pass this way, stranger, and they all are burned into a husk of what they once were, at least in days like this, when the season of long hours hanks its heat over us all.

But you, my friend -- you seem possessed not by a golem of the desert wastes. No, it is something more powerful that fluctuates and flutters through the soul, flowing out then in, soaring up and down, a force for good that one day might rise to obliterate the world.

Sir, I swear, I see it in your eyes, a thing difficult and dominant and strange.

THE PEEPER (TO JULES LAFORGUE)

Alors géhenne á fou, sans raison, sans issue!

The Eternal looks down upon the Creature that contains Awareness within itself, the Creature that sees and

reaches out to eternity even when it knows it's trapped in time like a beetle in a jar, like a scarab sun that senselessly rolls up and down the jar -- the Eternal can see the Creature skating across its years and that it is able to count each one, such a lonely few they are.

The Eternal looks down upon the Creature impassively with the blinkless stare of eternity. The Creature seems to know better than any other Thing that both Is and Are are transient and immutable, and that they are the bed in which it lies for its ever, a bed like a universal Bone, beyond all colour and all wonder and all pain.

The Eternal looks down upon the Creature incuriously as it hauls up its ennui at the little coffin-cradle cupping its existence, and It watches the Creature fill the air with a few choice words it hopes will invoke eternity.

The Eternal looks down upon the Creature scratching such words onto the unbreakable Bone and It often wishes It had an Eye to close, to no longer see the Creature struggle, or at least to weep these mites that agony their little jar.

BEMATOKRATES

When Bematokrates was nineteen, he looked out to sea and he thought of his beautiful land, and he said to himself, "I must make a choice of where to lead my life and where I can find myself fame and renown. Do I march to them, or do I sail there?"

The king was during that time at war in Cappadocia, or perhaps it is better to say he was conducting a minor skirmish. It was not, whatever it was, a glorious affair.

But that was what passed for war back then. There was no fleet -- let alone a magnificent Persian fleet -- that looked like it would row itself against the shore any time soon. "What choices do I really have?", sighed Bematokrates. "To be a mighty admiral looking out to sea at fishermen, or an incarnated Achilles who lends his mighty arm to schoolyard scraps?"

The youth Bematokrates stood still as a kouric statue. "There is no choice, at least not that I can see," he inwardly lamented. He grew incandescent at these Fates who'd thrown him into the world at such an unresplendent time, and what is more into a city where fame and renown are laid upon their backs, like criminals who plot against the city's empty laws and its truly godless worthless kings and queens, and who are to be thrown into the common grave beyond the city walls.

Envoi

*Fame mothers fear,
Fear smothers fame.
But here -- here! --
Life is mere game.*

*I, Bematocrates,
Am one of the martyrs
To this dead world
Into which I'm hurled.*

*At nineteen, I died,
Too full of pride.
I drowned in spleen.
I was just nineteen.*

*I, in this cask,
Of death I ask
It bear me fame,
A lasting name.*

OFFSET

In the room full of dreary people I saw her, slightly offset. I did not speak to her, just noticed her, for I was not there to stay long, and I did not stay there long. She stood offset, it seemed to me. To the room, to the people and, I was sure, to the world itself. I saw her gaze. It seemed to me her eyes took in absolutely what they wished to see, and excluded all the rest. I heard her laughter, a raucous laugh, but it seemed to me to be a laugh full of labour, and of doubt. The room was not hers, it never would be, and yet it was her world, to which she stood, and would always stand, slightly offset.

SALAMIS

Salamis means ‘the land of peace’, but not in the Greek tongue. The navy of Salamis goes about much like any other navy does, in the name of formally protecting the local carrying trade, the fat merchants of cloth and spices and pretty pots and lamps done up into the shapes of gods who themselves pretend to harbour and preserve the peace.

THE STORM

The storm approaches the Isle of Glass like a flea who spies a well-fed hound. It approaches steadily though: it doesn’t leap. Icily and easily it glides across the sky. They grow concerned, the gods do. It isn’t their storm, this storm approaching. They didn’t create this storm.

When the storm strikes, when it flows over the Isle of Glass, the gods, aghast, cover their eyes and ears. The storm is very terrible indeed. There is boulders of hail and rivers of rain and blades of razor-sharp lightning.

It has come to this, the gods said. We did not serve them well and this is our deserved reward. They prayed to us, we took from them. Always praying and taking, and it seemed it would last forever. Our greed has made us weak. This new God is jealous, as even He admits. But this new jealous God has made them both fearful and proud. And now He by Himself confronts our once mighty retinue.

What are we to do?

THE WALL

“I like to promenade along the Wall. It is a trader’s place, a soldier’s place. Traders and soldiers, I find so often, run together. The rough bark of the soldier balances the honeyed tongue of the trader. And the Wall is magnificent, a giant’s work, the work of gods. From Ituna to Tinea it marches, brick by brick. It commands the hills and the plains, and the hillmen and the plainsmen both fear and covet it. Along its length are towers and camps, and here the soldiers and the traders pace out their days. Trouble? There’s little now. We too have our wealthy. We complain merely to prove to ourselves we can complain. Very few truly stand against the Wall. We bring fruit and milk to our lady Brigantia, to her sacrifice, and with these gifts we hope that she will protect the Wall. These traders and these soldiers bring us both wealth and peace, after all.”

THE EXEGESIS

Today I am supposed to deliver my exegesis, and it's been bugging me for weeks. I don't even know if I agree with myself anymore, and being sure of myself is very important to me. I always need to know my own mind. I've written it all down, even made a set of bullet points in case I need them. But there's something doesn't quite make sense to me and I can't see what or why. It's right in front of me, I'm sure of it. It's there like a cat in a kennel. Oh, that's not right. I'd see the cat, wouldn't I. There's a chain of meaning to my argument, and I'm sure it's broken. Like a cat forgetting to ask for food (that's better, I think). It's the silent argument, the non-existent proof or refutation. The thing left unsaid. No, the thing I don't know how to say and should have said. The hat I never wore, the book I never read. All of it is before me, the whole entire world. The whole great nebulous thing. A giant swarm of mist. I grab, and grab, and grab, and hold out handfuls of nothing. If I light the beacon on top of the hill, the world turns upside-down and no one sees it. I have all the words written down and I'll type them all up, bullet points too. I have it written down and still don't know what to say.

AORIST

You could say I have reached the aorist time of life. I have a job, a good one, but I am starting to look back and not ahead. I drive into work each morning but, however fast I go, I don't really seem to go forward. Anyway, the traffic is often bad. I might as well be a stuffed mamma-bear, hung over the fireplace of life. Meetings, deal-sweetenings, fleeting patter thrown at the nearest wall, that's me most of the time. Even not long ago I used to see a goal, or rather, each little goal, the little goals you

meet with every day -- they seemed to drive me forward.
 I drew up my plans and waited for each building to be
 built. I built this city, this place, I used to tell myself. But
 each plan I draw up today -- what plan? These little lines
 that measure walls and rooms, places for ghosts to do
 deals in, where bigger ghosts can beat on less important
 ghosts within their great elaborate chain of unbeing.
 Maybe the buildings I make soon will themselves be
 aorist. Aorist bricks enclosing an imperfect world -- the
 only tense that offers perfect sense.

I am an aorist old bird these days, who has removed
 herself from the future into the past and who builds
 herself up an aorist world to flutter in.

PARABLES

i

Why is our world still here?
 World-tree plumped up wi' bugs
 Who are eating it from inside :
 Light last thing they will see

ii

All poured into a world
 In which they never fit
 They gabble and grapple
 Under the clouded lid

THE CRATON OF EMPIRE

There is only so much circumstance
That anyone can overcome /
There's so many others
Whose greed makes 'em dumb :

The tournaments are full
Of hungry little eyes
All angling for fame
And the waiting prize /

Do you think, even if you held
The winning ball,
They would listen to you,
Or that Rome would fall?

It doesn't work like that /
The craton underneath
Will uphold the edifice
Against any puff of breath

Rapidly eaten by the air /
Then crucifictors come
Leave what's left of you
To the dogs who run in Rome

SCOP

You see the field, you see the tree.
Everyone can see the field.
Everyone sees the tree.

But what do the field and the tree *mean*?

To everyone else but you,
they mean nothing :
this is a field, that is a tree.

What is it in you makes you different?
What do you *see*?
I mean, what *else* do you see?

Why grows about you
a tangent to the circumference
of these stars to which you fly?
Why do *we* not see?
Why don't we see *this*?

How, Wanderer, can you fly
up to the clouds
and among the birds,
Seafarer in exile
escaping the Ruins
of what was home?

Fly in such fellowship
and hello-ship
so far away from us?

It is as if --
this is *not* a field,
this is *not* a tree.
Is *that* what you see?

That the earth we all plow,
to us no more than turned-up mud,
is a world apart to you?

What you sing, we do,
and now you sing to we who sing too,
and we rise from the shade of our trees,
and we dance within our fields,
as we sing what you sing,
do we see what you see?

AT REST AT LAST

i

At the moment of burial
Death is most imperial,
This the final ceremonial,
The tombing of no return,
Ashes waiting in the urn.

ii

We stood around the empty hole.
Texts were read to soothe the soul.
In this warm day of a troubled year,
The Garden was sunlit and warm,
A kaleidoscope of gentle calm.
When sunlight serenades the day
 All resistance fades away.
 We all called out together:
We're very lucky with the weather.

iii

Time went rolling down its weir
Into his final resting place:
Does time matter in that place,
 That dark mysterious end

Of the puzzle we call life?
 We all watched, the final grief,
 To see the little urn descend
 At rest, the little wooden box
 That knocked against the paradox
 As it went down, ship-like, into
 The void, the final blank canto.

iv

When we'd lowered down the urn,
 We scattered dust, each in turn.
 Earth to earth, dusts to ashes fall.
 The urn was made of good strong wood.
 The warm sun still wrapped up us all
 In an affable heat that did us good.
 Yes it was a good day.

v

The ceremony
 Now over, we talked quietly
 Awhile, above the little mound
 Of earth now smoothed and prim.
 Here was Garden all around
 In a fallible and frenzied flood,
 A stone wall for flowers to climb
 Which offered up a gentle shade
 In the place where memory is made.

vi

We took our leave, back to the car,
 Thinking: *here he is, and here we are.*
It was a good ceremony. Friendly, warm.

We took refuge from the empty Form
 A death has. This Garden's for the dead
 It's true: a place where lost life is led,
 Until it finds its final anchoring:
 The soft ground, the lifeless void –

vii

But *here* life's not destroyed.
 Here *life* does the conquering.
 Death is most imperial
 At the moment of burial,
 But as its plans are laid
 And it leaps up to invade,
 Life *bursts* out the vacuum,
 All terrestrial, all aerial,
 Counterpoint, contrarial,
 All anthem, all organum:
 Here death *cannot* come,
 Life only lingers in this grove,
 Met from within and from above.

viii

Dad now in a place of rest and love,
 We got in the car and drove,
 Me, my brother, mum.

Four

ECHO

Too long ago for memory to reach,
 Perhaps when Adam led a gentle fawn
 To some deep pool reflecting each to each,
 When no creature ever feared the hunter's horn
 And peace was brokered every golden dawn
 (In the field we reap the corn once sown for us,
 On which the restless feet of Time are borne),
 A figure dreamily cried out *oh! oremus!*

At length she drooped beneath a shady rock
 Whose shadow harboured her in lakes of grey
 And, shuddering as if she were in shock,
 She quivered in the sun-set summer day.
 What was it caused that Echo cease her play?
 Who took her toys and hid them from her sight?
 Within the shadows of the rock she lay,
 As if in dream unspoken wrongs she might indict.

Yet no sleep came, nor the expected dream.
 "Love is I think the enemy of all,"
 She sighed. "A game played that can only seem,
 Inviting promises none can redeem,
 Like unminted gold within an unmined seam.
 I love he who cannot love me back,
 Me a mere star whose rays no longer beam",
 And she groaned as if she were a witch wrecked on the rack.

"I love he who cannot love me back!".
 It seemed as if she doubted this could be.
 "I might as well be scuppered in a sack!
 With horns as ears! Pebbles eyes to see!
 All *he* could find was monstrosity in me.
 I Echo, who many a suitor so blandly hurled

Into the void and walked away still free.
Now I'm shut out to all the beauty in the world!"

And as she spoke a gentle cloudlet fell
About her misery and she grew pale
Then paler. Echo knew it was a spell
The gods had sent. She felt all feeling fail.
"I fade away like love that goes all grey
And as I fade the gods renew their play,
For they themselves both suffer and rejoice
In the same seas of love that heave and sway,
And me the lovesick fool who dreynt into her voice."

MÍMIR'S WELL

After Harry Heine

In a far off land I came upon
A dark dungeon of a wood.
It was a spot in which to lose yourself,
Or find yourself for good.

In this wood I found a path
Through trees that didn't seem to move,
And as the zephyrs sighed they sighed,
And paced their palaces of lonely love.

At last a clearing in the wood
Like a lightning bolt burst out,
Like a fountainous old fairy land
That married in to out.

Right there I saw a nightingale,
Feathered with armorial gleams,
And a seated leonine old sphinx,
And a tower lit with dreams,

And a woman hanging from the sky.
There, all was glorious and good.
There, the nightingale's eternal song
Flew far above the weeping wood.

It flew with wings of light and shade
Above the clearing full of song.
It wrapped the light in music's shroud
And it made the light so strong.

The bird rested in the woman's hands.
In the sky were clouds of light
And she called them all to follow her
So they might escape the night.

There seemed to be a guiding hand
That guided them invisibly.
There was a silver fountain there
So far and yet so near to me.

Who could understand this place?
Who would mock a fairy spell?
Who could solve its riddle
Without breaking the shell?

The sphinx's riddle in the dust --
Why does the fountain flow so dry? --
The tower's answer to the sky,
The nightingale's searching song --

The fairy fountain was made of light,
But perfection cannot heal your thirst,
And can never mend a broken heart:
Light cannot be made to burst.

II

How did I come to take myself
From my land of dull repose?
Is the woman in the tower real?
What is it that she knows?

No, this is the place I entered in
And that's the only thing I know.
Who built this tower long ago?
From whose dust did it grow?

I realise this nightingale *is* song.
The tower *must* support the sky.
This sphinx's riddle *is* the dust
We all enter when we die.

This tower arms the woman who
Is the ghostly form of endless love,
And in that form she spears the sky
To seed the light that flows above.

She whispers out a wondrous chant
That rolls into the night'gale's song.
But here I stay, trapped here below,
And to her world I cannot belong.

She is the breathing of eternity.
We are the manifests of clay.
She flows into the stars at night,
Invisible to the light of day.

The clearing is a holy place,
A knell of dreams, a well of light.
It encloses the great riddle we
Invoke to help our helpless fight.

Our home lies in the savage wood,
In the gloomy glade of shady leaves.
Only there can we hope one day to see
The athenries a clearing weaves.

TO: 'THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'

I see the skies have opened up
That for so long were closed.
The blood is pouring out the cup:
It is running unopposed.
Ukraine's exploding with a 'crup!':
Who's been un-quelque-chosed?

Who made this war? What sort of pen
Has signalled it to start?
What women and what mostly men
Are playing out their part?
Who has breathed the oxygen
That makes pity into art?

For pity's murdered by these ties
Which mangle up the kind
In soft but heartless little lies:
I ask what sort of mind
Is drawn to war like light to flies,
Then weeps until it's blind.

It weeps in public, weeps to news
Of all the deaths out laid --
These deaths that propagandists use
As their proxy wars are made --
This is true evil, and I refuse
To reverence their trade.

THE CANOPIC JAR

It is our fate. It is fate.
Its capacity is great,
We dimensionless.

It is the beginning to each end,
The *point* of all ascent,
Our clay mourning dress.

It is worshipful as a tomb,
The final room,
What you were, will be, and are.

It is the stone circle of every soul,
The only thing that's whole,
Our canopic jar,
Our canopic jar.

LAST NIGHT

Last night I cried in my sleep.
In my dream,
I cried for you.

You were so helpless, in my dream,
I cried for you,
In my sleep.

Awoke I never cried for you.
As you know, I never *saw* you die.
Maybe that was why.

Maybe sleep is the real place,
And there we are almost free
To feel and to be.

In my dream I cried for you last night,
You were so frail and weak.
I cried last night and could not stop.

AT BRUNDISIUM, -19

I want that wretched epic burnt and turned
into flame. I spent eleven worthless years
scratching out that work and now, as I die,
rolled off the ship by Fortune's clap of hand,
you do understand just how I feel? I'll face
the gentle shades as firmly as I can, for I
imagined them back then. I've been there
almost as much as any man, as if I can see
heaven and its gods opening up for me.
At least let me imagine that is so and ask :
what is virtue and romanitas and pietas
worth to shining gods and obscure shades?
My papers, holding dull and dainty words,
block up the streams whose flow is dammed,
as if I were dammed. All the immersive flows
that washed me into life are now just soot
and grime. Ink lies on the vanquished plain.
Burn it, burn 'em: it mustn't leave one stain.

POET-AS-WORKER

I know someone who knew Eminescu
 in his later years, a tired and already
 worn-out man tied to the printing-press,
 starved of peace and meat, the editor
 who wrote it all, each article, and played
 the empty stage his every momentous
 and mantic soliloquy. His flat was small,
 piled up with books. Best friend his kettle,
 he lived inside a sea of tea and cigarettes
 that mummified the walls, swaddling
 his immortal soul.

So thus lived he in work.
 Work poured out of him, work his ship
 he sailed upon his sea of tea, as bugs
 that swam with him in his lonely room
 bit into the poems riding him to doom.

THE KWIHUTURA

K~ : a formal ceremony to change an old Hutu self
 into a new Tutsi self.

The self is a ruthless parable,
 detached from the sand it treads.
 It swings like a sky above the shoulder,
 spilling the rain we call perception
 upon our limbs as it seeps into life.

The nation is another rufus tale
 and every self is born to its song,
 its tales fragile, transparent glass :
here is the door, here we must pass
 to another self, our new spirit inhale.

CENOTAPH

The modern skull is a cenotaph,
 A memorial to the soul,
 And death is broken up in half
 As it is swallowed whole.
 But resurrection makes us laugh
 In the dusk of our own goal.

This cenotaph once held a mind
 That thundered from its throne
 And regally brought laws to mind,
 For wisdom was its crown.
 But an eyeless skull is always blind,
 Mere abdicated bone.

I imagine this skull a hive of bees :
 Alive in a constant hum,
 Each buzz about the pituitries
 To the summa adds a sum.
 But see all of these activities
 Freeze : the hive is dumb.

I see the weed replace the flower,
 The skull become a tomb.
 What happened to all that power?
 Who led it to its doom?
 But who remembers now of how a
 Hero paced that room?

FRANÇOIS TOMB

eca suθi

Vel Satius and Tanchvil Verati, may you
 find the peace you wished for

SELECTED POEMS

In your coloured clouds of painted walls
dripping with ancestors.
You appear both to be proud and pensive, for
the future (for you,
For us, the ancient past) is rising up. It is
no doubt full of hope
And thoughts of all the potential wealth
your purposeful politics
Is hauling in from the Alps and south
from over the sea
In boats and boxes bound for you. But the
scuttling southron folk,
In their little flatland villages, these backwards-
pointing Latins,
Are building too, and what they build
will overcome the very Fates
Themselves for almost a thousand years,
until the Fates fight back,
When all the freemen with the daggers will
overwhelm them like a sea
Breach across the Rhine. But those lands are
unknown to you for whom
The Alps are the towering northern outer-lands
of infinite wealth, hosting breech-clad chiefs
Who swagger into the frozen twilight of their
superb Greek-raised forts,
Ready to open up their hearts to your patter
and to your petty gifts.
So yes your hope makes good sense, but
look at the flatlands.
Look at how they build. Look at the
ever-growing walls. Look out
To all this. Let your imagination fly into
the haruspicine sky.

SELECTED POEMS

For this is what we know, we who look
back at you both,
In your endless rest, in your perpetual
peace and pretty hopes,
Your sword and mirror lain beside you
smooth as Lake Trasimene
In a passing summer day. Perhaps you can
keep your hopes with you,
That great Vulci will rise to even greater
wealth that will bring more power.
You can lay back and close your eyes forever
in a perfect peace.
But do not open them. Do not watch the building
bray into the flatland.
Do not eye the populus that will defend its
walls, then venture beyond,
One day, out into the totus mundus, to all the
sea and all the lands.
To open your eyes is so often to cast out
the seeds of hope.
To open your eyes is so often to set panic to
prey upon peace.
May you two find the peace you wished for,
in ignorant gloom!

FLINT, MICHIGAN

What's happened to the water, dear?
What's happened to the flud?
What's happened to the children, dear?
What's happened to their blud?

*There is a poison in the water, dear.
There is a poison in the blod.
The children are full of poison, dear.
If we could leave we wud.*

MEZTLI

Snowdrop lamp
Without a stem
Perch for the owl
Of glowworm eyes

Within the shadows
Owl sits and hoots
And so announces
As if she is in prayer

So the child is born
The child delivered
To the thread of fate
Beneath our *meztli*

The decadence of days
Surrounds his soft face
But *meztli* kisses him
To sleep his first sleep

The owl keeps watch
The wise old schemer
Meztli and more mice
Her *pulque*, her maize

Sleep your first sleep
You son of our *meztli*
First hoot a warning
To the nearing sun

FATHER'S DAY, 2022

Inexplicable is this world
Even if you understand its rules.
Absence in the shining light
Is one of the golden rules.

What is not there, like an empty page
Or a glass just waiting to be filled,
Is the seed that feeds the plow,
And in this way the field is tilled.

Today again, you are not here,
And never will be. I accept that is true,
But the knock upon the window now
Is visible as if it were you.

You are precisely where you are not
As each new day is given to the world.
If I offer out my hand to you,
It is understanding I will hold.

THE KNOCK AT A DOOR

I think -- I *cannot* think nor breathe
Within this garden that I wreathe.
I'm full of anger, and that means care,
As deep into the tangled web I stare.
No mole was ever truly blind as me:
I feel the bite of existence, and there
Remain, lukewarm in roomed aridity.

VOICES OF DESIRE

I heard a voice that emptied out of the mist,
A quiet voice. Perhaps it was a simple ghost.
The voice got itself about half way up the road
Before it was swallowed up by the leaning night.
A house loomed in the distance, a phosphor glow.
It no doubt contained a few windows and a door,
And within, a family wrapped up warmly by a fire.
But I was trapped there by the voice of my desire.

TANG

When they looked back at culture,
It was Tang, Tang, Tang,
That once was destroyed by
That dreadful An Lushan.

But was that twilight of the gods
Really so absolute?
For these people who did not believe in gods
Surely it was all moot?

Tang grew up and then it blew up
Like everything in time
And isn't culture anyway like water
That hides beneath the slime?

It was only a burst, only a pang,
The tragedy that they call 'Tang'.
The existing Arts were all beautiful,
And their end made a beautiful 'clang'
In which the awful moment sang
With a heart far more than dutiful.

II

As the final knell for the Tang
 Like a deadly riddle rang
 Hateful song of An Lushan
 Barbarian not hanren man
 Transformed Art into carrion
 Sits vulture-emissary on
 The road harbingers tarry on
 The road that now forever ran
 The end of Tang, the fall of man
 The fall of man to a barbarian
 In silence sits cold An Lushan
 Slowly closed the eye of Tang

III

*Let us lament in song the eye of Tang
 For all the world lived in the eye of Tang
 We sing for Tang we live and die for Tang
 All is nothing all lives within the eye of Tang*

SAYING, DOING

Finally, *someone* said
 what needed to be said.

But of course, then
they did what needed to be done.

TERRACOTTA MEN

Mount Li, late 3rd C BCE

They have faces, like me
 But they do not have hearts, like me
 No genius, no psyche; they are ghosts

SELECTED POEMS

They look like they march, but do not
Of course not! they are terracotta men!
Their trumpets do not hoot and howl
And all their wars are imagined wars
Who made thee? they can never ask
And turn back on their allotted task

LI

Li, a mould over nature
Keeping it cool and safe

Within the seethe and sack
But these walls never breach

Appearance is imperial
And it is judge to the act

Act is only one tenth freedom
Li keeps men within the mould

Let us make the mould perfect
Into perfection our li will sweep
Our children never have to weep

MALHAM TARN

Upon the waters stands the moon
In a lake of mischievous mysteries

Birds hide the evening in their wings
A silence binds the world in nets of peace

A single sound is all that remains of time
Water falls and pours its grief into the world

DEREK AND CLIVE

Pete'n'Dud have left this world,
 Which wasn't the worst job they ever had.
 I think they both had a good time here,
 And that Pete forgave his dad.
 They both met this bloke one day --
 Pete met Dud and Dud met Pete --
 And though sometimes they both were stupid cunts
 I think they were both glad to meet.
 They're just celluloid now, or digitised to bits.
 You have to laugh at things, they said,
 For if you don't, you'll only get the shits.
 So anyway, Crawfie's gone and Bertie's gone,
They've both got out the cab.
 Pete and Dud themselves prop up the bar
 Up *there* -- and I bet Dud pays the tab.

THE TOMB OF BERNABÒ VISCONTI

When you look at these rich tombs --
 The resting place of the very rich --
 You ask yourself if they really do
 Die like the rest of us. Their tombs
 Carry themselves in blatant afterlife
 Denied poorer brothers and sisters

He is on his mighty horse. The horse
 Stands poised on the platform forever,
 (Or what seems like it). Rationalisation
 They call it, what we say about the rich.
 Yes we all go, including them, but *they*
 Bequeath a solid light to the golden sun

MASACCIO

'La Cacciata dei progenitori dall'Eden'

He saw them leave
It was as if he actually saw them
He saw that woe upon their faces
And as he painted that woe
It was as if the canvas wore that woe
And the woe was woven into it and over time

Although it was an imagined moment
Of invented myth about an unknowable deity
Yet it is somehow so real
It forces you to feel

*

Form
the beast in the cave
the will must deprave
and in the resultant whoosh
reality find its couche

THE ACCUSATION

How can you do this to us, Time?
You are the Universe's greatest crime.
Because of you there is all this decay
And I think that Winter is your mask.
What do you do with us day after day?
Nothing but carry on your endless task.
You monitor us silently, without passion.
As you are Everything, you take no ration.
You are the deed with no doer, a power
That lives in an utter transcendent trance
Who fades only ever to resume the dance.

SELECTED POEMS

But every dance here fades to each hour.
Oh I know you give life and you breed birth,
But if you destroy what you give,
then what is that really worth?

LINES

Jet-black beetle
Climbing a wall
It is not yet night
And I see it fall

T'AO CH' IEN

It's all tatters torn down
He stand
In his empty garden
The few leeks sipping dew
His onion bulbs bumped by worms
Where is the silk?
Where does the silk come from?
He is dressed in rags
A dishevelled crow
Yet his paper is of silk
It is a winding skein
And is the *finest* silk
That I have ever seen

As he lies dug deep into death's garden
And our thoughts of him
 slowly begin to harden
He is blessed by soft syllables of grass
Who sing - '*may it pass, may it pass*'

A NEOLIBERAL CHANT

Little shops'
Full stops
Banished

Little folks'
Okeydokes
Vanished

Giants'
Alliance
Waking

Goes on
Flows on
Snaking

Mall is --
All is --
Hemmed in

Prison
We's con
-Demned in

The market
Is dark, it
Drops

To the void,
All destroyed.
Stops

FASCIST CASAS

Pretty Italian homes
Painted so prettily
Lying on their backs
In the elemental sun

Planted just like *teff*
In the Abyssinian dust
But as pretty as can be
All built last century

Built up and lived in
Like any other home
When the Fascist Party
Was the ruler of Rome

Paint-petalled walls
Cast a pretty shadow
There to remind us all
In our wartorn home

FASHODA

“But this situation could lead to war”

It is as if this is the navel of the world
Like Delphi, like Uisnech, like Jerusalem
The fingers are all on the trigger of a gun
And each man, his heart is upon his flag
After the voices are raised will bullets fly?
Each party is keeping all its plans to itself
They’ve come a long way so far from home
To a place where a flag is all there can be
And shadows harden where there is no rain
These little ants that struggle for their grain
Of dust hold in their hands the shape of fate

FUN

Colonel Robert Baden-Powell arrived
too late for the expected 'fun', in Africa,
in 1896, in Shonaland, in order to kill
the Shona men who had killed women
and kids. He knew women are children,
and to touch a hair of Her revered
little, pretty, golden and brainless head
puts any man some way past the pale,
like a wild potato-chewing savage Gael,
and men beyond the pale are the men
you kill with a guiltless heart. And, even,
 armed with a Maxim gun,
the killing is a harmless lazy sort of fun.

SUMMONED IN SUMMER

Herbert Kitchener
inhales the kitchen air :
blueberry pie and crumbs

It is so peaceful
this time of year, easeful
the buzzing bumblebums

Far away the Nile
flows all the while
slow and sure and strong

How long will it be?
And will he agree?
He *will* be called before long

LUGARD

Killer, not a murderer.
Magnificent distinction.

THE PIFFLERS

Here at the FO
we don't take kindly
to language like that

Here at the FO
we work very hard
and play a jolly good bat

Here at the FO
the world is far away
and made of long reports all double typed

Here at the FO
we hear things, true
but to us it *all* gets piped

Here at the FO
we ignore all that
and get on with the job head down

Here at the FO
we have countries to run
and a map to keep pink for London town

Here at the FO
such a report,
Mr Casement, is really not on

Here at the FO
we know that Empire
is no place for that unmanly thing, emotion

Here at the FO
we see it as it is:
a world of intricate interlacement

Here at the FO
we *know* we know
what is best. Good day, Mr Casement

GRENZEN DER MENSCHHEIT

A true love
Was never
On this earth
Nor true worth
All endeavour
To seek above
Mere Greek fire
A cheap pyre
For the *purth*
Chopped liver
And no higher

NOTES TO A DIG

- selig aber ist der also Schwangere!

Item : 1 female, incomplete. Ulna, good condition. Tibia, ditto, burnt. Retroverted labial plateau. Metatarsal, tali, complete. Jaw, 2 molars. Skullcap, estimated 1357cc. Tools found in layer Mousterian (axes etc). He therefore N'dertal. He was doubtless 30 or so yo. Cannb sacrifice? N'dertal man oft so. Wld prefer find abdomen/lower trunk: dig must resume. Q: how did N'dertal man give

birth? Did he have mod uterus? Perh soon find key to?
Hopeful: this a good specmen!

EXCAVATIONS

The flint bints get their hands dirty
 In the shadows and heat of Mt. Carmel,
Looking for people's bones. Five thirty.
 Miss Garrod tells them they done well.

Then she goes to the charts in her tent.
 She always studies the finds at end of day.
The sun is unwearying to its fundament,
 But this place is important. She will stay.

It's a place of discovering the world as it was,
 Of jawbones and ochre and flora and flints.
Miss Garrod says progress is good and that 'cause
 Of this hardworking tribe of trowelling bints.

THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

They lived over *here*
And *they* lived over *there*
Then suddenly they met
And shots wove in the air

They were once the best
And *they* the best and more
So what else is there to do
Than they both go to war?

L'ART x3

1 Bathers by a River (oil on canvas)

Where is the river?
In whose head?
This canvas is waterless,
Heraclitus said.

It's an anomie of colour,
A decadence of line.
Where is the river?
Where the spline?

2 Wyndham Lewis

Lines like lies
that become truth

Guides that gaze
into providence

In its haze
you see a face

In its face
a new start

Art is it all
torn apart

3 Paintbox

All of the rainbow in there
All of the world in there
Anything at all the eye can see
As far as the eye can see

PAUL CLAUDEL ETC

The catholic poets reappeared suddenly
 With their crosses and their beads
And the sky grew into crosseyed thunderclouds
 That wove into it potters fields like weeds

It was as if the god they spoke to spoke to them
To light the heart of darkness of the modern world
 To stem the tide of godless paint in the canvas sea
 And the mechanical jargon of modern poetry

The cross and its blood streamed down its ruins
A warpath of crosses in a vanned army of passion
 And steel scourges hung above the familial features
 Of the mother of mercy loved by all creatures

The catholic poets looked back to a passed world
Their ancestors had cursed in their hunger for heaven
 But all they could see was the starved altar of the cross
 And a world in which a pontifical bull never will be boss

CHATEAUBRIAND

Memoires d'Outre-Tombe

Is he still here?
Is his memory intact?
I see him sometimes
Wandering the parc.

Where the gentle zephyrs blow
I see his shadow in the jets d'eau
And when the rûches begin to hum
I hear a ballade that he used to like.
I see the nués far above the grue:
He is there en vide vu.
Death is a sarsen and a truand:
Vie donc mort, se dit M. Ch'briaunt.
Vie mort survecu. *We breathe*
and he -- he haunt.

MICHELANGELO BUONAROTI

The perfected rounded contours,
The muscles and the curves
Made by Greek fashioners of men,
And the lined pragmatic shapes
Of their successors paid by Rome --
What these these fashioners felt,
Who can know? All that remains
Is mute external Form.

But seeing the rebirthing of the soul
Fleeing the cudgel of the doctor's writ,
One of the wisest of these reborn men,
The angel Michael, made David live again.
The outward face of Eternity lived in him,
The silent waves of formless faith now
Given shape by him. In word and image
The culted face of Eternity he unmasked,
The heart of space, the bones of love, the art
Of having Form.

Yet unlike the fashioners
 Who came before, we have his word,
 The burning words that enflamed his soul.
 We hear his ascendent conversations
 With heaven itself, the one-way voice
 Reaching out to us in all its struggle
 To mould a lump of clay, a shapeless clod,
 Into a living thing that breathes with art
 In palaces of Form.

KIPLING

Teach us the Strength that cannot seek,
 By deed or thought, to hurt the weak;

 Of blood that grew in manly veins
 You sang, who never gave them Danes
 A shilling for their spears.
 The heart that beat the drums for you,
 From Mandalay to Khost it flew,
 When England spun the spheres!

The Empire like a titan stood,
 And what you saw to you seemed good:
 These were the golden years!
 But others heard the drums as well,
 And they believed it made a hell
 When England spun the spheres.

And soldiers born to English blood
 (The sons you led into the mud),
 Perhaps they too had fears,
 But to you these sons were perfect forms,
 These men in their cheap uniforms,
 As England spun the spheres!

All in the end, it turns to dust,
All thought, all hope, as it all must,
 And every mist soon clears,
All in the end cut from one cloth
(As you might say, Saxon and Goth),
 Yet they still turn, the spheres!

THE CLERESTORY

High up in the clerestory
There lived a flame of glory
Enlightened and pertinent
It seemed so permanent
And as the evening grew in strength
The web that hength
Above its lonely little pen
Grew perfect then
But now the fly that struggled
Into the chink of death was juggled
And as it was the wind in burst
Causing the little flame to perish in thirst

*In the clerestory a tiny flame
Lived in glory without fame*

SCHOTTENKLÖSTER

Silence of the Gael
Inkwell and *lebor*
Salads and prayers
Winter-floods of *fáith*
The white feet of Mháire
Silence meets silence
In each gaunt gillie

NIGHT-PIECE

One thousand years before Dante
 St Augustine rode out his pen
And the candlelight was proud
 As a supper that pleased ten

The gates of Hippo were open
 To the mainglory of its adept
The sun of the seasons lay silent
 One thousand inhabitants slept

Except he in the lethe of his light
 As his pen glowed sure as a sun
That shone a thousand years later on
 Upon a new work too begun

CHURCHES

Lain like lanterns over the land
They seem like visitors from another land
 Filled with mystery made of song
That pours out easily on the artless sand

We see at nighttime their shadows spill
Like lakes of sentinels in a single throng
 A faithful flock in awe of the sky
Whose lanterns flicker in their 'I belong!'

HEAVENWARDS X2

1 Il Tudertino

Jacopone in the pit
His eyes so burning
In the simple words,

He becomes faith entire
 Folded into ashen pages
 Arisen in angelic smoke,
 Our ancient messengers.

Above the pit they stare,
 The prayers they learned
 Bitter, blackened, burned

2 Cecco d'Ascoli, Astrologer

"Infine nuovante processato e arso vivo
 nel settembre 1327."

Looking up at the skies
 You saw more than was wise
 Those tiny little bulbs of fire --
 Can an astrologer be a liar? --
 Led you to an unintended path
 Where all abominations of Gath
 And Sidon, many boundless Baals,
 Like the devils of the provencals,
 Reflected back at you bold ideas
 Sailing away like smart gondoliers
 To their sleeping city's endless deeps.
 If he who knows is he who weeps,
 You brave in thought were fed to fate.
 Now here the fire and faggots wait,
 The living Church in lies is burnt
 As we forsake all we have learned.

A PRAYER

Muses
night's nine
entwine
Fate's yarn
Zeus' arn

*give wing
sing
to the night
bring out the might
within
turn on the light
within*

WHILE THEBES SLEEPS

*Where are you,
Thebes?
Who keeps
The flame?
Your seven gates
Closed to fame
Laios is
Limping lame
And Oedipus
Lost the game
Silence sweeps
You, Thebes
Your keeps
Lie in the grave
Where in creeps
The slave
As Thebes
Weeps.
Thebes aches,
Sleeps*

THE BALLAD OF ADAM CRANK

At Doncaster nowadays
 You see them in ranks,
 But just as in the Bronze Age
 There were no banks,
 Once, not too long ago,
 There were no cranks.

How many years ago it was
 I will let you add 'em.
 It was back when there was
 No tarmacadam,
 Which is when *he* lived.
 We'll call him *Adam*.

He'd read in the gazette
 Of a brand new machine.
 "Runs like an iron horse
 That won't dance or preen."
 Adam's excited and curious,
 As committed as keen.

He cut out the article
 And put it in his pocket
 And closed up his front door
 And proceeded to lock it.
 He was off to see George
 Stephenson's 'Rocket'.

It was Stockton to Darlington,
 Eighteen Twenty Nine,
 When the sun was, as ever,
 Refusing to shine,

And the first steam train ran
On the first railway line.

The great public was there
In numbers and hordes,
And counsellors and mayors
With ceremonial swords,
Whose pawnbrokered jackets
Boasted pure silken cords.

Our Adam was there too
With his binocs and pen,
And as The Rocket rolled off
He near fainted. That's when
A puzzle reared up that would baffle
Less resilient men.

II

George Stephenson was standing
On a platform of wood.
He was laughing and clapping,
For the going was good.
Him our Adam approached
And he tugged at his hood.

"Hey mister!", he cried out
To the honourable man
Whose top hat was covered
In soot like a tan.
"Hey mister, if any can answer me,
Surely you can!"

"What is the number?
It's not on the plate.

What is the number?
 You must know it, mate!
 Every train has a number
 That fixes its fate!"

George S looked blank

And thought for a bit.
 He looked at the young lad
 Whose eyes were so lit
 And who seemed so troubled,
 'Sif he was having a fit.

George S wasn't a teacher
 And he wasn't a don,
 And to be honest he wished
 The lad to be gone,
 But he spoke to him kindly:
 "The number is 'one'."

Adam wrote down the number,
 His page no longer blank,
 And that's the end of my story
 About Adam Crank
 Who wrote down the first number.
 It is he we must thank.

EN FAMILLE

Think of all the earth worms
 Your mother never did
 Think of all the earth worms
 Your father kept them hid
 Think of all the earth worms
 And join with them as one
 Think of all the earth worms
 We all do when we're done

ST CATHERINE'S CHURCH

Concerning a transmutation of lead into gold performed by
the doctor and alchemist Ramon Lull, reported to have
occurred in this London church (two years after his death).

"The colour.
You will watch the colour",
Says the wise doctor Ramon.
His audience watch.

The metal is dull
As a plumed bird in winter,
A bloc of nothingness
Put to flame.

Smoke and heat build up,
Hammering with energy
The lickerish lump,
Ennobling it.

"Gentlemen, watch closely",
Ramon directs them calmly,
As if he's plucking a feather
From the engine of fate.

'He knows, he knows',
All these gentlemen think.
They are huddled in the hall
Like a growing flock of birds.

'Let it seed! Let it seed!',
They think to themselves,
As if they are now at table
About to peck at feast.

Then, miracle! Spirits divine!
 A keening grimoire ooze
 Plunging out of the smoke --
A banquet of gold!

The flock flaps its wings
 And it chirrup its songs --
The transmutation is done!
 A new world has begun.

The church is filled with prayer
 Like a nest now rich with eggs
 That is about to teem with life.
The transmutation is done!

Gold! Gold! yolkyellow gold!
 Hatched and fledged and flown!
The church is filled with prayer.
 Gold they cradle, seed of lead.

THE LITTERPICKERS

See the litterpickers and their picks
 Pick cans of Fanta and packets of Twix
 That fall like snow.
 There it all lies upon the ground,
 Underfoot and all around:
 No ho ho ho!

The pickerstick goes 'clop' and 'clak'.
 All year round it must attack
 These heaps of stuff,
 But however many bags are filled,
 However much the will is willed,
 It never is enough.

So the litterpickers sit and think
 Until their eyes forget to blink:
 What can they do?
 Their pickersticks lie on the ground
 Yet litter still lies all around.
 All's wry and rue.

At length they look up to the skies,
 A sprig of hope seeps in their eyes,
 Though litter's everywhere --
 Litter everywhere like snow
 At Christmas lies, their plastic foe.
 They kneel to say a prayer :-

*“ Our Council
 Who Art in Harrow,
 Collection be Thy name,
 Thy van be come,
 Thy work be done
 In Rayners Lane as it is in Heaven.
 And give us this day our daily pick,
 And forgive us our litter
 As we forgive those who litter against us,
 For Thine is the Recycle,
 The Tip and the Dump,
 Forever and ever,
 Amen. ”*

At that they all got up and sighed.
 Was Heaven on the litterpicker's side?
 Who will ever know?
 But where cans of beer and laughing-gas
 Balloons etcet add biomass,
 There will they go.

THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT

One Christmas Day, as cold as crescent,
A great uproar round the Palace grew,
And maids and Marquise's in a panic flew.
Someone had lost Queen Victoria's present!

They looked in sculleries and in chamber pots
And libraries and bedrooms and in the stables,
Behind every curtain, of course under the tables
And, in the nurseries, even examined all the cots.

The news soon got to Albert, which put him in a tizz.
He summoned up the army and the navy too,
But even the Royal Engineers - not even they knew,
These pinions of Empire and the art of Swizz.

Then the Queen herself appeared from up above.
The people of the palace saw her as a fearful grump
Who always seemed to need something to thump.
The air was full of silence. The Queen removed a glove.

"Where's our Present?", she thundered and brave men wept.
But then she burst out *laughing* like a mischievous child,
And her countenance became softer and almost mild.
"Love is our Present!", she cried out as she swept

Back up the stairs. "The love of such high degree
You give *is* our Present and we must all of you thank.
Such a Present surpasses all the sand of Dasht-i Tanq!
We will recall this happy day until all Eternity!"

At that, she floated off away back to her far above,
 And all the Palace sighed and went back to work.
 Even Albert stopped sweating into his best serk
 And pondered the difference twixt fear and love

WINTER'S TALE

Ou sont les neiges d'antan? I don't know.
 The merry gents are rested long, so too
 Our plucky robin friend and all his crew.
 Where is the florilegium that I saw grow
 Into the green? The green is here, but no
 More village pond. Dried up. We let it go.
 We watched it underflow and sear the grass
 Of memory. All that is gone must pass
 Into the flow of time as we watch it sweep
 The day away and bear a broom to clean
 Out all the clutter that we cannot keep,
 Each hour that once upon a time has been.
 The snow of yesteryear now morning dew,
 We clutch the lease that we cannot renew.

HELLS

1 Le Goguenard

"I am in the hellhole of life
 Struck by the butterknife
 My soul a butterball
 If it is anything at all
 The air bears the filthy lies
 That like Lazarus rise
 With demonic wings
 The infernal choir sings
 Into the rosicrucian night
 How their wings take flight

And around this hole they fly
 Without knowing why
 Yet they must sense
 Me here, and their violence
 Is never far. O m'sieur soleil
 S'il vous plait
 Save me today
 For Hell is too hard
 For a goguenard,
 A maussade goguenard."

2 Helgaud The Churchman

When the churchman died,
 After a merry wineful life,
 He found the door of heaven
 Barred, and purgatory vanished.
 A single door remained, branded
 With the lonely letter 'h' in flame,
 A serpentine curl of ardent fire.

The churchman couldn't stay put,
 And even less turn himself back,
 For the path of death starts here.
 Muffled sounds buried by the door
 Loomed up before the startled man.
 Everything curled around his form
 And wrapped him in a cloak of fear.

But fear can at least be overcome.
 The churchman held out his hand
 To the door, and pushed it gently.
 The sound of scourge and hook
 And garotte and all the panoplies

Of pain threw off their muting muffler
And a harsh dreadful heat drew up.

'The blows of fate are mortal blows
That can't be fought,' the churchman
Sighed as he passed the dreadful door
With its ardent 'h' (a fiery Capital,
I might have mentioned, and blood
As well as flame). He closed his eyes
As if invisible pain is easier to bear.

'Hi!'. He heard a voice but felt nothing.
No pain, no heat, no sharpened blade,
Only a softly repeated greeting, 'Hi!'.
He opened his eyes and saw a beaky face,
Familiar from many a thousand pictures
And statues and thundered sermonings.
It was the Devil who stood before him!

The churchman stared like Moses had
At the sight of the burning bush, yet
Here was no flame, no fires, just light,
Pure righteous unadulterated light.
The Devil had a twinkle in his eyes,
A kind and cradling murmur of peace
And reflective quiet. 'Here, take this!'

The Devil passed a tankard over to
The churchman. 'Drink. It's very good.'
And it was good. The vineyards of Hell,
The churchman learned, are very good.
The grape is truly succulent, magnificent.
The demons who waulk the grape have feet
As soft as gossamer and wings like silk.

'My dear churchman,' said the Devil,
 'When you get used to this place
 I think it'll grow on you. It did me.
 So what it lacks that awful pomp
 And bourdonning song of Up There,
 And that damned seriousness He wants:
 Those endless Hierarchies and Rules.

I don't know how it is that he fools
 Everyone into believing in him, no.
 But you're a good sort, I can tell.
 You hated the abbot's frugal face,
 That cold and too-imposing place.
 Where's the fun? Where is the beauty,
 If everything is service and duty?

Churchman, you made a good decision
 To join with us. You'll be quite alright,
 Even though we live in eternal night
 You can see how everything is bright
 And the table is always nice and full.
 We do alright here, you'll see we do.
 It is', the Devil said, 'The place for you.'

And so the churchman entered into Hell.
 There were churchwomen there as well,
 And wine enough for all, and fruit and corn,
 And Adam was there, and Eve. It's all
 Too beautiful, the golden etherial spires,
 And no one rocks the boat, for *no one*
 Wants to end up in God's curling fires.

VERLAINE

1 Lang'rus, cheery, am'rus, weary

A brief word about Mathilde and Paul
 Without any Eden, they were all Fall
 Chased out of nowhere
 (Don't even go there)
 Did he throw his own baby at the wall?

All was about Paul, his hunt for the Green
 And that scrofulous boy who is only sixteen
 How they buggered their time
 In the most violent rhyme
 The former Parnassian tied to the obscene

Yet perhaps in denial of the shitness of life
 Beauty rained on the paper, pen and not knife
 We see the maddened vièrge
 The hellish spouse urge
 To accompany him far from his home and wife

2 Mrs Alexander Smith

(8 Great College Street)

Who has just took rooms?
 Two foreign gentlemen
 Who don't look like gentlemen!
 Their footsteps breathe anarchy
 But their money is good.

They've roomed here a while.
 Every day they do the rounds,
 Though I don't know where they go.
 But he's a devil of a young man,
 That unsettling Mister Ranbow!

3 *Verlaine Is Saved*

(The tears of faith)

In the crepuscular tomb of his cell
 He sees the light. In the windowless room
 The curtains are opened. He sees God.
 He has his own Annunciation, he his own
 Saint Paul. He is now no longer a cunt
 Opened wide for Arthur, that hellish gamin,
 But a reformed, pure man with a clear voice,
 Who'll lead the donkeys and monkeys of Paris
 To safety, the love of God. His God is of course
 His Self, a means to finally defeat the Green
 And his succubatic wife, his marmot Mathilde,
 Who is suing for divorce and wants his money,
 But not him, *cette furie!* damnable! H'las, Dieu,
 Let us say, is the spiritual support he needs
 To raise himself up off the floor. He must stem
 The tide of tears that wash his pale cheeks,
 But not his sins -- these sins! Trapped in a cell
 With all these memories that sail like auguries
 Of saturnine and satanic fears -- Oh, to be safe!
 To be *saved!* To be celestial and not enfernal.
 To see the peace that angels feel, to be angelic.
 To fly beyond the room -- live beyond the tomb!

4 *Stuttgart, Arthur*

(The bubble of faith)

Released from jail, Paul enquires
 Where is the gamin of all pariahs.
 He is gone, precepteur au pair,
 To Stuttgart. Paul finds him there,
 Mocking as always, as ever angelic
 But hadean. Their love is a relic

Tumbled to the tombs Paul now haunts,
 Now he is saved, as the twilight taunts
 His hopes, for the light shines on the boy
 He hates in his love and despises with joy.
Convert!, he urges in a jesuitic tone:
If you convert, you will not be alone!
 In this illumination of light, sweet is the breath
 That breathes love into hate and life into death!
 But Arthur stares back as if at something obscene
 And that night he has him back hacking the Green,
 And everything is *merde* and everyone *con*,
 As if faith is a bubble and the bubble is gone.

5 Verlaine In Paris

Intoxication lights up the brain
 Like the north wind on a windowpane

But after the storm
 The window's shattered form

6 Separated, wounded

Paul is in Frengia
 Arthur is in Aden
 Memories of rough love
 Are slowly fading

It's a forgotten memory
 That burns like a core
 Arthur is forgotten
 Like a dulling sore

Like a distant raider
Yet -- no, this is love
It is the wound of peace
The wound of a dove

THE TOURNAMENT OF TIME

You stand before the tournament of time
That swirls with parleys, palfreys, fight
For the grail in the distant deserts perilous.
The tournament is come to test your might.

It's now you see the endless darkness of its size.
The tournament has armour to defeat all creeds.
Its pavilions are built to awe but not to last.
Each garter hangs above an agony of deeds.

All will be forgotten in this lonely tournament,
All musticated as the hoofprints void and vanish,
As every sword is lying corrupted in the weeds,
You no better than the outlaw that you banish.

See the Castle stand beneath its standard now,
The champions ride to the tournament so proud.
But grace and honour are mere ephemeres of time,
However true the faithful pledges of the crowd.

THE LOVER AND THE LEFT

-- and in the end ta philomel
Deserted you, in your room,
Your little lonely mourning cell,
Gently covering you in gloom.

Who can tell you why she left?
Or perhaps it even is a blessing.

But love is often an unwanted gift
And often too is mere possessing.

It is good that she is free now too,
But with her freedom you replace
The innocent whose hopes in you
Wakes dreams you can't embrace.

LAUDANUM

Dreams its *dot*
Far above digestion
The clogged congestion
The blocked intestine
Before the boat
Lies the marmoreal
And the arboreal
Gaudy carnival
Like a moat
Around the dandy
Off the brandy
Sugar candy
For a coat

Heavy liquid
For six quid
Dream quarries
Fairy fanum
Laudanum
No worries

PARIS, c. 1860

1 Golcie

Golcie is a grand woman
Unflappable and tall
 And wrapped in cape
 And shawl
 See her escape
The fates of *à demain*

God made Golcie beautiful
But certainly not frail
 She speaks her mind,
 No tale
 Too hard to find
Why can't she be dutiful?

2 Two Types Of Bread

"J'emprunte pour payer." (C. Baudelaire, 1861)
The illuminations they see before them
 Are the bourgeoisie's rack and its rent,
And no dreamer can ignore them,
 Keep to his dream, to his sacrament.

The bourgeoisie dream is the seer's hell,
 A soulless frame of cartilage and bone.
But a poet's dream is not a better spell,
 For he cannot live on dreams alone!

3 Capitalism

Argent

The holy power emergent
In the expanding boroughs
Is a piecemeal masterpiece
Of misplaced hurrahs
Perfect in imperfection
Infected in confection
Its delicately extending branches
In fact unbreakable tranches
That invade the poet's atelier
With amendes for his hotelier
He has no peace
And no release
Chased from place to place
Like a clipper ship, in case
His creditor
And editor
Will serve him with new comeuppances
And claim back his last tuppences
To leave him in the gutter
To beg bread without butter
And the old boroughs are now cities
Innumerable streets with scant pities
Cries of pain
In the driving rain
Drown out the vagrant poet's ditties

4 *À Fontainebleau, 1860*

Alphonse Baudelaire had already been demoted to a mere *juge*
Then one day the haemorrhage left him hemiplegic

Far away in Paris his brother brooded
Charles had long ago rejected Alphonse
Judging him as a monster of false chivalry
(After Charles' money was placed under *conseil judiciaire*
Which inflicted upon him a relentless spleen)

*If a brother looks into a mirror
and sees his distorted self
How can he find the amnesia
forgiveness demands?*

'JE SUIS UN VEILLARD, UN MOMIE'

C. Baudelaire, 1862

When we grow old, the world feels old,
And our anger at our age throws out
An anger at the world. Now our vision
Narrows, its window full of soot. Inside
We feel bad, and we make the world bad.
The great creation of the old people
Is, curiously, a new world, the old
Divested of its novelty and surprise.
This new world is laggard, inefficient,
Buried in the twilight that eats up
The couchant like moss upon a grave,
Leaving the land in a half-infernal
Darkness, the enemy become a friend
Of these vieillards. The young can't read,
Can't write, can't spell, can't speak --
They exist in mêlées of imported tea
And wine and chatter, in nothingness.

Thus the vacuum of the old is thrown
Over the young, the agony of doubt
Replacing the agony of hope. Yet now
The veillard vows a new vengeance,
The vengeance of contempt and now
He sees his remaining days, the couchant
Swallowed forever, the agony of doubt
Raises him a little, both brisant and béant,
Ready to descend as his own fire is put out.

'YOU HAVE TREATED ME AS THE GREAT AND DEAD'

E. Delacroix to C. Baudelaire, 1859

Romantic and maligned,
Like a bomb in the Salon,
Eugène questioned Art.
Medusa's raft, Scio's doom,
Sardanapale and Christ --
He made Charles ask,
To describe or depict,
Is it not the same?
Is it not the same Truth,
Which is not just Beauty
But also the wickedly bad?
Don't both brush and pen
Turn into the same snakes
That swallow the world?
Make up, wake up, create
a new world.
Pass out this world of dust
Into that new world of Truth
Where there are no living
And there are no dead.

LAST DAYS

1 Agraphie, Aphasie (1866)

Baudelaire, the poet,
 Can no longer hold a pen
 And his speech can bear
 A syllable at a time
 White mountains
 Are dandruff dust
 The brilliant stars
 Are ear-wax balls
 The mighty spirit
 A cornered cobweb
 In an empty room
 Without a broom
 His eyes two suns
 Made out of cheese

What correspondences!
 Are these! are these!

2 Baudelaire

Il s'ennuie
 Just anywhere
 Even the moon
 No doubt there
 (He never goes
 Anywhere)
 Spleen and teen --
 "Baudelaire!"

3 *'And in the end...'*

Without language left
 It was "Crenom!"
 Cré nom!
 Things always things
 The mind can't name
 Things become naked
 Without a name
 Almost obscene
 Without a name
 Crenom!

4 31 août 1867

Ah, "sommeil avec les yeux ouverts
 ainsi que la bouche".

Then,
 "c'est fini".

And that was that,
 in a hack's whinney.

A GOOD YEAR FOR THE BOURJOIS

Fernand Boissard de Boisdenier
 Heir to the large *rentes* of maman
 Merged the aristoi to the bourgeoisie
 At backgammon he'd say 'Come on!'

But then most evenings added 'Hélas!'
 Even though money to him was like air
 His *gilet* was of the filigreed gold
 Bought with the *rentes* he had as heir

He was the bane of the striving classes
 But loved by *m'vais garçons*, dandies (all
 Of Monsieur Prudhomme's true enemies
 Who dance with socialism at every Ball)

Fernand's shoes the finest leather
 (*Semelles à vendre*), silver candelabras
 Blew scented charms almost ambrosial
 His *trucs* fetched from a dozen harbours

An orchid stretched out on a marble slab
 He lived out his riches through all '47
 Poor Fernand Boissard de Boisdenier
 So soon to be done in still in his heaven

Envoi

The quarante-huitiers
Loll about
The bourgeoisie
Read and pout
Oh how they fear
Men and maids
Shrieking like bats
On the barricades
But then there came
The doublecross
'Swhey our bourgeoisie
Are still the boss

CANDIDATES

Laparde was interviewed but he wasn't right.
 Chenavard was interviewed but he wasn't right.
 Dupanloup was interviewed but he wasn't right.

SELECTED POEMS

We live in a den of opiated monotony!
To speak is almost to whistle in the wind
And I've been interviewing all my long life

There is nothing to be said that hasn't been said,
Yet I must listen to Laparde and Chenavard
and Dupanloup,
Whose voices are not much more than
holes in the air.

TWO SISTERS

A sword invades the day
And severs it into two
The light one is for me
The dark one is for you

Your shadow is my heart
My shadow is your soul
Shadows made to follow
Together we are whole

There is danger in dissection
 More in than out each breath
 But if one is now dead to living
 The other lives again in death

TRENCHER, 1915

Once it was a flint arrow, now it's a
Howitzer.
We rot in these mud holes,
Like deadbeat dud souls
And wait
For the wizened hands of fate.

This is progress, whose white hands
 Like light sands
 Dandle the human race
 And with cold embrace
 The corpse
 Genuflects and gawps.

The corpse gawps, white as a beggar's debt,
 And tells us, "Progress is necessary, yet
 It is all-encompassing,
 It is all-trespassing,
 And although it really can heal,
 Its weapons too are very real."

If you're like us, progress
 Is an ogress,
 Pushing us back with her filthy thumbs,
 Into her bed of mud, while her dum-di-dums
 Roar out over the battlefield.
 We bovine men lack even what cattle yield.

Life against death is a brittle shield,
 In death our lives are soon likely to be sealed.

APOTHEOSIS

I

Caracalla
 Looked into the mirror
 And he saw the sun
 He saw the Emperor
 Light landed on
 And he was proud
 Of what he had done

'I am', he thought,
'The future's son'

II

He feels a numbing
A fading
Colour a miscellany of greys
Clouds where clouds just aren't
Blood turning into porridge

He is not hungry
Yet wants to eat
But his banquet days
Are over

The army of Drowse
Has conquered
And all feeling
Flees to his head
Feeling's pulse
Itself fading

Then Drowse
Is killed by Pain
Then Drowse
Attacks again
And Caracalla
A battlefield
Of mortal Sense
And morbid Drowse
A morgueish
Anaesthete

As clouds envelop him
 Like a turgid speech
 His imperium steers
 To the distant shore
 That is beckoning
 From the moon
 Whose influence
 Infects us all

*

Now his journey is done
 His march from east to west
 Of the deathbed

Do the gods cluck round him?
 Do they receive him?
 Is he now one of them?
 Are our stories *true*?

Ah! that was just a man
 Who is a man no more
 There is no farthest shore
 He is no longer even numb
 The last cloud dispersed
 Drowse and Pain lie dead

In the void he is immersed
 These senseless tugs of war,
 Body and soul, soul and body,
 Can take place no more
 They chant -- "Apo / theo / sis"
 Even as he falls into *this*
 Abyss

THE KING

When Leopold I of Belgium
 was old
 he'd often shed a tear.
 He sensed that death was near,
 and felt terribly cold.
 "I am a King!", he sighed.

"A Hapsburg! avatar Emperor!
 one whose time ough'nt distemper or
 derange! Why can't a King be king of death?
 Why must a King run out of breath?
 How is it that a King, whose word is law,
 must sail that sea without a shore?
 They speak of apotheosis, but
 that is just another door that's shut.
 Why should a King, whose word is law,
 share a fate with the lowly poor,
 slave to the same rut?"

At which he died.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

It's hard to make myths out of the unseen,
 It is its own foundation.

The unseen is simply brimming with potential
 Which the imagination makes kinetic.

But when Pompey entered the house of the Zeus
 Of the Jews, his curiosity turned to water.

Nothing there, no bearded old man, no coy youth,
 Nor even the many breasts of the Ephesian lady of love.

What met his eyes was empty space
Like a banquet yet to be prepared,

Like a meal yet to be served,
Like empty bottles out of wine.

*“This god is not a god, belief not here belief.
It is younger than clay, older than heaven.*

*I cannot believe in nothing. I son of Rome
Subjugate by matter which I subjugate.*

*Rome is the mistress of the material world.
All roads lead to her beating heart.*

*The roar of Jupiter is its unearthly roar.
His spear of lightning is our spear.*

*Rome is matter sworn to the might of violence.
Where is the power in this absurd silence?”*

PUŞAN

It is as if they all feel free,
Or are free, in this melody,
 This pull of pipes.
The forest whispers lullabies
That stop as stone all baby cries,
 All sound of all types.

All is still as if it has no will,
As if it waits for some great ‘until’,
 And then the release.
We feel so free even as the trap
Leaks into us and drains our sap
 As it leads us to peace.

'SEAFARERS TELL OF THE FAIRY ISLES'

Li Po saying goodbye to the Queen of the skies

Long ago the world was full of mystery,
Found in places that could not be seen,
And the places that could not be seen
Were covered over by the human mind
As it sailed to the worlds beyond the sea.

These tapestries of imagination stitched
Romantic populations made of mythic folk
Who, in a singular inexistence, found a voice,
A voice not their own that belonged to them,
A reflection twice as true because it wasn't real.

This tapestry, invisible, was truly tangible,
But long gone, and all is left is worlds of words
Dry-printed on the page, seized in old books,
Lumps of thread unwound and torn that now
Wait patiently to recover principle and form.

'THE HEART CLIMBS UP TO THE SOUL AND WEEPS'

Upon the shore she stood
With the seaweed and the kelp
No more than the horizon
Did she seek for any help

For help is beyond the horizon
In the land of our benediction
Many spend their lives believing
Is not much more than a fiction

II

*But stories make the heart beat
They are the miracle of the tongue
She stood upon the shore and wept
For what is a shore but the first rung
Of a ladder that leads to ever more?*

SODOM

Come here! I said: Come here!
 The weather benches deep
Come here! I ask: Come here!
 For it is time to sleep

The grass is whisked with witches' feet
 The valleys are in flood
The wind has teeth enough to bite
 And golems rule the mud

Fools born to follow folly bear the flood
 Come home! oh come home!
Home is the haven that is built with blood
 Our city is our home!

CITIES

Who built the city of the stars,
This infinity of Ra's
Made of helium and hydrogen?
Who lives in it, then?

CREATORS

I am sure they hate us --
Our creators.

First they create unfairness,
Then on top of that awareness.
Awareness is the mortal curse
That makes things so much worse.
They built us a house to live in
But made sure the roof would give in.
That's why I sit here in the unrelieving rain
Thinking of things that I can't explain --
Why life is pain,
 yet something more than pain.

APRIL

In April is no witching hour,
Inconstant earth is full of power,
A weeping play of trees
Curtained by the spreading bower.
Winter has lost the keys.

In April reverdie romancing
Trips to reveries of dancing
In which movement is reborn.
The falling moon is glancing
To see the sun at dawn.

All life in apriline renewing.
The shy pursued joy in pursuing.
The earth opens her eyes
And smiles at her children doing
What eternity denies.

TIME

Still I look on at the tournament of time,
 Still am riddled with the arena of its space.
 Here is my seat. Here is my place.
 Here the acts, safe in the amoretts of mime,
 All to time commended
 Until our time is ended.

How far it stretches, elastic as a snake
 That cannot lean or rest but darts like light!
 It slithers through the sky that we call night,
 At once creation and reaction, froth and flake.
 What a tournament we view
 In the moment that we do!

LEK

Suns dance around the sought black-hole
 Like radiant gods in a faultless display
 Never bettered / the halo on each's back
 A crest of power held in a martial motion
 Surrounding the centre in convulsive light /

The lek performed
 throughout the everlasting night

MICHAEL DRAYTON

There hung a heavy weight on
 The heart of Michael Drayton
 As the enclosures closed in,
 Mowing down all the life within,
 The shepherds, nymphs, and sylphs,
 Pan, Daphne, Delia, dryads, elves --
 All this life and liberty. The blast
 Was deafening. He retreated to the past.

When the world clots up its precious blood,
 Only the mind can restore what is good.
 As the scythe and the axe and ledger fall,
 Like apples in Eden, and they build a wall
 To keep both Corydon and Phyllis out,
 Whom the dangling rays of royal doubt
 Rip sutures from the wounded banks
 Of sacred riverbeds, and hackneyed ranks
 Of squire's hired hands tear up the land,
 Some instrument of torture in every hand,
 To sleep is not to dream, to dream to know
 Inversions and subversions of mortal time.

The pincer men who cut and gouge each crime,
 And even penetrate Sir Morfeo's holy realm,
 Chop willow, oak and beech, and splice the elm,
 And churn prophetic field into lettered lawn
 For some fool lord whose forelock stands for hire,
 And within the land of dream enclose the dawn
 To make of each day a day of hellish fire --
 At this you almost must avenge your thoughts,
 As if it is they issue from the tyrant's courts
 To defray and belay the world as it is today,
 Armed, uncalmed to all stand in the way.

In such a world, such a land, evil unopposed,
 The appleyards of England milled and enclosed,
 You must dream a proper dream it so to be on
 The sweet side of life, and he it hight *Polyalbion*.

THE RAPPAREE

In the heaving ling that marries to the unfettered free,
Where birds fear to sing as they flutter on the brink,

There lays the rapparee.

All cosmic-coarse and blud red-rose ready for a spree,
Whose wild eyes sail the sea and yet never will they sink,

Here lives the rapparee.

When the British for their sustenance set foot on our land
A cry that blends their blood to water floods their ears

Of the cruel rapparee!

He is fear set stone that will not sink, stabber in his hand.
He is a Homer-hero heart who makes short work of fears,

Our true rapparee!

If ever our proud Erse rocks reach up to the skies again,
This cursing ghost of our nobility will surely be the cause -

Long reign the rapparee!

See him fin the streams, feather high above the plain.
This land has learned men, and he learned in wars.

Long live the rapparee!

PARABLE AND PROPHECY

Joseph Addison
Places the caddis on
A golden leaf

And declares
My country best
It will invest

The world and sail
Overseas to scale
Unthinkable heights of power

*Yet that leaf
Pirouetting to its burden
Is both England's fate and grief*

*

Those eyes they come from another place
Like keys who dreamed of time
As if I were their debate and refuge
To be summoned at their chime

But they could not see, no, these eyes
See the world or time or even me
So we passed, the eyes and me
As if life hung on a thread, not we

SAPPHO

Looking back at a good long life
Always independent, never the good little wife,
Sappho sighs like breeze through a willow
Besides a river summer's day. But,
It is not summer now, nor even fall.
The white in her hair has won the war.

Sappho is content. She has always been
Content. Who more than a poet,
A feeler of feeling and thinker of thought
Leading time timidly tied to the lyre's laurel :--

Who more than Sappho can run her bony fingers
Through all that white yet stare like a warrior
Back into that night?

LAUREL

This plant that flatters every poet
This green lovely license to dream
Now laid-down whisper-dry below
the other leaves

FOR THIS PREY

The hunter and his bow
They go
To the far below
The mighty tree
From which he
Made his bow
And he
Prays
To the loreleis
Of aim and shot
And he lays
The bow
Upon the snow
And on this spot
He *turns*
He burns
Into the air he flies
On wings of eyes
In the gait of guise
And in a leap of loops
He swoops
Into the eroded roots
He shoots!

For this, pray --
For this prey

SAILOR

Where do we go
When the breeze ceases to blow?
I don't know.

The breeze is needed by us all,
The echo of our call,
Our rise and our fall.

But it must go one day
From us. It must sail away,
Somewhere beyond the bay.

THE RAKER

Underfed, underpaid, unappreciated,
 He shambles through the streets, rake
In his calloused hands, sometimes leaning
 On it, as if it was a living pillar reaching
Up to an arrogant heaven: but who knows
 What he is thinking as he takes his rest?
Is anything he does done for the best?

THE GAP

Father's Day 2023

The gap between us never will recede.
It is destined to expand. Time is a point,
And the point is fixed like a lantern
To its pole, shining out of the past. Light
Is like sound, its beams wails of mourning
 Into memory reborn.

In the memorial garden where you lie,
You are a point attached to the same pole,
Beaming into a dreamy and ethereal world
In which we now remain just as our light
Cracks and breaks into atoms that build
A cloak you to adorn.

ECHOES OF GETHSEMANE

"I am the Gardener
The hardener
Of all that is soft,
Yet also the pardoner.

I am the light
That is splayed,
Yet I can be paid
Only at night.

I am the Gardener
Of each lost cause.
Submit your laws
To the Gardener.

I am arisen in mist,
My flesh nail-kissed.
To my Garden, come,
To my Kingdom."

A FRIEND OF MIRIAM'S

"The wall of Magdala wraps
Its arm around the town.
My Mary at the threshold taps,
Always there to lead me down.

We are bound together here
 In our open homes and inns.
 We stand for pleasure over fear.
 In candlelight the night begins.

My Mary is a ventry of fun,
 Her laughter leaping over us.
 Her feet between our houses run.
 Her eyes unprick the obolus.

My Mary met this magick man
 Of Nazareth of words and deeds
 So marvellous, and we who can
 Provide for all his wants and needs.

At supper-time we pour his drink
 And bring to him his meat and bread.
 I'm not the jealous one, I think,
 When they both rise from her bed.

Often he and Mary seem as one,
 Almost as if they're sky and land,
 He tells her, then off he's gone,
 As if he has something planned."

PARADISE KEPT

Water just like wishes
 It surround the fishes
 Who live just to accept
 Where they're all kept
 And do not wish at all
 To feel the water's fall

A FRAGMENT

The stream ran past the meadow idly,
and it was noon. Shadows led the sun.
Seed inside the grass made birds to run.
We felt ourselves at one, now deep inside
our meadow, our sennce, and our guide
to time, our creator and our embryon.
The stream inspired, so wise so widely.

THE POET RILKE IS BURIED

Sad song, mad wrong,
Rarogne,
waved through the weary door
by the angel's heavy paw,
he passes through.

Rarogne,
to in the end belong
in this cloud-garden of dusk
lit by white roses in a flask
he passes to.

The hours linger long,
Raronge,
the earth's hands embracing the skies,
the earth in which no answer lies
to answer to.

TO ROBERT SOUTHWELL

Who can tell, as he looks now at the cross,
Facing the loss - the only loss that matters -
What he is thinking? His life lies in tatters.
Is he thinking of what will be, or what was?

The candle is low and thin. Tallow taper.
Life is yeastless. Built on such thin dough.
What is he thinking? There is no window.
Before him is a table, ink, pen, and paper.

OSIP

Two soldiers
 four boots
 collect him

Four walls
 two eyes
 at infinity

One pen
 one man
 Osip gone

THE DOORS

We blindly move
From door to door
Each day a door
Opened on the one before /
We go blind
To what lies behind
The next
Perplexed /
But on we go
As if we flow
In liquid steps /
Perhaps
The doors go on forever
And we'll get tired of opening them /
We'd need to keep the key, but then
No one is that clever

HEAT

When it heats
the heart beats
harder, like a fly on flypaper,
trapped in a foodless sea.

To its life a wrapper,
the sea completes
it, rhythmically.

HARAR (ENVIRONS)

To a commis maudit

Rimbaud fled his name
Into the lonely desert
And took photographs
Of the empty space

But his name flew over
Like a vulture or a crow
The sands of his memory
Resume a pointless flow

Life is a *trou*, ain't it so?
At least the desert is a place
Where a name is like a bone
Left by the vulture's greed

ANTOINE WATTEAU

Tuberculosis † 37

As blood poured out of him
His dreams began to shim
-mer Over the threadbare day
Set like a canvas made of clay

These dreams said not a word
Even as the incident occurred
As the oils on the imaginary brush
Redeemed, like prayer divinely heard,
In all of his rage and rush
As the lamps, these eyes, grow dim

NOTRE DAME OF PARIS

Labyrinth of shadows
Led by a spider thread
Dance of light leased
For the coloured glass
Stone life transfigured
Lightning into the dust
And passion into rust
Leap into the shadow
To be fair consumed
Into Minoan glooms
And dance on the web
Of its palatial heart

THE RUNAWAYS

No one used to choose
to be blessed by a Muse,
but when one clouds by,
you too fly.

But the Muses are not urban,
let alone suburban --
they live in rivers flowing freely,
at one with their kosmos all touchy-feely.

To leap barefoot over the gasworks
is what really irks
each Muse, met
to refuse it.

To tread the crushed up concrete
roads, the Muses have the wrong feet,
and they often scrape their knees,
these refugees.

* * * *

I saw a Muse the other day,
her golden hair now gushing grey,
and she murmured, "*I didn't choose to be a Muse*",
at which she run away.

HALF A LEG

When I still had both my legs
I flowed through the world
Like oxygen

Now I hobble in a bubble
In which my half-a-soul
Is foraging

I fall to the ground
Without a sound :
To my origin

APRIL 12, 1877

Sir Bartle Frere
said to Rider Haggard
*'Well I'll be damned and daggered!
Is the Transvaal now ours?'*

Rider Haggard
said to Sir Bartle Frere
*'Indeed it is our ship to steer
over the sea of Powers*

*and the power to hit hard
is the power to Civilise.
A new world shall arise,
now this our good card
safe on the table lies.'*

IVAN GROZNY

I

Lake Ilmen lies beneath the trees
Wrapt in veils of deep uncertainties
Like a box of tricks its water flows
The boats that sail it wear out its woes
Wet cries from the city walls arise
Novgorod is a pert and pretty prize
A forboding roding Ivan marches to
Walls shudder as Ilmen shudders too
It is the devil's hammer Ivan seeks
His fire and ice will fall for two weeks
When he goes the city will now be still
The bones veiled in a silent codicil

II

The Oprichniki stare a terrible stare
 That lies beyond any plaint or prayer
 Their black cloaks like hellish towers
 No medicine exists against their powers
 There is no colour within their homes
 No air at all inside the kremlin's domes
 Just bench and saw and blade and rope
 Just all you'd ever need to bury hope
 Outside these domes you see the *pole*
 Such a mortal mass of melancholy!

TWO

Rosculus

glutine materies taurino iungitur una

The best bull's glue is sold over there by little Rosculus.
 Built my roof with that. It would even hold a liar to his
 tongue so he would be fixed forever to his lie. A bull is a
 powerful creature and his force dwells in his balls. The
 world is fixed by a godlike grip in the power of these balls.
 Even the sky's own bull, Ju'ter's ironclad bolts, never
 broke my roof. Go see Rosculus, the little man. Bull's
 glue. Rosculus'll see you through.

Moscow, 1914

One thing you realise is how the Future grips you like a
 wraith with no faith, it grips you coldly, in a cold tenancy
 of atmosphere that lies like a lunatic breeze of fear above
 the land, your land, its grip impossible to loosen soon, as
 if you are the possessor and the possessed, it bears down,
 a land above the land, a ghost whose spell, unbroken, will

always hound you, and feed your fears, for the whole
remainder of your years.

A FOOTNOTE

Eternal Troy
domed and doomed
to fame

walled with a fleece of
flame, the shepherd
falls

into the sea, to be
a ship that cannot grip
the shore,

and as the weary sound
of war dries out, Troy
is no more

POETS

1 *The Bite*

In only what a poet's written
Is time's black veil freely bitten

See the vivid marks the teeth
Leave as the biters lie beneath

2

We make little marks on the paper and then
The great big red lines of the critic's pen

VOLK OHNE RAUM

The word 'Lebensraum' was invented by F. Ratzel in
1901 then popularised by the above-titled book.

Friedrich Ratzel
a riddle in the midst of space --
Lebensraum
a grand idea kaum
ignored within a crowded place

How m
-any people died for Lebensraum?
So many ears
have been pinched by odd ideas
that hate our hope yet reach our fears

THE OLD ONES

1 New Grange

In the homely hungers of midwinter
All stand and wait to be fed by her
The masked and seated peerless sun

Their contours define as if they paint her
Brimming chalked and clad in coats of fur
Shivering lost leaves in a holy horizon

At midday in the leaky creaking lintel
Of living stone, she blushes into a blur
And the mask is off now she has risen

2 Windmill Hill

The dances enhance the season
Feet and legs a spinning throne
Of faith and joy itself in belief
In a ring in the rays of the moon

Upper to the lower woven strong
Grass beneath them knotted strong
Joy in faith in light luxuriant lines
Rich with radiance as the dancers
 swell and swoon

ZINC

I placed my coins on the zinc.

Think!

I said to myself, then drink.

Well I drank myself out of coins
And ended up reading the runes
Of the old pissoir's ceiling.
The faded paint was peeling.

I will never be a philosopher.
The glass has much more to offer.
All my coins are in the till
All my thoughts doolally ill.

Soon I will be back in bed
In the banquet of my room
And the liquid in my head
Will be like a second home.

No the world is not for me to think :-
I am now married, sadly, to the zinc,
To the true platonic Form of drink.

TUMP

Over there by the river, all marsh and sump
But dry and safe is Hetty Pegler's Tump
It's a pretty place of sheep and box and heather
I lay down there beside a comfy little stump
To enjoy the holy commonplace of weather

The tump was built so many moons ago
When the druids processed in a white row
In a soft moonlight with their golden scythes
So steep the path to this steadfast stowe
In a free world without castle and tithe

As I lay up here in this carnival of grass
Boundless birds drop wishes as they pass
In this marsh and sump I find only tears
That run in rivers down the season's glass
The tump beats out a living heart of years

EXCLAVE

The Hackerwells in their brochlike den
preventative primitive prebender men
baneful boatrowers that splash gut and gore
when they row their boats up to the shore
hell is the heart of the Hackerwell roar

it is bleached with death up to the moor
weeds wind round the oaths they swore
to the ancestors that bled the world before
they themselves battered down life's door

The moon on the loch is a fleeting glance
whose light bleaches out death's dance
and the people peppered into a trance
must stand quite perpendicular to chance

The boat sets to the shore like death
its whirling wheels of fate beneath
as the Hackerwells display their teeth
each sword wakes up inside its sheath
they excavate them so they can breathe
cry, fra Mull and Muck unto Menteith!
each word a flower wrapped in a wreath

When they leave, these mountain men,
around there is all this ruination, then
a sound of tears rolling round the glenn
forsaken prayers forswear the least 'amen'

LORD ALBERMARLE

Lord Albermarle is drenched to the bone
The Cabinet is all set to the wide sea
Now no one can save the thing but he
Lord Albermarle is drenched to the bone

The French throw water onto the land
In their dark dungeons of diplomacy
Conniving and striving that we do not see
The French throw water onto the land

Will it all end up in fields full of bones?
Lord Albermarle is drenched to the heart
We are just hoping that he played his part
Will it all end up in fields full of bones?

The paper is filled up the document sent
The sea is its calling the sail is its hope
All of our traitors wrong end of the rope
The paper is filled up the document sent

What then -- is Lord Albermarle done?
He is the one with the sense for this all
He seems to be sinking in waters of gall
What then -- is Lord Albermarle done?

It is evening now in the whale of Whitehall
And each of its jonah-men feels so alone
Lord Albermarle is drenched to the bone
It is evening now in the deeps of Whitehall

This rain now a symbol of all that is known

‘LET IT PASS’

Each moment approaches
And then must pass
Let it pass

You cannot follow
For time is hollow
We in its cave
Poorly lit, half-blind

Let it pass

It cannot feel
 It is not even real
 After it dies
 And flees the cave
 In which we live
 Each moment approaches
 In magnificent coaches
 But leaves a slave

Let it pass
 Let them pass
 There will be more coaches
 To trample the grass
 As they flee the cave
 To their own grave

A moment is light approaching
 To exist in a flash
 To mist and to ash
 It leaves the cave
 In which we live
 To the grave and grass

Let it pass

TOPSY

Living with genocide

*Alights like a spinning top, see
 Then spreads like topsy,
 Spinning facsimile of form
 That, in the consoling storm,
 Turns memory into belief
 And belief into memory:
 We do not feel warm,*

*Yet it warms our grief.
Its cattle-cuddled works
Raise no alarm
As they cause their harm*

*Inside the insidious way
That lurks
Within our thoughts
To stop them going astray.
Unwittingly we strive
To stay alive
Charred by the way it exhorts
Us to be pure, be good,
Be proud, be free,
And as it crops and it lops, we
Succumb to its topsy.*

RED RAINBOW VIII

Joyce Spicer († 15.04.2008)

“But who invented colour?”, asked the crowd.
“We think it must be one who loved the laws,
All of these meanings coupled to a cause.
Their colours signify the world and shine

Into the eyes opened to a world of force.
Each colour’s avenue transcends the line
That leads it to the scintillating sky,
To save the souls that can no longer fly.”

There was a silence in the leaves of light
That sowed its seed into the fields of night,
To wake and feel and flow without a pause.

Red Rainbow softly spoke her thoughts aloud.
 "No one invented colour." Then she smiled.
 "No one was parent to that precious child."

THE UNICORN

Intent on swerving through the sky
 With earthbound yet heaven-spread wing,
 The eagle, swiftly-soared,
 This symbol bearing everything that's high.
 Evangelists and deities all sing
 His praise, and each word
 Propels him higher.
 And who would tire
 Of praising he who soars over everything?

Yet far below, unshaded, with a timid gaze,
 A creature trembles like a sheaf of corn,
 Its innocence a sword
 Against melancholy fearful paths and ways.
 'I am the last remaining unicorn.
 It is so very hard
 To see the eagle
 So strong, so regal,
 And in whose wings such beauty is reborn.

I am the last remaining of my kind,
 A lonely sheaf who trembles, not in fear,
 But that in front of me
 Lies fate that is unfruitful and unkind
 And to the end the final path is clear.
 For it is that I see:
 The eagles waken
 And I, forsaken,
I tread the pathways moribund and blind.'

THE CAT AND THE WIZARD

Margaret Maet 88

I

There was a wizard, glib no doubt,
 Yet wise and I would say devout.
 All that he had always looked new:
 Sir John Fitzwilliam Fortescue.
 His lib'ry was so full of books
 That oozed into its deepest nooks
 And in them was each sort of spell.
 He could make you sick as well as well,
 Call down beelzebubs and pucks
 To stir up rixes, riots, rucks.
 The things that went on in his flat!

II

Now this Sir John he kept a cat
 As plump and limber as can be
 And always gazing hungrily
 As if he never had been fed.
 One day a hungry Felix said:
 "It be the infelicity of Fate,"
 (This cat had read Philosophy
 And dabbled in Dem'ology.)
 "The infelicity of Fate is great
 As I Perceive this empty Plate.
 My Wit is as my Hunger great,
 But one will not the other sate."
 He raised his paw and sniffed the air
 'Sif inspiration might lie there.
 "A fool I be who could not see
 The answer's in his Library!

It's full of Charms and Summonings.
 I can Read and I know many Things!
 I eat and sleep and Dream of Food
 And now my Dream can be pursued,
 For I shall Summon me a Feast!"
 And off he went, this foolish beast.

III

The door unlocked, he entered and
 He gasped to see a room so grand
 In gloom though it was candlelit.
 He saw bats like little spirits flit
 And tiny fairies blow their nose
 (For that is where the dust all goes).
 Thick beams of light belayed the gloom:
 How many books lay in that room!
 No force to Felix could occlude
 How near he was to so much food.
 He found the spell for being fed
 Within a mighty mantic book
 Secreted in the deepest nook.
 From this he read, and this he said :-

*Let hunger be fed
 To soup each disjune
 By bane and by boon
 In cauldron in keg
 No cantrip no gegg
 Let hunger be led
 To cookrooms of food
 Replenished renewed
 To feast and to feed
 To sow and to seed
 Let hunger be fled
 By gourmand by ged*

Oh hunger I send thee away!
Oh hunger I end thee today!
I put out thy flame!
In Sir John Fitzwilliam Fortescue's name
I banish thee!
Hunger -- thee!
I summon thee,
Food, food -- thee!

IV

In Sir John Fitzwilliam Fortescue's name,
 How the food it came!
 Like rain, like hail, like snow,
 Crunchies -- see them grow and grow
 Like weeds, like eager flies
 That buzz and dance about. They rise
 Like flies off of Beelzebub
 All summoned for hubbub
 And rix and riot. Routs
 Of crunchies. Clouts
 Of crunchies. "*Help!*",
 Poor Felix cried.
 Philosophy aside,
 He was not cut out for spells.
 In Nature's *je m'appelles*
 He was just a cat,
 Rotund and not flat,
 However he might wish
 That food was in his dish.
 All this was all too much.

V

At last, in double-dutch,
 He heard a double-barrelled growl
 That metamorphed into a howl.
 Then suddenly,
 As if it was stuck fast with glue,
 The anarchy
 Of rix and riot ceased.
 The charm was released
 And Sir John Fitzwilliam Fortescue,
 With hat and wand and grimoire too,
 Stepped into the light. He was very cross
 At Felix. But Felix purred and it was impos-
 -ible to be cross for long. The cat waved his tail
 As if Sir John were the Holy Grail.
 Felix rubbed himself right round Sir John
 Who could be no longer woebegone,
 And there could be no woebetide.
 This was not malice, no. Not pride.
 "Silly boy," he smiled at last.
 "What's done is done, what's passed is passed.
 But wizard spells are not for cats --
 They are for men in wizard hats
 With wizard sticks and wizard books,
 The most powerful in secret nooks.
 Cats do not need any book of weird.
 In a purr, a meow -- a patient stare:
 The mightiest of charms is there."

VI

And Felix purred and food appeared.

SIR KEIR

Sir Keir stands for human rights
 Sir Keir Starmer is annoyed
 There are people speaking up
 Against a Gaza half-destroyed

As mobs of bombs are falling
 And so many lives lain lost
 The unlettered are protesting
 Keir Starmer is so cross

Sir Keir stops and startles
 When he hears from the street
 A sea of voices crying 'Stop!'
 Sir Keir's white as a sheet

Sir Keir must set sail his ship
 Silver sail and golden anchor
 Sir Keir on the ship of wealth
 Built both for war and banker

He sees the monsters he had heard
 He lets loose all his harpoons
 Slays them all and duly saves
 The grateful cowering tycoons

He has cleared the sea of voices now
 This leaves the voices of his head
 '*They are always right*', Sir Keir
 Says to himself. '*They tread*

*Upon the sea of righteousness
Those monsters are no more
I have made it safe for us all
To carry on as we did before*

*I am a lawyer first to last
And true justice is my rock
I set the scales back and forth
It swings to every tic and toc*

*The evil deed is weighing down
The Left and so I raise the Right
Until I set the balance just so
To lay waste to the Amalekite'*

As the moon caressed the waves
Sir Keir's thoughts were thunk
But as their sulfur burst in flame
Sir Keir's little ship was sunk

An End

There is a beauty in the graceful lie
That fetches from our hearts a gentle hope.
Like a bird our feelings fret to swoop and sigh :
Where is the falconer who holds the rope?
But then, the falcon is a common trope
For what is free yet flung back to the ground.
Its wings are beating and its talons grope
For anything to reach for, anything around:
Yet see it fail and fall and sink without a sound.