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POEMS OF A DECADE
1931-1941

by the same author

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POLITICS AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION

POEMS OF A DECADE
1931-1941

by

A. L. ROWSE

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To
DAVID CECIL
for the years of friendship and encouragement

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The poem *Extempore Memorial* has previously been printed in a private edition.

For the design of a snake on the cover I am indebted to the kindness of Lord Berners.

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I. EARLIER POËMS

IRELAND

A wise-eyed solemn child, tanned gipsy, see
In solitary play beneath the elder tree

In the wild hillside garden where the hours
Go by on tip-toe over the kitchen flowers:

There's sweet potato-bloom, lavender and white,
But under the hedge, nettles and aconite;

And a border made, of thyme and saxifrage,
On a ledge pennywort, and in a bed, sage.

But he, forgotten child, content to play
With dreams for company, all summer in a day,

In his coign where the green rain-water-barrel is
Under the elder, hears strangest harmonies.

His eyes, dark sloes, follow the evening sun
Up the hill slopes, till night's shadow dun

Enfolds the garden and him. In the last rich light
He finds a secret knowledge and his delight:

For then, he knows that beyond the round hill's brim
Where no one has ever been is the world's rim;

And there, he has heard tell, is Ireland coiled
In ultimate seas and is the end of the world..

'Ireland', he whispers to the sky's blue tent—
And the waters of sleep steal over him content.

THE OLD CORNISH WOMAN BY THE FIRE

By the fire she sits
In the dusky evening of her years,
And the firelight flits
Above her head, and on her whitened hairs.

Her sorrowing face,
Like a withered lily in the gloom
Of the hearth-place,
Glimmers with dim light in the shadowy room.

She has her thoughts,
Nor stirs if anyone should pass:
Like speckled motes
They come and go against a pane of glass.

So patiently
She bears her pain: as for a friend,
So peacefully
She waits the footfalls of her certain end.

DtfPORTH

Into a quiet, lonely place I come,
To a coign of cliff and a lane that drops to the sea:
The shrill voices of the winds have here
No place, nor the winds' fingers in my hair.
All that was before is strangely far,
And I have entered on a secret stillness:
A frightened hush falls on the throat that sang,
On the stream that babbled dreamily in the sun,
On whispering osiers and ivied stones.
There are a thousand timid eyes that watch
In the startled silence; only the monotone
Of gathered waves that break upon the shore
Below, lulls suspense with regular beat.
A sea-bird leaves his preening by the margin,
And rising through swift air, desolately
Wheels above the deserted shore. And now,
Rousing from dreams I find my quiet nook
Beautiful with innumerable sounds:
The intimate brook resumes its idle chatter,
A little wind wakes among the withies;
The ivy-leaves that gleam like pools of light
Rustle softly over the stones, and even
The mosses are astir; a robin threads
The intricate hedge, and pipes a friendly song
Ere he flits mocking up the covert lane.

THE SHADOWS ON THE GLASS

When far into the night I sit and work,
Within a dim room where the shadows lurk,

Still and black before me as a pond
A window is, and the deeper night beyond:

Shade of another world although it be,
The shapes of friendlier things I often see.

For there upon the mirrored deeps of space
Are the homely signs of this my chosen place:

A polished surface lit in kindly glow,
The tongues of firelight dancing in a row

On shelf and cupboard; and in far background,
The great doors that may move, and with no sound.

Myself looks at me from the darkened glass
And holds my eyes whenever they would pass:

And if a shadow now should wake and stir
This room to movement, and my heart to fear...

A sudden flash of the eyes, as a bird takes cover,
The moment broken and the dread is over.

The room resumes its quiet homeliness,
And nothing stirs in the night's lone distances.

GROWN-UP TO CHILD: TEN COMMANDMENTS

Take a rake with ten teeth
 To hollow out the sea;
Ride astride a sea-bird's back,
 Nor ever be
Afraid to raid the nests of gulls
 In the shy places of the rocks;
Nor slow to draw music from
 The fluted comb.
Spread a bed of gathered down
 From dandelion clocks;
Scorn not the thorn whereon there grows
 The everlasting rose.
Do not you afear to spin
 A thread to catch the air,
Nor lack to pluck the golden broom
 On the high ledges where
The rare birds there do preen and plume
 Themselves above the bay.
Nor fail to sail a coral boat
 Out to meet the day
At dun of dawn: And may
 Your eye descry
 Whatever there shall lie
 Between the green sea and the sky.

PARADISE SQUARE

There was a moment of fleet-foot joy
Today in Paradise Square.
Even Time itself stood still,
When the obscure sun from behind a cloud came out
And darted fingers of light through the aspen trees;
And the wind awoke and walked in the gardens of
Paradise Square.
The little old women looked down through lattices
Of high upper windows in windmill houses,
And laughed to see the trees blown all silver and grey.
A tiny white cut sniffed at the breeze
And fell three steps down into the street.
A journeyman tinker went by under a tower,
With bag on his back and apprentice lagging behind.
Today there was a moment of fleet-foot joy,
When even Time stood still in
Paradise Square.

JEREMIAH, THE TABBY CAT, STALKS
IN THE SUNLIT GARDEN

—
While you clamber over the blue gate in the garden,
In the sunlit garden I
Already arrived am before you: while
In a flash of the eye,
You are suspended in your leap, an invert body
With lithe panther movement,
Against the blue ground of the gate. And then,
Unconscious cinema-actor, you cross your stage,
The little plot where light cuts the shade like a jewel,
On what intent?
Your eyes are amber in the sun, flashing
From the cushioned tuft of harebells
And calceolarias.
Now you thread the intricate pattern
Of long garden stems and stems of shadow,
And cross the lawn;
Your supple flanks serpentine, your tread
Stealthy and secret, of who knows
What generations of great jungle cats?
And so you reach the undergrowth of the sycamore;
Nor pause to hear me calling from my window
Whence sight of you I lose,
Your dappled side lost in the camouflage of dappled shadow:
And you have left the sunlit garden
For who knows what obscure instinctive memories of lost
generations of great cats?

THE SNAKE: HOMAGE TO LAWRENCE

One day in childhood
Coming down the hot summer road,
The sun brilliant upon the angular elvan-stones
 polished by the horses' hooves,
 upon the shining metal and white dust,
Passing the triangular bed of nettles
 in the corner of the hedge,
 the dried-up water-course below:
I turned and suddenly saw
Coil upon coil, the striped and fascinated
 rings of a snake sleeping there:
Slowly he shifted and a lithe
 movement like a shudder passed
 through the shifting coils as he lifted
 them to settle himself again.

But I did not stay to see any more.
Of a sudden overwhelmed with horror
I fled spinning down the village street
 in the hot sun, nor stopped
 until the welcoming doorway of my house.
All I remember is the way
 those coils lay, the stripey colour,
 the horror, and runnijg away
 down the road.

Still I have never forgotten the sudden fascination,
 the horror of that instant,
 the nearness, the unexpectedness;

Often and often that image,
 a slow-motion picture, comes into mind;
And I wonder if perchance I shall see
 the snake, as tonight,
 come slowly unwinding his coils
 out of the dying embers, the red
 bed of the fire, unwinding himself through the bars
 and into the room;
Or come slowly up out of the recesses
 of the great blue chair,
 or from under the stealthily moving
 pattern of the carpet:
The horror of it
 if he were, as in my childhood,
 suddenly there!

SATURDAY

(ToL.J.)

Because this is Saturday, and because
It is late afternoon, and the day's scrubbing and cleaning are
over,
The neat and pictured red houses stand in their rows
Prim and tightly like aproned women; and all
The brass-rimmed doorsteps flashing in the sun,
And here and there a canary cage set above the black hollow
of the door.
Suddenly I hear from a window opened to the street,
In a lull of the busy traffic, the three quarters sprinkled
From a somnolent clock upon the hot oppressive air.
Then chiefly I remember the Saturdays of the past,
And of them, one.

And because this was Saturday,
And because we were soon to go different ways,
We were together, child of the daydream blue eyes
And I:
Visiting our toy cathedral town, set within a bowl of green
hills,
With cheerful runnels that go purling under the mirrored
skies,
To make sweet and clean the streets.
The selfsame chime we heard, like drowsy beads of water
Dripping, from a tower upon the commerce of the market-
place.
And all the belfries followed: St. Mary's loosened tongue,
Deliberate and spare of speech;
And the Cathedral chime, a distant fine-spun web of sound,

That floated high overhead, out to the meadows
And over the woods and waters of the valley.
When evening came, we chose the oblique shadow of a lime
And sat by the river-side on a spur,
Watching a tall ship, rigged and delicately sparred,
That came with slow proud movement, against the sunset-
shadowed hills,
Slowly up the river, with the breeze and flowing tide:
O magic hour, when the day closes its petals up
And folds itself, a flower upon the pond of the encroaching
night.

THE FALLEN TREE

Walking through the fields in the eye of day
Blinded, I came upon a tree that lay

Across the accustomed path. Felled in the strife
With elemental winds, writhing for life,

The great tree bore the seals of agony.
And now, like marble or like ivory,

Immovable and still, without a breath
It lies, finding a serene peace in death.

And yet in the branches of the unfallen trees
There runs a gentle music of the breeze

Among the boughs, like a small stream's murmur,
An echo of the singing winds of summer.

The hedges are yellow where the sunlight lingers:
Touched to colour by the season's fingers,

They stand in regiment of gold and red.
Now over the stripped body of the dead

Tree, there creeps a gleam of mirrored white
And blue of steel, the sheath and shadow of light.

The crumpled leaves fall with scannel cry
Over the tree's marmoreal ecstasy.

Still in the high elms, there runs a whispered dirge
Of leaves in motion, the remembered surge

Of waves within a shell, hollow and smooth,
Some far, faint song from the netherland of youth.

ODE

*On hearing a bird sing from a farthestmost
point ofland out over the sea*

How many days now, how many months and years,
Since that rain-mirrored evening of the spring,
When rooted in enchantment by the shore
Suddenly I heard the song of a bird take wing,
Sweet and uncertain in the stillness, and soar
Out into the shattered silence of the bay.

So many years, so far a thing, and yet
The sea is strong within my nostrils now
As then, the wind off the sea in my hair
And in my eyes, and to my heart shall bear,
Over the remembered music of the waves,
This confident song, this ringing ecstasy.

The cup of the bay is brimmed with melody
As the calyx of a flower is filled with light.
Only the iron walls of the cliffs reject
The supplication of this throat and break
The song into a thousand petals white
That all the hollows of the sea reflect.

One last gleam of the sun lights up the rock
From whence the song comes ringing: there it rides
Mute in tongueless immobility,
Proudly over the lapse and flow of tides:
Yet like a brave doomed ship with light at mast
Has set its course out to the open sea,

If only, before the night, the song should loose
The moorings of the rock, so that it break
From its foundations, and urging the slow bark
Across the perilous ways of the fatal sea,
And triumphing should meet disaster: if only
The song should cleave the ways of the deep and wake

The dead who sleep in the valleys of the sea,
So that the sea give up her dead: if only
The stopped ears might hear music again,
And all the huddled skeletons of drowned men
Assemble their bones and throng forth from the lonely
Places beneath the waters' immensity:

But the song shall pass, as all things pass
Across the margin of this translunary sphere;
And no brave ship shall be set voyaging,
Image of man's infinite loneliness,
A cry that gathers strength from nothingness;
For the world is dead and there is none to hear.

THE PROGRESS OF LOVE

Your beauty was of such a quality
As I have seen distilled by sober light .
Of day upon the surfaces of things:
The delicate touch of the sun's passing brings
A glow of life upon the palace front,
That sinks from desire to memory, and dies.

So was your passing from the shadowy room:
While you were there, the late light lingering,
All things grew sentient of your loveliness;
And here a face caught the refracted impress
Of your beauty. And when you went, you drew
Evening on, and owl-soft dusk came down.

Now is your spring, and yet will summer come
To strengthen you, and make you brave to war.
And you will follow up the hot dusty course
Of irrevocable time, nor have remorse
For him that loved you, and would have you never
Changed by contact with the harsher world.

And then will autumn lay a still cold finger
On your beauty, will dim your liquid eyes,
And suck the warm juices of your lips.
This living dream you are shall see eclipse,
And I'll not mourn you in my wakiag state,
Wide-eyed and in my frozen heart secure.

Many days now has your image haunted me
And set me forth upon my wonted ways:
In field and pasture you are at my side,

Impetuous, inseparable guide,
Yours is the vision that the sun informs
In cloud, in water, in every stone and leaf.

Though spring shall fade, and autumn summer folbw,
And winter come to ravage with decay,
Something of your beauty shall remain
Untouched, intangible, beyond all wane;
Nor can you altogether die, as long
As I shall live you will go on in me.

THE GARDEN

The enchanted garden under the stillness lies,
And the dark trees that taper to the skies
Funereal are, like sombre swaying plumes.
Beneath the stars, gigantic night entombs
All that the familiar day revealed.
Only a midnight lamp that has for shield
The velvet verdurous gloom of vernal trees
Disturbs the dusk, all night unseeing sees:
This is my beacon, this solitary eye
That watches me insensate till I die.

This is my life, to watch the seasons pass
Over the garden's clear enchanted glass.
There goes by the procession of the hours,
The days, the years, nor stirs the ordered flowers.
And there as on a magic plane I see
The ceaseless flow of time away from me:
Not in my heart, but in the external world
This evidence of my weak mortal hold.

And so through change to inevitable change
The visible shadows of existence range
From the dawn to the coming of the night.
Have I not waited for the dim uncertain light
That steals into this world of mystery,
Troubling its strangeness and its intimacy?
And in this place, where late the loud birds sang
Before the dawn, so that the garden rang
With passion and with ecstasy, now all
Is silent upon roof and stone and wall.

Hush! the hour when all things living wake
It is: they stir the garden's dream and break
The threads of sleep. Now statuesque and still
The gathered chimneys of the palace spill
The last rays of the wheeling sickle moon.
A clock strikes the quarter: one note is soon
Dropped like a stone into that shadowy well;
The walls resound to the shrill sudden bell,
Then all is quiet, and the waters of peace
Flow in and find their undisturbed release.

So morning comes, and the turning earth spins on
Under the blue acres of the sky whereon
The white clouds flying, flaunt their candid banners;
The wind springs up like the feet of many runners,
Is rampant in the trees, then gradually
Subsides upon a low bough noiselessly
Nid-nodding in the idiotic wind.
Then in the noon, the tulips flame-quickened
Lay bare their hearts aspiring to the sun;
And later, in the coolness, when day is done
They shut their petals up and like a troop
Of driven ghosts, pale and defeated droop.

So comes the night, so vanishes the day,
So with the seasons passes life away:
Passes away, nor any impress makes
On the mind that knows not if it sleeps or wakes.
Only by the shadows on the garden's face
Changing, I follow time's unchanging pace:
By them I know the world rolls on its course,
Irrevocable, swift, without remorse.

ARCTIC MOON

—
The fingers of the moon upon the frozen world
Have caught the aloofheart in a net,
Caught and enmeshed there is no longer hold
Within this arctic region where life is not:

The fine and subtle fingers of the night
Seek out the lunar shadows that we are,
Sifting in the crevices the white
Dust fallen of the crumbling sphere:

The wind of death at the corners of the house
Is furtive behind the barren leaves;
Though we, but shadows moving in the caves,
For screen from the approaching death have these:

The frozen eagle poised still in vain for flight,
The patterned poplars and the momentary light.

THE ACCUSTOMED SPRING

How usual is the world of Spring:
The floods are out across the plain;
The punctual birds are on the wing,
Scattering the dew like grain.

Over the meadows and the fields
There blows a wind of daffodils;
Each passing year no difference yields
Upon the seasonable hills.

Yet still I think sometime to meet
A tiger, amber in the rain;
And turning down the narrow street,
The Holy Ghost in Magpie Lane.

SMALL ENCHANTMENTS

Here by the fence I halt, the familiar spot
Under the green shelter of the leaves in the hot

Summer afternoon, where the light makes lattices
Upon the running brook's sweet surfaces.

In the flat water-meadows, the sorrel is red
Among the golden kingcups. And overhead

A passing plane, blue and silver in the sun,
Drones and drowzes marvellously on.

A sudden eddy of wind the long grasses
Stirs, and reveals the sedges' hidden places.

Yet all the while had I taken no notice
Of the enchanted brook, playing to entice

Me from my dream of ordinary things,
That to the subsiding pulse of motion sings.

A gentle rill of sound as it ripples over
The pebble edge makes a little music hover

In the intimate air. Nor had I seen
A tiny splutter where a furtive wren

Bathes among the shallows, among the cresses.
O magic of this place where secret voices

Put out their strength to soothe and charm a while:
These are the small enchantments that beguile.

THE WIND AND DEATH

(In memoriam R. B.)

The wind in the alders and across the marshland
is like the plunging of many seas.
I am borne down in the heavy waters
to where the strong tide runs by:
The trees are but fronds in the current waving,
the long grasses leaning over.

The wind makes a furrow in my hair,
And all is stillness around me in the bent avenue
So loud is the wind's voice.

Here on an earlier summer day were two
Lovers, kissing in the rain,
Oblivious of the wind, the trees and the evil eye of day.
They pass, the destroyers of my peace,
Strewing the floor of the world with broken flowers.

I, the passer-by, for consolation have only these:
The charity of brown ploughed earth,
The folded curves of the furrows,
The passing bells of raindrops
That break upon the upturned face.

There is no mystery in dying so.
Only his body that else had been lapped round
by all this land,
One with the folds of the hills and the strong trees,
Is but ashes scattered in the wind
upon the lips of flowers.

HOMeward RETURNING TO THE CITY

(For Mrs. W. G. S. Adams)

The wintry sun a pallid laughter yields
To the sterile slopes and the forsaken fields.

No leaf is left upon the autumnal bough;
The Sabbatarian rooks go homeward how.

And homeward I, yet pause to think that here
I stood for a moment of a former year,

And watched a fox drive his purposive line
Across the snowy ploughland, in a fine

Dark streak upon the white from hedge to hedge.
Now like an ossuary at the edge

Of hill and sky, rises the skeleton
Water-tower and bleakly leans upon

The open heaven. The gathered wind forlorn
Is shrill among the trees, yet to the shorn

Pasture is temperate and nothing stirs.
Only a memory returns and whispers

To me in the willow-walk, of a child
Homeward from the wood returning with wild

Irises in his arms, and in his eyes
A fugitive fear, a sudden sweet surmise.

Now all the land, crepuscular and still,
Glides into darkness; and I follow from the hill

The last void loveliness upon the plains,
Till of the city there is nothing that remains.

II. THE DECADE

EXTEMPORE MEMORIAL

(For C.H.)

(i)

—
These anemones, these snowdrops, this frail aconite,
That light with purple the dark corner of the room,
And tell me that in the west, the spring akeady come,
Heaves under the quickened mosses, runs along
The hedgerows and lights with flame
The secret earth:

Speak also to me of one untimely dead,
This language of the soul for the dead soul,
This bond, this union of the hills and valleys, wind
 and the high trees,
Of all that country that by death is his,

I who remain this protest make:
How should my life have become so bound,
So mixed with his that by his death,
I now see never that ridge of land,
The familiar road, the stone-pines on the edge
 leaning to the wind, their driven shapes
 fantastically flanking the forsaken house;
Nor ever see the curve of the hills
Encircling the beleaguered lighted city
 through nocturnal mists, June night of stars,
 or by the January moon;
Nor ever walk in the funereal woods,
 the waters in my ears falling,
 letting fall their drops upon my mind,
 and in my heart:

Nor know all these in the flesh, or in the mind's eye,
but they are his, being made so by his death?
Does death give this property in the sensible world?
—I had not thought so, save for this.

(ii)

Now come back to me the evidences of those hills,
Those walks, the bridle-path, the gorse bright
over Idless, and the blue swept sky;
So also the December rains and the plantations-
Shivering with wetness and the winter sun;

The Christmas moon above the hollow bowl
Where the city lies sleeping, lapped by the blown bells;
the quiet house where the successor of Peter,
sheltered within the peach-clad walls
under the shadow of the tower,
Looks out upon his flock and keeps his hours.

O bells, O moon of Bethlehem,
O moving finger of time that writes
upon those walls, upon the trees,
O prince of the Church, O people,
O sleeping city, O sapient bells
that call the heart home,
opening the casements
upon what inner kingdoms,
what peace forgotten,
save in the unquiet tongues of bells
ringing to church on Christmas Eve,
the people waking in the streets,

shaking themselves from sleep
having dreamed dreams under their spell:
OSapientia, O Radix Jesse!

(iii)

Who is this that moves when the leaves move
Blown by the wind along the midnight road
By Tresillian Bridge, past Pencalenick and St. Clement's
Cross?
What dear ghost is this comes revisiting his former places?
I who remain keep watch in vain
upon the wind, upon the faces
of the clouds that pass,
hoping for a sign of one who has long forsaken
the friendly woods;
Perhaps to-night under the strong headlights
of the passing car,
the leaves dropping in crowds,
The sense of a falling star
may be taken
to signify
the mystery.

(iv)

He lies not here: here you will not find him,
but in another country, under other stars,
not his, not ours,
in stranger soil.

The stone-pines and the cypresses
whispering the sounds and perfumes of the sea,
take up these messages from this country
that by death is his,
wherein the spirit entered, finds release;
Here circumscribed by every line and fold,
in every blade and leaf
at home, at peace.

HOW MANY MILES TO MYLOR?

How many miles to Mylor

By frost and candle-light:

How long before I arrive there,

This mild December night?

As I mounted the hill to Mylor

Through the thick woods of Carclew,

A clock struck the three-quarters,

And suddenly a cock crew.

At the cross-roads on the hill-top

The snow lay on the ground,

In the quick air and the stillness,

No movement and no sound.

'How is it?' said a voice from the bushes

Beneath the rowan-tree;

⁴'Who is it?' my mouth re-echoed,

My heart went out of me.

I cannot tell what queerness

There lay around Carclew:

Nor whatever stirred in the hedges

When an owl replied 'Who-who?'

A lamp in a lone cottage,

A face in a window-frame,

Above the snow a wicket:

A house without a name.

How many miles to Mylor

This dark December night:

And shall I ever arrive there

By frost or candle-light?

THE DEAD FRIEND

Sometimes when day draws in I think I hear
Th* firm and friendly step upon the stair,

The door open, the long familiar form
Stooping a little, enter now the room.

He looks a little sadly as one that's lost
To life and me, that affable shy ghost,

Yet moves across to his accustomed place
In the angle of the window, looks into my face

Questioningly, as if I had some remedy
That might be sovran for this strange malady

Of being dead. But when most I think to have
Found something that might heal, a word to save,

So turn to him, he is no longer there:
A soundless movement, a sigh upon the stair,

And I remember in the empty room,
A narrow, cypress-darkened grave in Rome.

WAYLAID

¹What face is that peering from the shadow
Though I turn not, of the darkened window:

Who is it watches me with such loving care,
So closely, when I turn he is not there?

Wherever in this waking room I am
Reminds me that another called this home.

Silent, so still, so sleepless an eyelid,
What cover I may take, I am waylaid.

Always beyond the turning of the eye,
And when I think to follow, slipping away:

If I should turn, I know, you are not there,
Unmoving, still I know this moving fear;

And if perchance then I am listening
My inner ear shall hear the dead man sing,

Very low and soft and void of grief,
Regretful, yet having small regret for life.

This is he who formerly was here,
Who dead, forgetting not the things that were

His, lays a shadow upon all that's mine:
Poor ghost, come home then, come you in!

THE FIELD

This quiet moment, unbroken of sound, as if
I should stand for ever at edge of cliff,

The world unmoving, the pastures of the sky
Still and harrowed by no cloud, and I

A lonely column of shadow in a field,
A long gaunt finger pointing to the mild

Plains of the sea and the translucent east.
There is a brooding quiet in the west:

The high tired voices of children: Silence again.
And all the generations of former men

Are forgotten while a bird intent darts low
Along the hedge. And now with tread more slow

From the four corners of the field they come,
So many dead men have made this their home.

The day will be when I shall be dead as they,
And the quiet land that bore me, in that day

Will know me no more than than the dust of those.
They squandered here the labour of their thighs,

The far-off, linked, inseparable lovers,
Until the moon set or sun rose. And others,

Watching a moment between the hills and sea,
Knew too a time would come and they not be.

Now all the land is silent as the dead:
I celebrate their spilled and wasted seed.

MARCH LANDSCAPE IN CORNWALL

Passage is opened for the sun in heaven:
A fleeting wind drives by, a way is riven

For the late reluctant gleam to light upon
The splintered granite, the road bare as bone.

The March light sudden and fitful of heart,
Mocking with faint hope the summer heat,

Explores the skeleton land and now reveals
The rifts and crannies that the rock conceals,

The secret periwinkle and parched mosses.
Now sings the keenlier in the long dry grasses

The shrill mnemonic of the scuttling wind:
The razor sound zigzags to the quarry's end,

Skimming with swift, subtle touch the edge
Of precipice and angular cut ridge,

And scurries swish-swish to the moor's rim.
Across the hollows of the pastures come

The comfortable cries of idiot sheep.
And now in the distance the familiar shape

Is suddenly there, of the snakewhite road once seen
Strung with red gems of light under the moon.

A gust of wind blows out the rapid sun:
The grey wings settle on the land again.

APRIL LANDSCAPE

The cracked bell rings to Lenten service over
The April fields, lifting the mists that hover

Across the dun distances from wood to wood.
Each quiet stroke renews the familiar mood

Of a dream that has been dreamed, and again I hear
The interior, murmuring complaint of prayer.

Now the dark woods of Duporth are pierced with late
Innumerable sweet voices, separate

And clear above the burden of the sea.
The long sea-swell rolls in its symmetry

Of surf, breaking the springwhite flowers of foam
Upon the iron rocks amid the fume

And thunder of spring upon the heaving sea.
The sheltered slope is strewn with sticks that the

April winds have sown: the trees are yet bare.
A night-moth voyages on the uncertain air,

Seeking the dizzy region of the cliffs.
Somewhere in the domed sky a gull laughs

Above the turning world, and with shrill mirth
That the sea should mumble the corners of the earth.

TRENARREN

The moon at end of day
Stares at me across the bay;

The clouds scud overhead
Across the valley of the dead,

The plain where the drowned men
Rise and fall again.

Smoke for this hour ascends
From the still house, befriends

The dark and friendless grounds:
Nothing now there sounds,

Save the crack of boughs
Around the waiting house.

Under the lowering sky
The importunate seagulls cry;

The wind stirs the frieze
Of black, ancestral trees.

What if the long drowned men
Assemble their bones again,

Since all is at an end,
The thronged cliffs ascend,

Once more themselves arouse
Against the doomed house?

IDEA

Suppose the brain is turned
And, looking up from the lamplit desk,
I meet the stony glare
 of a jade-green different star,
Image of cold, ironic steadfastness,
That watches me motivated by no desire?
(Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art.)
But who is steadfast?
Not you. Not I.
In the dark well of the palace
The moon-lipped sill of a window
Gleams, and is withdrawn.
The leaves glitter in the wind, in the darkness
Falling. The world is falling.
Und doch ist Einer welcher dieses Fallen
Unendlich sanft in seinen Händen halt.
O vanity of desire:
The world is but a jewel, and we
The prisoned lights that lurk in hidden depths,
Shifting and insubstantial as the leaves.
I am blown to where the cliff of Spain
Draws its frozen draperies in stone
Out of the vermiculous sea.
You know the route:
That way madness lies.

WALK BY THE MOON

Over the hill's neck
King of the land I walk,
Under the moon.
There are those eyes that follow me,
And the curve of another's lips:
But in vain, but vain
 as the thunder of the sea,
 the grateful folds of the cliffs.
If a foot should stumble,
There would be an end perhaps:
The long silver leagues of surf
Leap up to receive me.
Into what hands then would I commend
 the spirit?

Hurt by no possible thought,
Wounded by unhopèd-for ends,
This is my will that speaks.

A dumb beast sheltering under a wall,
A broken gate, the faces of drowned men
Turned upwards to the innocent surface of the sea,
A lonely heron fishing in a creek,
The labouring spirit of the woods,
A roof that the wind sings through:
These would be greater content,
Less sinister than
A bruised reed.

THE DREAM

The dream begins to stir again

In the hollow corners of the winter mind,
In the secret places of the exhausted brain.
(Life is difficult because quotidian.)
Yet, in the Wittenberg Plate on a summer noon,
The open balconies yawned up to catch the sudden sun,
The trees gleamed in a little wind,
And lights brushed the brave geraniums on the market stalls.
These moments have I stored up against the ruin
That time will bring upon us and upon our love.
But time that ruins also heals
And perhaps will lay a finger to console; or so you say:
As if this should be for consolation
In the cold gradations of decay.
What are these soft autumnal leaves
That come drifting across my tired eyes
Drifting, nor cease to beat
With slow insistent concatenation
Upon the brain?
For all is not yet dull
Under the different skull,
Although innumerable webs are woven
To net the vanishing dream.

AUGUSTE NEPT: 1877*

So here you are, brave soldier!
You that were young in seventy-seven.
How clear it is he loved you:
Did you respond, I wonder?

But he has left for later ages,
For the posterity that is I,
The ineffaceable mould of feature
The form that in God's eye
You were, and still to us is you,

L'Homme seveillant h la nature[^]
He called you, thinking to stifle his love,
And make a parable of his pain.

Did he think so to forget
The summer of seventy-seven,
And Bruxelles dusty under the lime trees,
And the Caserne, the bugles and the trumpets,
The watered pavements in the morning,
Your upturned face in the archway,
Under the lamp at night?

If so, here it is.
(0 for the summer of seventy-seven,
The heat, the Exposition Universelle
And the gendarmes of the Trocadero, the gardener
Watering the flower-beds before the heat o' the sun,
And MacMahon, and you.)

The model for Rodin's *VAgē d*Airain* was named Auguste Nept.

Fear no more the heat o the sun.*

Only so has he possessed you,
And saved your body out of the wrack of time.

Where else then is this body,
Mauled or distorted by the years,
Scarred by the fevers of the flesh,
Ravaged by the worms,
Put out by death?
Where is this dust:
Mixed into the mould of many battles,
Ploughed into the fields,
Or sleeping by some quiet water
By Louveciennes or Charleroi,
Having found death late in an arm-chair by the fireside,
Or early, by the fevered waters of the Congo?

This is my body.

What else that matters?

He has saved you from the body's death
And made you for ever young:
Though you had no pity on him for his love,
Have mercy upon me now.

THE STRICKEN GROVE

Enter now the stricken grove

W. H. AUDBN

Here in the grove that's forested with bells
They walk who know their own loves' funerals;

Two by two, though oftener one by one,
They seek their shelter from the tolerant sun:

They are but ghosts of their own discontent,
Hugging their private disillusionment,

Laying their withered fingers without heat
Upon the wounded places of the heart,

Cherishing their anguish and their pain
Till the tufted forest cry again

Adonis, Adonis!—O Adonai! O Lord,
If only we might hear the unlikely word

Spoken aloud to the world as once we heard
Each to himself alone, nor ever feared

The exquisite risk, the danger of despair
Nor any defeat. Now there is nothing there:

Only the sexual birds repeat their cry
And the vibrant lovely snake glides by.

This is the stricken grove: no life is here.
Too late for joy, too proud for hope or fear

They move as shadows: these are they
Who blench not when their bodies turn to clay.

THE SNAKE

J'y suivais un serpent qui venait de me mordre

PAUL VALÉRY

In the water-meadows the yotaig men walk,
Admire their women, stiff with sex they talk,

Self-consciousness upon their fallow faces
(Better to be private in these public places).

The young women to assert their innocence
And hide their native insignificance

Chatter like paroquets along the paths,
Whose plumes they borrow for their summer clothes.

The human scene outdoes the verdurous,
The borders lush, the birds lascivious.

The wise and hidden snake remains apart,
Unseen, unmoving, eating out his heart:

He is not deceived, but steadfast sees
With lidless and live eyes these fooleries,

Withdraws himself into a world remote,
With its own inner bitterness replete,

After long seasons' silence to reflect
On what is passing in the world, eject

Some suitable poison of the wounded brain
On all that's folly, human and mane.

6 snake, be thou my friend, an enemy
No more, no more a living fear to me:

But let me fed amid this treachery
Thy fang, thy ringed and steeled fidelity.

THE APES

This is the day and this the magic hour
When apes, contemplative, now take the air.

Under the green lobes of the leafy glade
Darkling, the melancholy beasts parade:

Their native forest but a garden, whence
The velvet wallflower wind assails the sense.

Down this blind alley comes a sideling pair,
One serious green face, a vacant stare

The other, arm-in-arm they walk or run,
The eternal father with the eternal son.

Another, lithe and sinuous, long of limb,
Hangs shrinking at the water's rim,

Dripping at mouth and fessle, harshly screams
Across the river, and disturbs the drums

Of birds that startle into lyric song.
No matter: he heeds nothing: needs not to sing:

He has his girl. Behind the shifty leaves
A flash of the eyes betrays the furtive loves.

Syringa blossoms drop on the honied air;
A young ape steals the sleeping petals there.

The females, gaudy of colour, chatter and grin
And chatter, while the inane bird cries again

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! in the wood to hairy ears.
A reflective ape regards himself with tears

In the mirror of a pool, and lifts his eyes
Slowly, with what contempt, with what surmise?

TAKE OFF YOUR HAT!

Take off your hat to the dead.
There is more point in the dead
 than in the live,
Their ears closed to the innumerable
 idiocies of common converse,
Their mouths stopped from adding
 to the sum:
They are the truly happy, the fortunate
As they go by on their carts, the hearses
 decked with flowers,
The mourning coaches following them
Keeping up a decent appearance of grief,
Tribute of superfluous respect.
Take off your hat as they pass,
Remove your headgear!

VOX CLAMANTIS IN DESERTO

War is the supreme reality in the life of a nation. All else, even in times of peace—which are but a preparation for times of war—must be subordinated to this reality. War is not an instrument of policy: policy is an instrument of war.—LUDENDORFF.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord.
My mind aches, my temples throb,
 my tongue is swollen and dry,
 the seat of my reason would give way
When I behold the desolation we have made
 and called it peace.
(If there were only twenty men found in the city,
 or ten or five,
Still would I not destroy it.
Can the city be saved?
But the city does not want to be saved.)
War is not an instrument of policy:
Clausewitz was wrong: we know a thing or
 two
Today: policy is an instrument of war.
Where had we heard that before?
Ludendorff in nineteen-eighteen,
 then after the War heard no more,
 no more attended to
 than an old rag upon a stick,
 a clout upon an old clothes-line:
Now back again in place and power,
 the man of the War;
 the men of after the War all dead:

Liebknecht dead; Ebert dead
 that should have been his friend;
Rathenau dead; Erzberger dead;
The genial Stresemann that faced Europe
 dying, with a smile:
 safe in his grave, felicitously deaf
 to all that has come after:
the man of the trenches, of the Munich bier-halle,
the nondescript of nineteen-fourteen
 in the seat of power,
having learnt nothing and forgotten nothing by the
 War,
remaking the world to what it was before.
The men of the War come back once more, ~
Ludendorff and Mackensen, Goring
 the friend of Richthofen, writing
 the latter's will more largely upon the air.
My reason would give way when I observe
 the world that these have made.
Am I insane? I ask. Or am I sane?
The question that Swift often and often would put to
 himself,
Looking out with too clear a vision upon the world's
 insanity.
The world concluded that it was sane, Swift mad.
Am I perhaps mad? and Ludendorff sane?
Then policy is but an instrument of war,
 war the one reality,
 the one thing certain
 in a world unreal,
 the world of a dream.
The voice of one crying,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Repent
for the Kingdom
sane
the Kingdom
sane sane sane
is at hand!

1936

1937

Behold the antics of the populace:
Here in a corner in a close embrace

A loving couple without shape or grace
Front to front, vapid face to face,

A toddling father with his toddling child
Walks in the meadows in the warm and mild

Weather, has no thoughts to occupy
His vacant mind, nothing to signify

Except the daily round by tube and train
And bus, from home to town and back again;

His constant one concern to earn enough
To keep his woman and his child, a roof

Over their heads and the garage: pity
Him. Behold the fresh youth of the city

Enter now the walks with unseeing eyes,
Loud of mouth, whose voices hold no surprise.

A day will come when there shall descend on them
From the skies they do not observe, some stratagem

Of fate to search and sear their flesh with fire,
Seal the eyes that are stupid with desire:

Liquid gas will rain down from the air,
Will suddenly arrive upon them there

And lick their bodies up and burn their bones,
No-one at hand to hear their mutual groans:

For these are they who warned of what's to come
Walk blindly on to their appointed doom.

HOMO RATIONALIS

Mature I hate and what's unnatural choose
For rule of life, rather than hourly lose

The sense of separateness from the common world,
Admit a likeness which I never willed

To all that's human, similar and mean:
Rather the animal than the inane,

The rational without reason, without sense
The sensible, devoid of innocence,

The monkey-antics of the human child.
Better the native mischief and the wild

Malice of the ape, the young baboon
Or chimpanzee, than suffer with slow scorn

The usual mother's loving lunacy-,
Suckling her child in human foolery.

Nor love the more the adult with his power
To greater harm, his procreative hour

Now come, yet nothing makes to justify
The sterile motions of his ecstasy.

Of the unequal I assert the sense,
The valued quality, the difference.

NOT ALL THE MULTITUDINOUS SEAS

A hundred times a day I wash the hands,
Wash them of human folly, while the sands
Of time slip through the fingers and I smell
The chloroform upon the folded towel.
Everywhere the odour follows me, the scent
Offolly, death and disillusionment,
Subtly stealing into a thousand places,
Lurking in unexpected forms and poses
To come out at me with sudden sweet surprise
And ruin pleasure with a sad surmise:
The blight that lies like something infinitely
fine and light, a film of powder, white
Upon the covered face of everything:
The canker in the core of fruit, the sting
In the honey-bee, the poison in the heart,
The worm that gnaws the vitals and the hot
Anguish of the mind denying peace.
What prophylactics are there to give release,
What instruments to sear and cauterise
This wound, the affected place to sterilise?
Not all the multitudinous seas could cleanse
The scent of folly from the human hands.

UTILITY OF ILLUSION

I smell the madness of the winter world,
the patent disgust of man for man, of man for woman,
of woman for man, of all that's human,
madness upon the pavement, in contiguous bodies
jostling, thrusting, waiting for a bus or a tram,
madness of the mind and heart,
of homo sapiens or domestic animal,
the lunatics that look upon each other and,
liking what they see, play their part
persuasively a moment in the eye,
the incriminating smile, the gesture of a hand
suggests the body naked with the hair that smells,
the itching fingers, palms that sweat:
the meaningless afternoons, the tea-time hour,
the tea-table spread before the fire,
each in a comfortable confiding mood,
one watches the other for a move,
in mutual stimulation are renewed,
are fortified to face life in the nude,
stripped of illusion like the winter trees of leaves,
their trunks washed black in the rain,
the slow soft rain upon the heart that grieves,
the stimulus of madness to the brain.
There is madness in the room I feel,
in the touch, the contiguity of things,
assails the sense of taste and smell and sight,
behind the shutters, in the humble holes and corners,
in the seams and cracks of the floor:
Quick! Shut the shutters,
shut out the light!

THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

Ô that the world were but a quiet shell,
A house of silence within which to dwell,

"Where the relentless patter of the rain
Of sound should cease upon the tired brain

And tired eyes and heart should find release,
And from the stress of life, a little peace.

So that quiet should, on a sudden, fall
Upon the world like water and run through all

The intricate channels of the vaulted mind.
O that some unseen hand would still the blind

Insane laughter of children, and lay a finger
On the throats of men: Nor should there linger

The echoes of their vanished presences
Without the empty walls and in the spaces

Of that appointed house. So that there be
A blessed silence, and the mind set free

To voyage in those conchoid halls, explores
Her utmost galleries and corridors.

ANIMAL AFRAID

Something has happened to me,
I know not what, nor how, nor when:
some interior worm
eating my body's vitality
has left me like a beaten shell
cast up by the sea
after a storm,
the once vivid occupant
avid of life, drinking in the tide,
now absent, quite drained away:
a space vacant
where that intangible thing
having motion and colour
 and light and sensibility
has lived its life:
now gone.

What has happened I do not know,
save that some grief of the body
has stolen in unawares upon the spirit,
has sapped and seeped
and underground driven innumerable fine channels,
 honeycombed with sea foam
My will, my mind, my hair,
My teeth, my heart, my guts
 and even to the sensitive finger-tips:

What has happened that insensibility
steals over me like one already dead,
so that the hair and nails

go on living when the heart has stopped,
life receding from the organs
stage by stage, very gradually
till all is vacant, the senses fled from me
who was formerly
so greedy to drink in the air, the sea,
the sun, the variety
of colour and sound and smell,
cliffs and ledges, meadow and moor and river:
all that gave pleasure
now shall I never
enjoy again, full lip, full eye:
the heart dry, the body
this animal afraid to die?

EPITHALAMIUM

Behold them standing at the altar there,
The candles clearly burning in the March air,

The yellow spring-flowers in the chaste and bare
Church, are bright in the eyes of the bridal pair:

These two have chosen each other with equal heart
In sickness and in health, till death do them part.

The congregated women crane to see
This act made sure before society

For greater warrant of security
From man to woman, Or rather say that she,

Having won her woman's victory,
Will fasten like a sea-anemone

Upon him, the female instinct to enfold
And wrap him round, nor ever loosen hold.

Or like those plants of so seductive smell
That delicately entice within their cell

Uncertain insects, frail and fluttering,
Whose petals shut upon the wounded wing,

Whose stamens search the heart and suck the brain,
Nor ever let their prisoners out again.

Or as that animal with honeyed tongue
Licks up the unwary, innocent and young:

Or spider that with hairy limbs confines
Lovingly his prey within fine lines,

Till the long forefinger strikes to paralyse
The willing victim, the fascinated eyes:

So too society, the octopus
Many-tentacled, lays wait for us,

Softly the inner core of man seeks out,
Pierces the flesh and slowly eats the heart.

CARRION COMFORT

Not, not carrion comfort, I'll not feed on thee.

• G. M. HOPKINS

—
Fool, knave, idiot that I am
Not when well to leave well alone
The itch of the eye, the tongue, the ear,
The body to forgo,
But must excite the mind to new
Wantonness, further foolery:
Who will deliver me
From the body of this death?
Who
 will deliver me?
Not who, but what,
Not what, but that
Which unspecified
Is still unsatisfied.
No satisfaction had
Or possible to be had,
But this mad mind, this mind unsatisfied
That still would have
The fresh rose to fold with flame
And clothe the self with shame:
Not peace, no peace but death itself
Can stay the self
From verge of perjury,
This lived hypocrisy.

POEMS FOR A WEDDING

(0)

*Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in.*

SPENSER, *Epithalamion*

A pretty thing is human happiness:
Man and girl embrace with tenderness,

Holding mouth to mouth and lip to lip,
Lest from that uncertain cup should slip

Some tepid nectar of security
To spoil the momentary certainty

With what the future holds: and she the while
Hangs loose and willing, innocent of will.

In due course an announcement will be made
In the *Times*, according to the usual mode:

Friends will be very welcome at the church;
They will be so happy: Thank you very much.

The pure young man takes to himself a wife,
Prepares to live the squalor of domestic life.

Yet I foresee a different future
In which the man grows old and changes feature,

Loses vitality and grace, while she
Retains her primal insatiety.

So they two go complaining to the grave:
No happiness remains and none to grieve.

Now is it become for them as is most just
For lovers, earth to earth and dust to dust.

(ii)

*Again, if two lie together, then have they
heat. But how can one be warm alone?*

Ecclesiasticus, iv. 11

The phallic crocuses are up and out
Standing on tip-toe as if to shout

Their happiness, like lovers soon to be
Locked by the law in wedded chastity.

The Church confers a blessing on the pair:
A clutch of leering women will be there

To watch each motion of the bride and groom,
How they enter, how up the aisle they come,

She very white and virginal and he
Erect, conscious of his virility.

The well-bred women silent speculate:
One more licence given to fornicate.

The tasteful honeymoon will be in France,
There will be time to dance, a time to dance,

A dance of death, for I have surely known
The bridegroom not return from honeymoon,

The bride not rise from premature child-bed,
Fruit of too eager joy, that gate of the dead.

So let me speak that have no children: I
That know not how to live nor how to die.

POEM ON MARRIAGE

I/ wait nomme cette Chimere "l'Hippogriffe".

H. DE MONTHERLANT

—
The thought of marriage is enough to make men mad:
To think that in the end a man is had

Neck in the noose, foot in the trap caught fast,
Winged and brought down, snared and secured at last

By nature's forces, malign, inscrutable,
Himself no more an independent will

But only a straw, a conduit through which the power
Of human need to multiply may pour,

This parody of purpose, begetting more
Men so that all may proceed as it was before:

The end and aim of life! No wonder this
One broke his word and fled across the seas

Or that one tkew himself under a tram
In the underground; or a third paid in vain

Long visits to the psycho-analyst,
Yet never found again what he had lost:

Once trapped and hostage given there's straight an end
To freedom of the body and the mind,

THE ESCAPED SELF

Twice only has this dream appeared to me in which
Lying stifled and ill at ease upon the pillows
My face has peered out at me from the darkness
Leaning so closely, so lovingly over me
With such insistent sharp reality
As of another person not myself, yet this
Self at the same time more myself
Than the self asleep upon the pillows.
This other self unsleeping watching me
So closely, so intimately as if in sleep
The soul and body had slipped connexion
And this were now the soul escaped
From bondage of the body observing the
Dead body lying there among the pillows.
Etfai deuxfois vainqueur traverse l'Acheron.
But if a third occasion should come
And the escaped self not return,
Unable to re-enter the prison of the flesh,
The cord cut, the connexion severed,
The gulf now too great to be bridged,
The body asleep or dead impotent to recapture
The self escaped into the night of darkness—
Would this thing seal my doom?

I MUST FORGET

I must forget that there's physical beauty in the world,
must reject perfection of gesture, so easily born, so conduced,
the fine form of the body, mould of the spirit,
eyes that are awake, awake,
awakened to beauty and to sin.
Contemplate animals: the strange world
of birds, geometrical and rare,
scattering seeds upon the air,
the seeds of disease among men and beasts.
Contemplate cats: the low forms
crouching, belly to earth, ready to spring.
Avoid the green window and that form;
Withdraw the intellect into the void of its own making,
crying *Peccavi, Peccavi*,—
that bitter satisfaction freed from dependence
upon all that moves in the moving world:
lust of the eye, desire of the body
here inhibited, here extinguished,
quite put out.

PRIDE OF THE BODY

What pride of the body,
What lust of the eyes
 to look upon the body's strength,
Shall find defeat
And bite the dust.
When this delight
 at length be past,
Shall flower from this seed
Some fragile bloom
 of spiritual grace;
All that is earthy
 then put away,
The usual hand,
 the common face.

THE PHARISEE

At the point at night,
where the copulating cars draw up,
the lustful lovers sit huddled inside,
dark above the soft explosion of the sea;
or here where the beam of St. Anthony's light
lays a dark track across the harbour mouth
to Pendennis and envious me:

I envy their abstraction from the world,
their absorption in each other,
their self-sufficiency:
the primal couple as of ape or dog
making a fruitful unity.

They heed not the rain that patters
on the window-screen, >
the careful footfall of the passer-by;
at intervals the tolerant car
patiently labouring gives forth a sound,
some rhythmical motion indicative
of the creative gesture of the obscure within.

The wave breaks upon the shore below;
a solitary curlew cries;
the curious devout observer passes on.

III. POEMS OF WAR TIME

THE ANSWER TO ALL THIS HATE IS
ONLY LOVE

—
The answer to all this hate is only love:

Love only, for all we are involved alike
in common suffering, in common guilt.

No way is there to be gained or held
By cherishing this cancer of the mind,
eating up peace and quietude,
gnawing away all content and happiness the root of life.

Nothing to be had from this unnatural
cancerous growth, filling every nook and
crevice with bitterness, the sterile righteousness
of vain reflection: eating away love,
destroying life.

There is no life without love; neither can I any longer live
by this excessive clarity, this light without sympathy
for common humanity.

So little responsibility is there here,
any more than of the animals when they lie down and die,
not knowing how this should come to them or why.

Yet is there here such nobleness and sanity
—It is I this cancer of the mind has made insane—,
such resignation, magnanimity.

Here is such a one who came to die
in a far country, fighting in another's cause,
the blood of comradeship notwithstanding sealed in his.

These are they who heroically bear pain
with fortitude, huddled in time of war in crowds
in the clearings of the burning woods.

Here they die, Others survive in hospitals,
the clean white sheets stained with their wounds

the light of life low in their eyes
—wars being fought in the blood of the young;
some turn their faces to the wall, the lights lowered,
screens about them, the footfalls soft about them as
 they die
far from their friends, their loved ones and the scenes
that so late held their lives in the hollow of the land.
Others attend upon the sick; others make music
to seek a little distraction for the mind;
some borne away to the quiet cemetery,
To what point unless their lives are rounded with a little love?
How otherwise is this grief of life to be borne?
I must some signal service then perform
to lessen this lot of human suffering,
make retribution for past bitterness,
turn hate into love, subject the mind
 to discipline, myself prepare.

I LOVE NOW

I love now the very variety of the world
When once I admired only its unity,
Wished that all men were subjected to a like discipline,
 walked alone, away from their women,
 thought the same thoughts, felt the same sentiments,
 knit together in one insistent unison.
Now I see how all things move in accordance with their own
 harmonies,
I hear the Angelus upon the breeze and not object,
See two lovers upon a bench under the trees
 kissing, or walking innocently hand in hand,
 and think no harm, am glad even that these
 are brave in their course to continue the gay generations.
I welcome the flags in the streets, the flags floating out
 over the river,
 the noise, the clamour, the crowding of people,
 the dogs walking with their masters in the park,
 the young women astride their horses,
 their golden hair and russet and brown and dark
 framing their faces fresh with the wind
 and cantering over the meadows.
Remaps one can be in love even with the poor,
 nor mark specially the meanness of their accents,
 when they too are in love with life,
 spring in their veins, the dead winter over.

TO A

(i)

I envy
 yourself-sufficiency
integrity
 of bird or flower or bee
intent
 upon your purpose bent
content to be
 and not to wonder why
achieving
 beauty of body
sobriety of movement
candour of the eyes
the faithful serving hands:
the whole being
 sufficient to itself
with no dependency
 upon another
other than the self.
Or like a flower
 turning to the sun
a creature at one
 with nature
with no consciousness of self
not torn
 or features worn
by conflict
 of how and why
as I
seeking what satisfaction I may find

in bitter occupation of the mind
while you
 to your own self arc true
nor need
 this compensation for the deed
wanted
 and by that haunted
this gap
 between the impulse and the act
unknown
 to your philosophy
where soon
 what's thought is done
what begun
 is ended
what broken
 mended
not left undone
whether tying up a flower
or waiting for the world-without-end hour
 to meet your girl
or getting out your car
bound
 upon your usual round
that brings you back again
 where you began.
So you and I
 that meet but day by day
pass by
 each on our different way.

TO A

.(*)

I saw you in the street today
for a passing moment;
Obligingly and with your usual courtesy
you came my way:
Yet not without hesitation, I could see
the delayed action for a fraction
of a second.
Nobody else would notice save only he
so much in love with you
that anything you do
Can not escape the eye, the heart, the mind,
is saved up and remembered
for a bitter day
when you're no longer here perhaps.
Who knows now what haps
may seize on you before your time,
gay and alert among the chaps,
May tear the ruddy English flesh from the bone,
Expose the nerves, shatter the spine,
Making you of all men so supple and fine
a cripple, or something worse?

Beholding you now I seem to see the curse
in your candid blue eyes questioning mine,
that rest but for a moment
and smile and are gone
on some quest of no moment
that holds you as I never can.
So you stop, stand by the roadside

holding your bike as if at attention
while all the while your mind
is elsewhere on your errand,
and the noise of the traffic goes by
and the sky is blue as your eyes,
the trees turning yellow and crimson
in this solemn and lovely autumn.

When you are gone I realise
It's not so much your love I want,
It is your life I want to share:
 that which is so closed a book to me,
 the quiet and contented round
 of work and love and sleep:
 you cultivate your garden,
 are for ever making something
 with your hands,
You go contented to the pictures with your girl,
 or take her for a ride by your side
 or down to the river for a swim;
You are strong and superb: you can run,
 drive a car, fly, strip in the sun.
While I sit here and spin these ropes of sand,
 begin again, nor ever find
 peace or content or ease of mind:
 my only gift what hurts me most,
 the faculty to see the future in your eyes,
 your ghost.

TODAY MY WORDS SHALL BE OF
LOVE

(For Noreen)

—
Today my words shall be of love,
Love and the spirit of life in things,
Love for the fireman that passes in uniform
with rolling sailor's gait along the corridor,
for the girl knitting quietly in her corner,
the student with his book, the old man smoking his pipe;
the outlook from the window upon the fields,
the dun brown waste that speaks of winter,
the curve of the river by Nuneham, the fallen trees in the
copse,
the out-at-heel back-gardens with washing on the line,
the crowing cocks and little animals
speak to me of England and the love of human kind.
Nothing on such a day can unlovely be:
Not the December distance with frosted trees
the horizon delicately fingering,
nor the stubbed willows holding up their crowns,
the tufted haycocks, the red and mottled cattle
scampering home across the fields,
the loquacious crows chattering of Sunday,
the fine upsurge of the downs,
the country church that fortress-like
lifts up its head above the village
keeping its vigil through the centuries:
On such a day all these things speak to the heart
but lately frozen, that now beats
with love of life and common humanity.

CORNISH ACRE

This is the field that looks to the south:
No words come to my mouth
To signify my dread
Of this field of the dead.

This is that field where on a time
Hope died in me,
Even as I looked out upon
The gay and smiling sea.

The blue and bitter southern sea
Laughed back at me and said
'Have you any recruits for me
From the field of the dead?'

Over the dark and echoing woods
I heard the bell toll nine,
And then I knew full well
The augury was mine.

O moving finger of time that writes
My name in water, on the sea,
Pause yet awhile upon this slope
Remembering me.

DUPORTH CAMP: SEPTEMBER 1940

They will come no more home to field and byre,
Our roads will not see them waiting at the corner for their
 girl,
 the beaches watch them stripping for a bathe
 laughing and chaffing their comrades as they dress and
 smoke their after-a-swim cigarette:
Their sweethearts will wait for them in vain when the sun
 goes down,
 take to bed with them an image and
 stretch out their hand in the night to a shade:
The children they begot will never know their fathers,
Nor the land feel the labour of their bodies,
 the coves and quiet places hear their voices
 on parade, the challenge of the sentries,
 their quick step going up and over the hill
 to fade away and be heard no more upon what field
 of Spain?

Yet, there are those who will not forget,
 who will remember at each turn of the day:
 at sunrise when the bugles blow *reveille* over the bay,
 at midday 'Come to the cook-house door, boys';
 the silence of afternoon upon the camp
 as if everybody had suddenly gone away,
 received his marching orders, shouldered his kit
 and gone—as one has gone today.

When all that is far behind, and ordered life has resumed its
 usual sway,
This place for one will be a place of ghosts.

Perhaps there will come this way
one who was here for a time and went away,
leaving no memorial of himself,
nothing to remember him by
save that he would say, looking out to sea:
That is a thing that I could never understand,
why anybody should break their heart about me/

IN THE TRAIN

Li the corner of the compartment
The young air-force pilot sleeps,
The lax pose of the splendid body
Drawing all eyes to his repose:
No secret, for as he sleeps he smiles,
Some thought of whom he's going to meet
Is printed on the blood-red mouth,
Lights up the corners of the lips,
Contracts the curve of the brow,
Some thought that transcends the here and now.

Outside the windows the winter rages
Over level plain and Midland field,
The rivers are swollen and barely clear the bridges,
The landscape blotted out with mist and rain.
The guard comes in with his usual message
'Please pull down the blinds on either side:
It's the regulation/ We obey.
Now enclosed in our travelling box
We four, four lives that fall together
Roll on through the darkness towards London
And our separate dream.

Some other thought fills the sleep
Of the young pilot as he lies
Long leg outstretched, head on arm
Resting, a thought more grave, more stern.
So perhaps one day will he look
When they pick him up, arm supporting the head,
Outstretched hand upon thigh,
Upon the face an expression of gravity
And over all the overshadowing
Wings enfolding him.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:
COpMBE CHURCH 1940

(For Lady Salto)

Here we are on this afternoon of mid-November:
the quiet country church is well
filled, but today there is no bell;
on one side the khaki ranks of the Home Guard,
on the other the bandsmen in their uniform,
and behind, the good country people warm
in their Sunday best.
The squire is in his pew, the legion's banner
laid to rest
upon the altar where the candles burn
in the thin light of winter afternoon.

All is as it was before. A dream, a haze, a mist
descends upon me and obscures my eyes
with the dear dead dust of centuries:

All is passing as it passed before
in days of the Edwards, Henrys and Elizabeth:
the country folk come yet once more
to commemorate their dead,
singing, Onward Christian soldiers, Onward as to war.

All is as it has been, as it was before:
so many wars, so many times
the bells ring out their chimes
for peace proclaimed, upon the village green
under the elms and limes
that remember the faithful few
who in every age do not return,
their forfeit pay.

There are no bells today:

the sound of a plane passing overhead
wakes me from my dream of the dead: •
to find the parson ascending the pulpit,
his saw assuring us
our cause is just,
we fight because we must,
we shall not sheathe the sword
we have drawn before the Lord.

He remembers before God the names,

the innocent country names
of Bakers, Coopers, Smiths:
I see them early or late at plough
against the clean, bare world of winter,
or coming hot and sweating down the summer lane
from harvest, stopping at the brook
among the water cresses for a drink.

Now they are where there is no thirst, I think,
nor any weariness, nor getting up from sleep
nor lying down at night beside their dear companion.

All that was fought for, all that they died for,
gave up the dewy morning and the scented night,
the harvest moon, the stars coming out over the
familiar hill,

All has to be fought for again,—

the parson assures us their sacrifice was not in vain,—
the price to be paid once more in the lives of their sons:
while they sleep, those other ones,
far away from Coombe, far from their home,
from the village green, and cricket in summer
and winter games among the trees,—
in France, in Palestine, under the seas.

fight the good fight, we sing:
the young air-gunner with proud pursed lips
carries the cross slowly down the aisle—
fight the good fight with all thy might
Christ is thy Strength, and Christ thy Right;
behind him crowds the slow crocodile
of bright-faced choirboys, newly washed and spruce:
Run the straight race, through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His Face.
So pass the singing men and at the end
an old and grey-haired clergyman
weary with years, who has seen three wars,
yet still keeps lively eye upon his flock,
his Oxford M. A. hood a little awry
upon his back.

The people reverently stand as the procession
goes slowly by
Singing, Faint not nor fear, His Arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear.
The last light of the wintry sun
lights up the cross,
the white head of the clergyman:
laying a loving finger upon them every one
as they pass slowly down the church
out of my dream, and day is done.

ON CHAPLIN'S *GREAT DICTATOR*

—
This little man, this common man
who suffers in himself the lot of common humanity,
is lost among the millions who fight in modern war,
emerges with a sense of lost identity
into a world given up to gangsters,
where force and fraud and lack of human decency
and evident brutality prevail—
the palpable love of man for man betrayed, put out—
a world in which he has lost his way,
is like a man fumbling at a door for a key,
cannot remember the word
but now upon the tip of the tongue,
the so familiar speech that would put all right,
enable him to get back upon the simple track
where right and wrong are not confused,
oppression and cruelty not triumph,
nor the cry of the most numerous and the most poor unheard.

So he passes through the world,
takes upon himself the sufferings of common man,
is despised and rejected for a son of Israel,
suffers the disappointment of small hopes,
the defection of friends, is beaten and pursued,—
yet nourishes a seed of hope within,
unconquerable spirit, that rises
yet O at the moment of our greatest misery
to offer words of faith and consolation in defeat,
an ultimate assurance of our victory,
the singular magic of speech
that puts forth flowers in our hearts
and lays upon our lips the finger of prophecy.

SUNDAY CINEMAS

All is well at my return
to my native town:

I find pompous Parsifal
beating the air
asusual
on the subject of prayer
and Sunday cinemas.

The young men, it seems,
have other things to think of
than to attend his ministrations,
though there are the delights
of Faith Teas and bun-fights
and cocoa to lure them on to hear the word of God,
or rather
of pompous Parsifal, who affects to be
Our Heavenly Father, the Sovereign Pontiff,
the Archbishop of Canterbury,
the Chief Rabbi
and Moderator of the Free Church Council
all rolled in one.

Lord, how he pontificates,
lays down the law to these poor bums;
Lord, how he hums!

All is meetly well,
All is as it should be:
The world's about our ears,
But never mind
It's some consolation to find
Our Parsifal in his pulpit and
All's well with the world.

Does he ever leave his pulpit
I wonder, step down
and look at himself in the glass,
turn up the hem of the robe of self-righteousness
that swaddles him
and see the pitiful creature underneath,
the vacancy, the smug complacency,
the sickening hypocrisy?
Sunday cinemas indeed!—
While all around
The world topples into ruin and disaster,
Men lose their lives, are bombed and drowned
that such as this
may continue to hold forth in conscious bliss
of the wickedness
of Sunday cinemas.

VISIT TO THE DENTIST

(Tojack)

Explore with me the romance of Keble Road
On a May morning: the baker's van with its load
Of sweet-smelling, new-baked loaves drawn up
At the door, the blue-print housemaid with white cap
On her knees scrubbing the sprinkled steps.
The rain-washed pavement gleams, the sun leaps
Upon the neat and decorative garden-plots
Of wall-flowers, tulips and forget-me-nots.
Above the wall a silver birch but waves
Its plumes in the wind with feminine grace, weaves
The sunlight in and out the shifting leaves.
While I wait in the swept and polished waiting-room,
Across the lugubrious bulk of the mausoleum
Of Keble and Pusey, the men of the Oxford Movement,
A thrush in the garden sings loud, triumphant.
Within, the white-coat dentist awaits his patient.
Enter now the room: the strong and surgical scent
Invades the senses. There is the vacant chair
Before the window-pane. With careful air
And delicate soft tread the dentist goes
About his preparations. I recognise
Among the smell of medicaments and salves
The pervasive, pungent odour of oil of cloves.
Now the broad, firm hands place in position
The head, the clever fingers of the physician
Explore the mouth and mould the gums. 'The tree',
He says, 'the apple-tree, bears fruit profusely,
But the pear is sterile/ The eye rests upon
Clips and needles, syringes and spittoon,

The rolls of cotton wool. All lulls the sense,
Induces apprehensive somnolence;
Hypnosis softly steals upon the brain
Absorbed in the world of sky beyond the pane
Serene, while from the region cloud there still
Approaches nearer, inexorably, the drill.

SUMMER WARNING

(*ToR.-B.*)

Priapian gods the meadows know
Under the clouds of summer snow;
The Chinese willows droop upon
Punt and pavement, water, stone.

The blind man taps his way along
The singing street, bird at end,
Until the traffic stops the song
And lilac girls the stairs descend.

June's sweet and heavy chloroform
Climbs the slower steps of sense;
The tunnelled shades are green and warm,
And patterns of no consequence

Are made of light and leaves of sound
And petals white upon the ground.
The air is filled with wires of fear:
If you'd be happy, come not here!

The red bus runs along the road,
The pillar-box erects a warning:
In the grass, the snake, in the ditch, the toad,
At the turn the lazy lovers mooning.

With sudden shock the shut gate opens,
Upon the wall the dead fruit ripens
With subtle smell upon the air.
The world's a cage. Beware! Beware!

DAYS OF WAITING

These are the days of waiting, when
Crocus and aconite shoot their bud;
In the bare gardens the birds are brave,
The spring sings early in their blood:

And in the veins of the elderly
Ladies and petulant nurse-maids
Pushing perambulators down
The willow-walk into the meads.

The familiar trees are still and wait
For the sap to rise along their veins,
Put forth their bravery of leaves
And clothe with colour the English lanes.

So the turning world moves on,
Trees and meadows, river in flood,
Into the spring and the unknown,—
And over all the threat of blood.

THE REVELATION

I, who found life so difficult, so fragile a thing
that I could hardly dare to look forward
from day to day and hour to hour,
dragging my weary body up the stair,
could hardly bear
the noise of water dripping upon
the sensitive nerve,
holding life and its pain in hourly horror:

This afternoon came upon a procession
going down the street,
the drum-major with acrobatic stick
leading the band,
the bandsmen bright and shining in their uniform,
the coloured Indian infantry, gay and smiling,
following them
and behind, the fresh-faced Oxford yeomen stepping
vigorously;
and then the sea-scouts, air-cadets
and engineers with their pontoons,
the searchlights, tanks and guns—
those old Priapian gods, the guns—
to which the buxom land-girls paid tribute as they
passed;

And all the people in the street happy to see them pass,
the planes circling overhead:

Suddenly I who found life difficult
was made aware of its simplicity.
Perhaps life is simpler than I thought
(I thought), simple and promising as a smile

from the driver of an ambulance or tank
to the admiring girl in the street.

And I remembered

the dark and passionate lad in the lane,
the golden-haired khaki girl in the train;

And all seemed easy and effortless

as the regular beat of the swans' wings

 flying over the plain,

that disturbs with strange exhilaration

the swans afloat upon the surface of the water.

MAYTIME IN MAGDALEN

(For Bruce)

Early May, and the scent of the earth
Nostalgic and blue like smoke
Or drift of bluebells in that woodland glade;
The hot and resinous scent of the sun;
The blue boles of the beeches,
The colour and shadow of silver coming and going.
And here at the corner where Addison walked,
The wanton flute of a thrush;
A footstep further, the memory of the voluptuous summer
snake
Gliding down to the water to drink.
A bird darts out and up like a fish.
Today no bells from Cotman's tower:
The fragrant, delicate eighties are buried at last;
Only the mouse-like, hooded fritillaries
Ring their bells silently in the passing wind.
The green and verdurous alleys along the river
Grow reminiscent of the Tuileries in summer.
The many and various scents of flowers,
Cuckoo-pint, cow-parsley and jack-in-the-hedge,
The wind-blown odour of wall-flowers from over the river,
Besiege the nostrils, the eyes, the heart,
The breath that comes and goes with delight,
Fills the lungs like a bellying sail;
While all day the yaffle laughs madly in the wood
That Spring's in the air and in the veins
Of the forgetful, the faithless and even the sophisticated
Has not failed to flow.

