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COLLECTED POEMS

1929-1933

TRANSITIONAL POEM
FROM FEATHERS TO IRON
THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN

by C. Day Lewis



SECOND EDITION

THE HOGARTH PRESS
37 MECKLENBURGH SQUARE
LONDON, W.C.1

1945

First published *March* 1935
Second impression *May* 1935
Third impression *March* 1936
Fourth impression *March* 1938
Second Edition *January* 1945

PRINTED BY THE REPLIKA PROCESS
IN GREAT BRITAIN BY-
LUND HUMPHRIES
LONDON BRADFORD

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TRANSITIONAL POEM

This work is dedicated to

R. E. WARNER

PART I

Ira brevis, longa est pietas, recidiva voluptas ;
Et cum posse pent, mens tamen una manet.

MAXIMIAN

NOW I have come to reason
And cast my schoolboy clout,
Disorder I see is without,
And the mind must sweat a poison
Keener than Thessaly's brew ;
A pus that, discharged not thence,
Gangrenes the vital sense
And makes disorder true.
It is certain we shall attain
No life till we stamp on all
Life the tetragonal
Pure symmetry of brain.

I felt, in my scorning
Of common poet's talk,
As arrogant as the hawk
When he mounts above the morning.
"Behold man's droll appearance,
Faith wriggling upon his hooks,
Chin-deep in Eternal Flux
Angling for reassurance!"
I care not if he retorts—
"Of all that labour and wive
And worship, who would give
A fiddlestick for these thoughts
That sluggishly yaw and bend,
Fat strings of barges drawn
By a tug they have never seen
And never will comprehend?"

I sit in a wood and stare
Up at untroubled branches
Locked together and staunch as

Though girders of the air:
 And think, the first wind rising
 Will crack that intricate crown
 And let the daylight down.
 But there is naught surprising
 Can explode the single mind:—
 Let figs from thistles fall
 Or stars from their pedestal,
 This architecture will stand.

2

Come, soul, let us not fight
 Like cynical Chinees
 Beneath umbrella, nor wish to trade
 Upon neutrality.
 For the mind must cope with
 All elements or none—
 Bask in dust along with weevils,
 Or criticise the sun.

Look, where cloud squadrons are
 Stampeded by the wind,
 A boy's kite sits as calm as Minos
 If the string be sound:
 But if there are no hands
 To keep the cable tense
 And no eyes to mark a flaw in it,
 What use the difference
 Between a gust that twitters
 Along the wainscot at dawn
 And a burly wind playing the zany
 In fields of barleycorn?

The time has gone when we
Could sprawl at ease between
Light and darkness, and deduce
Omnipotence from our Mean.
For us the gregorian
Example of those eyes
That risked hell's blight and heaven's blinding
But dared not compromise.

3

That afternoon we lay on Lillington Common
The land wallowed around us in the sunlight ;
But finding all things my strenuous sense included
Ciphers new-copied by the indefinite sunlight,
I fell once more under the shadow of my Sphinx.
The aimlessness of buttercup and beetle
So pestered me, I would have cried surrender
To the fossil certitudes of Tom, Dick, and Harry,
Had I known how or believed that such a surrender
Could fashion aught but a dead Sphinx from the live Sphinx.

Later we lit a fire, and the hedge of darkness-
Garnished with not a nightingale nor a glow-worm-
Sprang up like the beanstalk by which our Jack aspired once.
Then, though each star seemed little as a glow-worm
Perched on Leviathan's flank, and equally terrible
My tenure of this plateau that sloped on all sides
Into annihilation—yet was I lord of
Something: for, seeing the fall of a burnt-out faggot
Make all the night sag down, I became lord of
Light's interplay—stoker of an old parable.

4 .

Come up, Methuselah,
You doddering superman!
Give me an instant realized
And I'll outdo your span.

In that one moment of evening
When roses are most red
I can fold back the firmament,
I can put time to bed.

Abraham, stint your tally
Of concubines and cattle!
Give place to me—capitalist
In more intrinsic metal.

I have a lover of flesh
And a lover that is a sprite:
To-day I lie down with finite,
To-morrow with infinite.

That one is a constant
And suffers no eclipse,
Though I feel sun and moon burning
Together on her lips.

This one is a constant,
But she's not kind at all;
She raddles her gown with my despairs
And paints her lip with gall.

My lover of flesh is wild,
And willing to kiss again 5
She is the potency of earth
When woods exhale the rain.

My lover of air, like Artemis
Spectrally embraced,
Shuns the daylight that twists her smile
To mineral distaste.

Twin poles energetic, they
Stand fast and generate
This spark that crackles in the void
As between fate and fate.

5

My love is a tower.
Standing up in her
I parley with planets
And the casual wind.
Arcturus may grind
Against our wall:—he whets
A tropic appetite,
And decorates our night.
"What happier place
For Johnny Head-in-Air,
Who never would hear
Time mumbling at the base?"

I will not hear, for she's
My real Antipodes,
And our ingrowing loves

Shall meet below earth's spine
 And there shall intertwine,
 Though Babel falls above.
 Time, we allow, destroys
 All aerial toys:
 But to assail love's heart
 He has no strategy,
 Unless he suck up the sea
 And pull the earth apart.

6

Dismayed by the monstrous credibility
 Of all antinomies, I climbed the fells
 To Easedale Tarn. Could I be child again
 And grip those skirts of cloud the matriarch sky
 Draggled on mere and hillside? ... ("So the dog
 Returns to his vomit," you protest. Well only
 The dog can tell what virtue lies in his vomit.)

Sleep on, you fells and profound dales: there's no
 Material wind or rain can insulate
 The mind against its own forked speculation,
 When once that storm sets in: and then the flash
 That bleakly enlightens a few sour acres leaves but
 A more Egyptian darkness whence it came.

Mountains are the musicians; they despise
 Their audience: but the wind is a popular preacher
 And takes more from his audience than he gives them.
 How can I wear the clouds, who feel each mountain
 Yearn from its flinty marrow to abdicate
 Sublimity and globe-trot with the wind?

By Easedale Tarn, where I sought a comforter,
 I found a gospel sterner than repentance.

Prophetic earth, you need no lumber of logic
Who point your arguments alike with a primrose
And a sick sheep coughing among the stones:
And I have only words, yet must they both
Outsoar the mountain and lap up the wind.

7

Few things can more inflame
This far too combative heart
Than the intellectual Quixotes of the age
Prattling of abstract art.

No one would deny it—
But for a blind man's passion
Cassandra had been no more than a drabble-skirt,
Helen a ten-year fashion.
Yet had there not been one hostess
Ever whose arms waylaid
Like the tough bramble a princeling's journey, or
At the least no peasant maid
Redressing with rude heat
Nature's primeval wrong,
Epic had slumbered on beneath his blindness
And Helen lacked her song.

(So the antique balloon
Wobbles with no defence
Against the void but a grapnel that hops and ploughs
Through the landscape of sense.)

Phrase-making, dress-making—
Distinction's hard to find ;

For thought must play the mannequin, strut in phrase,
Or gape with the ruck: and mind,
Like body, from covering gets
Most adequate display.
Yet time trundles this one' to the rag-and-bone man,
While that other may
Reverberate all along
Man's craggy circumstance—
Naked enough to keep its dignity
Though it eye God askance.

PART II

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then, I contradict myself;
I am large, I contain multitudes.

w. WHITMAN

8

IT IS becoming now to declare my allegiance,
 To dig some reservoir for my springtime's pain,
 Bewilderment and pride, before their insurgence
 Is all sopped up in this dry regimen.

Laughable dwarfs, you may twirl and tweak my heart,—
 Have I not fought with Anakim at the crossways?
 Once I was Cicero, though pedant fate
 Now bids me learn the grammar of my days.

These, then, have my allegiance ; they whose shining
 Convicted my false dawn of flagrant night,
 Yet ushered up the sun, as poets leaning
 Upon a straw surmise the infinite.

You, first, who ground my lust to love upon
 Your gritty humorous virginity,
 Then yielding to its temper suddenly
 Proved what a Danube can be struck from stone:
 With you I ran the gauntlet for my prime,
 Then living in the moment lived for all time.

Next the hawk-faced man, who could praise an apple
 In terms of peach and win the argument. Quick
 Was he to trip the shambling rhetoric
 Of laws and lions: yet abstract turned the tables
 And his mind, almost, with a whiff of air
 Clothed first in a woman and after in a nightmare.

She next, sorrow's familiar, who turned
 Her darkness to our light; that "brazen leech"
 Alleviating the vain cosmic itch

With fact coated in formulae lest it burned
Our tongue. She shall have portion in my praise,
And live in me, not memory, for always.

Last the tow-haired poet, never done
With cutting and planing some new gnostic prop
To jack his all too stable universe up:—
Conduct's Old Dobbin, thought's chameleon.
Single mind copes with split intelligence,
Breeding a piebald strain of truth and nonsense.

These have I loved and chosen, once being sure
Some spacious vision waved upon their eyes
That troubles not the common register 5
And love them still, knowing it otherwise.

Knowing they held no mastership in wisdom
Or wit save by certificate of my love,
I have found out a better way to praise them—
Nestor shall die and let Patroclus live.

So I declare it. These are they who built
My house and never a stone of it laid agley.
So cheat I memory that works in guilt
And stucco to restore a fallen day.

9

I thought to have had some fame
As the village idiot
Condemned at birth to sit
Oracle of blind alleys:
Shanghaied aboard the galleys
I got reprieve and shame.

Tugging at his oar
This idiot who, for lack
Of the striped Zodiac,
Swore that every planet
Was truck, soon found some merit
In his own abject star.

Then there came disgust
Of the former loon who could
Elbow a bridge and brood
From Chaos to last Trvmp
Over the imbecile pomp
Of waters dribbling past.

For what can water be
But so much less or more
Gravamen to the oar?—
(Reasons our reformed dunce)
It is high time to renounce
This village idiocy.

10

How they would jeer at us—
Ulysses, Herodotus,
The hard-headed Phoenicians
Or, of later nations,
Columbus, the Pilgrim Fathers
And a thousand others
Who laboured only to find
Some pittance of new ground,
Merchandise or women.

Those rude and bourgeois seamen
Got glory thrown in
As it were with every ton
Of wave that swept their boat,
And would have preferred a coat
For keeping off the spray.

Since the heroes lie
Entombed with the recipe
Of epic in their heart,
And have buried—it seems—that art
Of minding one's own business
Magnanimously, for us
There's nothing but to recant
Ambition, and be content
Like the poor child at play
To find a holiday
In the sticks and mud
Of a familiar road.

II

If I bricked up ambition and gave no air
To the ancestral curse that gabbles there,
I could leave wonder on the latch
And with a whole heart watch
The calm declension of an English year.

I would be psedagogue—hear poplar, lime
And oak recite the seasons' paradigm.
Each year a dynasty would fall
Within my orchard wall—
I'd be their Tacitus, and they my time.

Among those pippin princes I could ease
 A heart long sick for some Hesperides:
 Plainsong of thrushes in the soul
 Would drown that rigmarole
 Of Eldorados, Aukg, and Perilous Seas.

(The God they cannot see sages define
 In a slow-motion. If I discipline
 My flux into a background still
 And sure as a waterfall
 Will not a rainbow come of that routine?)

So circumscribe the vampire and he'll die soon--
 Lunacy and anaemia take their own.
 Grounded in temperate soil I'll stay,
 An orchard god, and say
 My glow-worms hold a candle to the moon.

12

Enough. There is no magic
 Circle nor prophylactic
 Sorcery of garlic
 Will keep the vampire in.
 See!—that authentic
 Original of sin
 Slides from his cabin
 Up to my sober trees
 And spits disease.
 Thus infected, they
 Start a sylvan rivalry,

Poplar and oak surpass
Their natural green, and race
Each other to the stars.

Since my material
Has chosen to rebel,
It were most politic—
Ere I also fall sick-
To escape this Eden.
Indeed there has been no peace
For any garden
Or for any trees
Since Priapus died,
And lust can no more ride
Over self-love and pride.

Leave Eden to the brutes:
For he who lets his sap
Run downward to the roots
Will wither at the top
And wear foolVcap.
I am no English lawn
To build a smooth tradition
Out of Time's recession
And centuries of dew...
Adam must subdue
The indestructible serpent,
Outstaring it: content
If he can transplant
One slip from paradise
Into his own eyes.

13

Can the mole take
A census of the stars?
Our firmament will never
Give him headache.

The man who nuzzles
In a woman's lap
Burrows toward a night
Too deep for puzzles:

While he, whose prayer
Holds up the starry system
In a God's train, sees nothing .
Difficult there.

So I, perhaps,
Am neither mole nor mantis;
I see the constellations,
But by their gaps.

14

In heaven, I suppose, lie down together
Agonised Pilate and the boa-constrictor
That swallows anything: but we must seize
One horn or the other of our antitheses.
When I consider each independent star
Wearing its world of darkness like a fur
And rubbing shoulders with infinity,
I am content experience should be
More discontinuous than the points pricked
Out by the mazy course of a derelict,

Iceberg, or Flying Dutchman, and the heart
Stationary and passive as a chart.
In such star-frenzy I could boast, betwixt
My yester and my morrow self are fixed
All the birds carolling and all the seas
Groaning from Greenwich to the Antipodes.

But an eccentric hour may come, when systems
Not stars divide the dark; and then life's pistons
Pounding into their secret cylinder
Begin to tickle the most anchorite ear
With hints of mechanisms that include
The man. And once that rhythm arrests the blood,
Whq would be satisfied his mind is no
Continent but an archipelago?
They are preposterous paladins and prance
From myth to myth, who take an Agag stance
Upon the needle points of here and now,
Where only angels ought to tread. Allow
One jointure feasible to man, one state
Squared with another—then he can integrate
A million selves and where disorder ruled
Straddle a chaos and beget a world.

Peals of the New Year once for me came tumbling
Out of the narrow night like clusters of humming-
Birds loosed from a black bag, and rose again
Irresponsibly to silence: but now I strain
To follow them and see for miles around
Men square or shrug their shoulders at the sound.
Then I remember the pure and granite hills
Where first I caught an ideal tone that stills,

Like the beloved's breath asleep, all din
Of earth at traffic: silence's first-born,
Carrying over each sensual ravine
To inform the seer and uniform the seen.
So from this ark, this closet of the brain,
The dove emerges and flies back again
With a Messiah sprig of certitude—
Promise of ground below the sprawling flood.

15

Desire is a witch
And runs against the clock.
It can unstitch
The decent hem
Where space tacks on to time:
It can unlock
Pandora's privacies.

It puffs in these
Top-gallants of the mind,
And away I stand
On the elemental gale
Into an ocean
That the liar Lucian
Had never dared retail.

When my love leans with all
Her shining breast and shoulder,
I know she is older
Than Ararat the hill,
And yet more young
Than the first daffodil
That ever shews a spring.

When her eyes delay
On me, so deep are they
Tunnelled by love, although
You poured Atlantic
In this one and Pacific
In the other, I know
They would not overflow.

Desire clicks back
Like cuckoo into clock;
Leaves me to explain
Eyes that a tear will drown
And a body where youth
Nor age will long remain
To implicate the truth.

It seems that we must call
Anything truth whose well
Is deep enough;
For the essential
Philosopher-stone, desire,
Needs no other proof
Than its own fire.

16

Remembering how between
Embrace and ultimate bone
Always have interposed
Strata undiagnosed
In Love's geology;
And even memory
Is bullied by the flesh
Out of its usual dish;

I railed upon desire,
The silly self-betrayer
Whose Cronic appetite
Gobbles up all his brood j
And I found, in body's despite,
A moral to clinch the mood.

They say that a mathematician
Once fell to such a passion
For x and y , he locked
His door to keep outside
Whatever might distract
Him from his heavenly bride:
And presently died
In the keenest of blisses
With a dozen untasted dishes
Outside his door.

O man,
Feed Cronos with a stone.
He's easily decoyed
Who, perched on any throne,
Happily gnaws the void.

From this theoric tower
Corn-land and city seem
A lovely skiagram:
You could not guess what sour
Contagion has outworn
Those streets of men and corn.
Let body doubt: the pure
Shadow will reassure,

For shadow gives a free
Licence to lunacy.—
And yet fools say it is
The heart that's credulous . . .
For once, O sceptic heart,
Will you not play your part?

17

When nature plays hedge-schoolmaster,
Shakes out the gaudy map of summer
And shows me charabanc, rose, barley-ear
And every bright-winged hummer,

He only would require of me
To be the sponge of natural laws
And learn no more of that cosmography
Than passes through the pores.

Why must I then unleash my brain
To sweat after some revelation
Behind the rose, heedless if truth maintain
On the rose-bloom her station?

When bullying April bruised mine eyes
With sleet-bound appetites and crude
Experiments of green, I still was wise
And kissed the blossoming rod.

Now summer brings what April took,
Riding with fanfares from the south,
And I should be no Solomon to look
My Sheba in the mouth.

Charabancs shout along the lane
And summer gales bay in the wood
No less superbly because I can't explain
What I have understood.

Let logic analyse the hive,
Wisdom's content to have the honey:
So I'll go bite the crust of things and thrive
While hedgerows still are sunny.

PART III

But even so, amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being, do I myself still centrally disport in mute calm.

HERMAN MELVILLE

18

ON MY right are trees and a lank stream sliding
 Impervious as Anaconda to the suns
 Of autumn ; and the boughs are vipers writhing
 To slough the summer from their brittle bones.
 Here is the Trojan meadow, here Scamander j
 And I, the counterfeit Achilles, feel
 A river-god surge up to tear me asunder,
 A serpent melancholy bruise my heel.

On my left is the city famed for talk
 And tolerance. Its old men run about
 Chasing reality, chasing the Auk
 With butterfly-nets. Its young men swell the rout
 Gaping at Helen in the restaurant,
 Mocking at Helen from monastic towers.
 Boy Achilles, who has known Helen too long
 To scold or worship, stands outside and glowers.

Between the stream and city a rubbish heap
 Proclaims the pleasant norm with smouldering stench.
 See! the pathetic pyre where Trojans keep
 Well out of sight the prey of time's revenges j
 Old butterfly-nets, couches where lovers lay—
 All furniture out of fashion. So the fire
 Guts the proud champions of the real: so Troy
 Cremates her dead selves and ascends to higher.

Grecians awake, salute the happy norm!
 Now may Achilles find employment still;
 And once again the blood-lust will grow warm,
 Gloating on champions he could never kill.

And if Scamander rears up and pursues,
This ring of rubbish fire will baffle all
His rage. Hero, you're safe, in the purlieus
Of God's infernal acre king and thrall.

19

When April comes alive
Out of the small bird's throat,
Achilles in the sunshine
Kept on his overcoat.
Trojan and Greek at battle,
Helen wantoning—
None but heroic metal
Could ignore the spring.

When honeysuckle and summer
Suffocate the lane,
That sulky boil was broken
And I at last a man.
I'd have stripped off my skin to
The impacts of hate and love —
Rebel alone because I
Could not be slave enough.

Bodies now, not shadows,
Intercept the sun:
It takes no rod to tell me
That discipline's begun.
Seeking the fabled fusion
From love's last chemical,
I found the experiment
Makes monads of us all;

For love still keeps apart,
And all its vanities
But emphasise higher heaven,
As February trees
When rooks begin their noisy
Coronation of the wood
Are turreted with folly
Yet grow toward some good.

I thought, since love can harness
Pole with contrary pole,
It must be earthed in darkness
Deeper than mine or mole.
Now that I have loved
A while and not gone blind,
I think love's terminals
Are fixed in fire and wind.

20

How often, watching the windy boughs
Juggle with the moon, or leaning
My body against a wind
That sets all earth careening;
Or when I have seen flames browsing
On the prairie of night and tossing
Their muzzles up at Orion ;
Or the sun's hot arsenal spent
On a cloud salient
Till the air explodes with light;
How often have I perceived a delight
Which parallels the racing mind.
But never rides it off the course

Another fire, another wind
Now take the air, and I
Am matched with a stricter ecstasy.
For he whom love and fear enlist
To comb his universe
For what Protagoras missed,
Needs be reborn hermaphrodite
And put himself out to nurse
With a syren and a sibyl.
So the spider gradually,
Drawing fine systems from his belly,
Includes creation with a thread
And squats on the navel of his world.
Yet even that arch-fakir must feed
Austerity on warm blood.

The tracks of love and fear
Lead back till I disappear
Into that ample terminus
From which all trains draw out
Snorting towards an Ultima Thule.
Nothing is altered about
The place, except its gloom is newly
Lacquered by an unaccustomed eye,
Yet cannot blunt mine eyes now
To the clear finality
Of all beginnings.

Outside
In the diamond air of day
The engines simmer with delay,
Desiring a steely discipline

No less, though now quite satisfied
They travel a loop-line.

21

My lover is so happy, you well might say
One of the Hellene summers had lost its way
And taken shelter underneath her breast.
None but its proper fear can now arrest
Our meteoric love: but still We grieve
That curves of mind and body should outlive
All expectation, and the heart become
A blunt habitual arc, a pendulum
Wagged by the ghost of its first impetus.
Love keeps the bogey slave to admonish us
Of vanity, yet through this fear we scrawl
Our sky with love's vain comets ere it fall.

And then, up on High Stoy standing alone,
We saw the excellence of the serious down
That shakes the seasons from its back, and bears
No obligation but to wind and stars.
What paroxysm of green can crack those huge
Ribs grown from Chaos, stamped by the Deluge?

Later, within the wood sweetly reclining
On bluebell and primrose, we loved j whose shining
Made a poor fiction of the royal skies,
But were to love alone repositories
Of what by-product wonder it could spare
From lips and eyes. Yet nothing had such power
As prattle of small flowers within the brake
To mount the panic heart and rein it back

From the world's edge. For they, whose virtue lies
In a brief act of beauty, summarize
Earth's annual passion and leave the naked earth
Still dearer by their death than by their birth.
So we, who are love's hemispheres hiding
Beneath the coloured ordeal of our spring,
Shall be disclosed, and I shall see your face
An autumn evening certain of its peace.

22

It is an easier thing
To give up great possessions
Than to forego one farthing
Of the rare unpossessed.

But I've been satellite
Long enough to this moon,
The pharisee of night
Shining by tradition.

There's no star in the sky
But gazing makes it double
And the infatuate eye
Can breed dilemmas on it.

Wiser it were to sheath
My burning heart in clay
Than by this double breath
To magnify the tomb.

I'd live like grass and trees,
Familiar of the earth,

Proving its basalt peace
Till I was unperturbed

By synod of the suns
Or a moon's insolence
As the ant when he runs
Beneath sky-scraping grass.

23

You've trafficked with no beast but unicorn
Who dare hold me in scorn
For my dilemmas. Nor have you perceived
The compass-point suggest
An east by pointing to the west,
Or you'd not call me thus deceived
For fixing my desire
On this magnetic north to gyre
Under the sheer authority of ice.

I have seen what impertinence
Stokes up the dingy rhetoric of sense:
I've seen your subaltern ambitions rise
Yellow and parallel
As smoke from garden cities that soon fades
In air it cannot even defile. Poor shades,
Not black enough for hell,
Learn of this poplar which beyond its height
Aspires not, and will bend beneath the thumb
Of every wind } yet when the stars come
It is an omen darker than the night.

The rest may go. No satisfaction lies
In such. And you alone shall hear
My pride, whose love's the accurate frontier
Of all my enterprise.
While your beauties' succession
Holds my adventure in a flowery chain
As the spring hedgerows hold the lane,
How can I care whether it ends upon
Marsh or metropolis?

But look within my heart, see there
The tough stoic ghost of a pride was too severe
To risk an armistice;
With lesser powers than death ; but rather died
Welcoming that iron in the soul
Which keeps the spirit whole,
Since none but ghosts are satisfied
To see a glory passing and let it pass.

For I had been a modern moth and hurled
Myself on many a flaming world,
To find its globe was glass.
In you alone
I met the naked light, by you became
Veteran of a flame
That burns away all but the warrior bone.
And I shall know, if time should falsify
This star the company of my night,
Mine is the heron's flight
Which makes a solitude of any sky.

24

Farewell again to this adolescent moon ;
I say it is a bottle
For papless poets to feed their fancy on.
Once mine sucked there, and I dreamed
The heart a record for the gramophone-
One scratch upon the surface,
And the best music of that sphere is gone.
So I put passion away
In-a cold storage and took its tune on trust,
While proper men with church-bells
Signal a practised or a dreamt-of lust...
No fear could sublimate
The ennui of a tomb where music slept
In artificial frost,
Nor could it long persuade me to accept
Rigidity for peace.
Moon-stricken I worked out a solitude
Of sand and sun, believing
No other soil could bear the genuine rood.
But nothing grew except
The shadow at my heels. Now I confess
There's no virtue in sand:
It is the rose that makes the wilderness.
I thought integrity
Needed a desert air ; I saw it plain,
A chimney of stone at evening,
A monolith on the skyline after rain.
Instead, the witless sun
Fertilised that old succubus and bred
A skeleton in a shadow.

Let cactus spring where hermits go to bed
With those they come to kill.
Three-legged I ran with that importunate curse,
Till I guessed (in the sexual trance
Or playing darts with drunken schoolmasters)
The integrity that's laid bare
Upon the edge of common furniture.
Now to the town returning
I accept the blind collisions that ensure
Soul's ektogenesis.

25

Where is the true, the central stone
That clay and vapour zone,
That earthquakes budge nor vinegar bites away,
That rivets man against Doomsday?

You will not find it there, although
You sink a shaft below
Despair and see the roots of death close-curved
About the kernel of your world.

Where is the invaluable star
Whose beams enlaced are
The scaffolding of truth, whose stages drawn
Aside unshutter an ideal dawn?

It is well hid. You would not find
It there, though far you mined
Up through the golden seams that cram the night
And walked those galleries of light.

Above, below, the Flux tight-packed
Stages its sexual act—
An ignominious scuffling in the dark
Where brute encounters brute baresark.

Keep to the pithead, then, nor pry
Beyond what meets thfe eye,
Since household stuff, stone walls, mountains and trees
Placard the day with certainties.

For individual truth must lie
Within diversity;
Under the skin all creatures are one race,
Proved integers but by their face.

So he, who learns to comprehend
The form of things, will find
They in his eye that purest star have sown
And changed his mind to singular stone.

26

Chiefly to mind appears
That hour on Silverhowe
When evening's lid hung low
And the sky was about our ears.
Buoyed between fear and love
We watched in eastward form
The armadas of the storm
And sail superbly above;
So near, they'd split and founder
On the least jag of sense,

One false spark fire the immense
Broadside the confounding thunder.
They pass, give not a salvo,
And in their rainy wash
We hear the horizons crash
With monitors of woe.

Only at highest power
Can love and fear become
Their equilibrium,
And in that eminent hour
A virtue is made plain
Of passionate cleavage
Like the hills' cutting edge
When the sun sets to rain.
This is the single mind.
This the star-solved equation
Of life with life's negation:
A deathless cell designed
To demonstrate death's act,
Which, the more surely it moves
To earth's influence, but proves
Itself the more intact.

27

With me, my lover makes
The clock assert its chime:
But when she goes, she takes
The mainspring out of time.

Yet this time-wrecking charm
Were better than love dead

And its hollow alarum
 Hammered out on lead.

Why should I fear that Time
 Will superannuate
These workmen of my rhyme-
 Love, despair and hate?

Fleeing the herd, I came
 To a graveyard on a hill,
And felt its mould proclaim
 The bone gregarious still.

Boredoms and agonies
 Work out the rhythm of bone:—
No peace till creature his
 Creator has outgrown.

Passion dies from the heart
 But to infect che marrow ;
Holds dream and act apart
 Till the man discard his narrow

Sapience and folly
 Here, where the graves slumber
In a green melancholy
 Of overblown summer.

PART IV

The hatches are let down
And the night meets the day
The spirit comes to its own
The beast to its play.

w. H. AUDEN

In the beginning was the Word.

UNDER different skies now, I recall
The childhood of the Word.

Before the Fall,

Was dancing on the green with sun and moon:
And the Word was with God.

Years pass, relaxed in a faun's afternoon.
And the Word was God.

For him rise up the litanies of leaves
From the tormented wood, and semi-breves
Of birds accompany the simple dawn.
Obsequious to his mood the valleys yawn,
Nymphs scamper or succumb, waterfalls part
The hill-face with vivacious smiles. The heart,
Propped up against its paradise, records
Each wave of godhead in a sea of words.
He grows a wall of sunflower and moonflower blent
To protest his solitude and to prevent
Wolf or worm from trespassing on his rule.
Observe how paradise can make a fool:
They can't get in; tut he—for a god no doubt
Is bound by his own laws—cannot get out.

And the Word was made flesh,

Under different skies now,
Wrenching a stony song from a scant acre,
The Word still justifies its Maker.

Green fields were my slippers,
Sky was my hat,
But curiosity
Killed the cat.

For this did I burst
My daisy band—
To be clapped in irons
By a strange hand?

Nevertheless, you are well out of Eden:
For there's no wonder where all things are new;
No dream where all is sleep; no vision where
Seer and seen are one ; nor prophecy
Where only echo waits upon the tongue.

Now he has come to a country of stone walls,
Breathes a precarious air.
Frontiers of adamant declare
A cold autonomy. There echo starves ;
And the mountain ash bleeds stoically there
Above the muscular stream.
What cairn will show the way he went?
A harrow rusting on defeated bones?
Or will he leave a luckier testament—
Rock deeply rent,
Fountains of spring playing upon the air?

29

Those Himalayas of the mind
Are not so easily possessed:
There's more than precipice and storm
Between you and your Everest.

You who declare the peak of peaks
Alone will satisfy your want,
Can you distil a grain of snow?
Can you digest an adamant?

Better by far the household cock
Scratching the common yard for corn,
Whose rainy voice all night at will
Can signify a private dawn.

Another bird, sagacious too,
Circles in plain bewilderment
Where shoulder to shoulder long waves march
Towards a magnetic continent.

"What are these rocks impede our pomp?"
Gesticulating to the sun
The waves part ranks, sidle and fume,
Then close behind them and march on.

The waves advance, the Absolute Cliffs
Unaccountably repel:
They linger grovelling ; where assault
Has failed, attrition may tell.

The bird sees nothing to the point;
Shrugs an indifferent wing; proceeds
From rock to rock in the mid-ocean
Peering for barnacles and weeds.

30

In the chaotic age
This was enough for me—
Her beauty walked the page
And it was poetry.

Now that the crust has cooled,
The floods are kept in pen,
Mountains have got their mould
And air its regimen.

Nothing of heat remains
But where the sacred hill
Conserves within her veins
The fiery principle.

Fire can no longer shake
Stars from their sockets down;
It burns now but to make
Vain motions above the town.

This glum canal has lain
Opaque night after night,
One hour will entertain
A jubilee of light,

And show that beauty is
A motion of the mind
By its own dark caprice
Directed or confined.

31

Where is the fool would want those days again
Whose light was globed in pain
And danced upon a point of wire?
When the charged batteries of desire
Had licence but to pass
Into a narrow room of frosted glass?

The globe was broken and the light made free
Of a king's territory.
Artemis then, that huntress pale,
Flung her black dogs upon the trail:
So with one glance around
The hunted lightning ran and went to ground.

Safer perhaps within that cell to stay
Which qualified its ray
And gave it place and period,
Than be at liberty where God
Has put no firmament
Of glass to prove dark and light different.

But Artemis leaps down; At her thin back
Wheel the shades in a pack.
At once that old habit of fire
Jumps out, not stopping to inquire
Whether it follows or flies,
Content to use the night for exercise.

And I, when at the sporting queen's halloo
The light obedient flew
Blazing its trail across the wild—
Resigned now but not reconciled,
That ancient Sphinx I saw
Put moon and shades like mice beneath its paw.

The red nor'-easter is out:
Trees in the covert strain
Like dogs upon a leash
And snuff the hurricane.

Another wind and tree now
Are constant to their west:
The breath that scours the midday
Unseen, is manifest
In this embittered thorn—
Forcing the stubborn frame
To grow one way and point
His constancy and aim.

This wind that fills the hollow
Sky, of a vacuum
Was purely bred. The thorn once
In modest seed lay mum
That squats above the Atlantic
Promontoried on pride.
For my tenacious tree
Requires not, to decide
That he has roots somewhere,
Atropic foliage ;
Since that the leaf recurs
Is a sufficient gauge.

Again, what of this glass
Whereby the formulae
Of sense should all be solved?
It cannot enlarge a flea
Nor accurately define
The features of a star,
dazing through it I saw
Nothing particular
Distant or close. A summer
Accident it was
Explained its property.

It is a burning-glass
 Which interrupts the sun
 To make him more intense,
 And touch to a single flame
 The various heap of sense.

53

Seventeen months ago
 We came to the mine on the moor. A crow
 Sees more than meets the eye—
 What marrow in fleshless bones may lie.
 And now I passed by a forbidding coast
 Where ironworks rust ,
 On each headland: goats crop the salted grass:
 Steam oozes out of the mud. Earth has
 No promise for proprietors. I from far
 Came, and passing saw something oracular.
 Put down the tripod here.

I stretched a line from pole to pole
 To hang my paper lanterns on. Poor soul,
 By such a metaphysical conceit
 Thinking to make ends meet!
 This line, spun from the blind heart—
 What could it do but prove the poles apart?
 More expert now, I twist the dials, catch
 Electric hints, curt omens such
 As may be heard by one tapping the air
 That belts an ambiguous sphere.
 Put down the tripod here.

This is the interregnum of my year ;
 All spring except the leaf is here,

All winter but the cold.
Bandage of snow for the first time unrolled
Lays bare the wounds given when any fate
And most men's company could humiliate:
Sterilized now; yet still they prick
And pulse beneath the skin, moving me like
An engine driven on
By sparks of its own combustion.
There are going to be some changes made to-day.

Then add to this that I
Have known, and shall again, the greedy thigh;
Browned by that sun, but not betrayed,
Which puts the Dog-Star in the shade:
For though my world at one Equator meet,
These Arctic zones are still complete.
Baring my skin to every bruise
Love gives, I'll love the more ; since they're but dues
That flesh must pay to bone
Till each is overthrown.
There are going to be some changes made to-day.

34

The hawk comes down from the air.
Sharpening his eye upon
A wheeling horizon
Turned scrutiny to prayer.

He guessed the prey that cowers
Below, and learnt to keep
The distance which can strip
Earth to its blank contours.

TRANSITIONAL POEM

Then trod the air, content
With contemplation till
The truth of valley and hill
Should be self-evident.

Or as the little lark
Who veins the sky with song,
Asking from dawn to dark
No revenues of spring:

But with the night descends
Into his chosen tree,
And the famed singer ends
In anonymity.

So from a summer's height
I come into my peace;
The wings have earned their night,
And the song may cease.

NOTES TO TRANSITIONAL POEM

THE central theme of this poem is the single mind. The poem is divided into four parts, which essentially represent four phases of personal experience in the pursuit of single-mindedness: it will be seen that a transition is intended from one part to the next such as implies a certain spiritual progress and a consequent shifting of aspect. As far as any definitions can be attached to these aspects, they may be termed (1) metaphysical, (2) ethical, (3) psychological; while (4) is an attempt to relate the poetic impulse with the experience as a whole. Formally, the parts fall with fair accuracy into the divisions of a theorem in geometry, *i.e.* general enunciation, particular enunciation, proof, corollaries. The following notes may be of assistance to the diligent; they are intended simply for the elucidation of the text, and do not necessarily imply assent to any proposition that may be advanced in them.

C.D.L.

January, 1929

PAGE 9, lines 3-8, *cf.* Spinoza, *Letters*. "I would warn you that I do not attribute to nature either beauty or deformity, order or confusion. Only in relation to our imagination can things be called beautiful or ugly, well-ordered or confused."

PAGE 9, line 4, *cf.* Spinoza, *De intell. emend.* "But above all a method must be thought out of healing the understanding and purifying it at the beginning...."

PAGE 14, line 22, *cf.* Exodus x, 21 and 27.

PAGE 18, line 6, *cf.* Deuteronomy ix, 2; also i, 28.

PAGE 23, line 6 *sqq.*, *cf.* page 47, line 5.

PAGE 28, line 3, Cronos is here used as a symbol for desire.
 PAGE 28, line 21 *sqq.*) contrast Donne:

"But up into the watch-tower get,
 And see all things despoiled of fallacies."

PAGE 28, line 23, "skiagram"—a drawing in shadow, not strictly the Greek sense.

PAGE 38, line 21, *cf.* Dante, *Inferno*:

"Ed egli a me: Questo misero modo
 Tengon Panime triste di coloro,
 Che visser senza infamia e senza lodo."

PAGE 40, line 23, *cf.* Isaiah xxxv, i.

PAGE 42, line 9-16, *cf.* Wyndham Lewis, *Art of Being Ruled*) Part 12, Chapter VII.

PAGE 42, line 21, "Fear and love" throughout this poem represent the general principles of attraction and repulsion.

PAGE 46, line i, "the Word" in this poem stands for the individual poetic impulse, as a part of the Logos in the theologian's sense of "mind expressing God in the world."

PAGE 46, line 4, *cf.* "The Ballad of the Twa Brothers":

" 'O when will you come hame again?
 Dear Willie, tell to me!
 When the sun and moon dance on yon green;
 And that will never be."

PAGE 49, line 12, *cf.* Henry James, *The Ambassadors*:
 "Whether or no he had a grand idea of the lucid, he held that nothing ever was in fact—for anyone else—explained. One went through the vain motions, but it was mostly a waste of life."

PAGE 49, lines 17-20, *cf.* note on page 9, lines 3-8.

PAGE 50, line 23, *cf.* page 11, line 13.

PAGE 53, line 9, the refrain of a song sung by Miss Sophie Tucker.

PAGE 53, line 21, *cf.* page 9, line 15.

PAGE 54, lines 1-4, *cf.* Spinoza, *De intell. emend.* "Finally, perception is that wherein a thing is perceived through its essence alone.... A thing is said to be perceived through its essence alone when from the fact that I know something, I know what it is to know anything...."

FROM FEATHERS TO IRON

TO THE MOTHER

Do thoughts grow like feathers, the dead
end of life?

W. H. AUDEN

We take but three steps from feathers to
iron.

JOHN KEATS

I

SUPPOSE that we, to-morrow or the next day,
 Came to an end—in storm the shafting broken,
 Or a mistaken signal, the flange lifting—
 Would that be premature, a text for sorrow?

Say what endurance gives or death denies us.
 Love's proved in its creation, not eternity:
 Like leaf or linnet the true heart's affection
 Is born, dies later, asks no reassurance.

Over dark wood rises one dawn felicitous,
 Bright through awakened shadows fall her crystal
 Cadenzas, and once for all the wood is quickened.
 So our joys visit us, and it suffices.

Nor fear we now to live who in the valley
 Of the shadow of life have found a causeway;
 For love restores the nerve and love is under
 Our feet resilient. Shall we be weary?

Some say we walk out of Time altogether
 This way into a region where the primrose
 Shows an immortal dew, sun at meridian
 Stands up for ever and in scent the lime tree.

This is a land which later we may tell of.
 Here-now we know, what death cannot diminish
 Needs no replenishing; yet certain are, though
 Dying were well enough, to live is better.

Passion has grown full man by his first birthday.
 Running across the bean-fields in a south wind,

Fording the river mouth to feel the tide-race—
Child's play that was, though proof of our possessions.

Now our research is done, measured the shadow,
The plains mapped out, the hills a natural bound'ry.
Such and such is our country. There remains to
Plough up the meadowland, reclaim the marshes.

II

Let's leave this town. Mutters of loom
Nor winding gear disturb
The flat and residential air—
A city all suburb.

Go not this road, for arc-lamps cramp
The dawn; sense fears to take
A mortal step, and body obeys
An automatic brake.

Ah, leave the wall-eyed town, and come
Where heaven keeps open house;
Watch not the markets but the stars;
Get shares of gilt-edged space.

For what we have in hand is no
Business of shop and street.
This is our strait, our Little Minch
Where wind and tide meet.

You are the tides running for ever
Along their ancient groove:
Such winds am I, pause not for breath
And to fresh shores will move.

III

Back to the countryside
That will not lose its pride
When the green flags of summer all are taken.
Having no mind to force
The seasons from their course
And no remorse for a front line forsaken.

Look how the athletic field
His flowery vest has peeled
To wrestle another fall with rain and sleet.
The rock will not relent
Nor desperate earth consent
Till the spent winter blows his long retreat.

Come, autumn, use the spur!
Let us not still defer
To drive slow furrows in the impatient soil:
Persuade us now these last
Silk summer shreds to cast
And fasten on the harsh habit of toil.

The swallows are all gone
Into the rising sun.
You leave to-night for the Americas.
Under the dropping days
Alone the labourer stays
And says that winter will be slow to pass.

IV

Come on, the wind is whirling our summer away,
And air grows dizzy with leaves.
It is time to lay up for a winter day,
Conserve earth's infant energy, water's play,
Bind the sun down in sheaves.

Contact of sun and earth loads granary j
Stream's frolic will grind floury
Tree's none the worse for fruit. Shall we
Insulate our strong currents of ecstasy
Or breed units of power?

Bodies we have, fabric and frame designed
To take the stress of love,
Buoyant on gust, multi-engined.
Experiment's over. We must up and find
What trade-routes are above.

This is no pleasure trip. We carry freight
To a certain end ; not whirled
Past earth's pull, nosing at no star's gate.
We'll have fresh air, will serve, perhaps, the state;
Surely, enlarge our world.

Or, think. Tightens the darkness, the rails thrum j
For night express is due.
Glory of steam and steel strikes dumb j
Sense sucked away swirls in the vacuum.
So passion passes through.

Here is love's junction, no terminus.
He arrives at girl or boy.
Signal a clear line and let us
Give him the run of life: we shall get thus
A record of our joy.

V

Beauty's end is in sight,
Terminus where all feather joys alight.
Wings that flew lightly
Fold and are iron. We see
The thin end of mortality.

We must a little part,
And sprouting seed crack our cemented heart.
Who would get an heir
Initial loss must bear:
A part of each will be elsewhere.

What life may now decide
Is past the clutch of caution, the range of pride.
Speaking from the snow
The crocus lets me know
That there is life to come, and go.

VI

Now she is like the white tree-rose
That takes a blessing from the sun:
Summer has filled her veins with light,
And her warm heart is washed with noon.

Or as a poplar, ceaselessly
Gives a soft answer to the wind:
Cool on the light her leaves lie sleeping,
Folding a column of sweet sound.

Powder the stars. Forbid the night
To wear those brilliants for a brooch
So soon, dark death, you may close down
The mines that made this beauty rich.

Her thoughts are pleiads, stooping low
O'er glades where nightingale has flown:
And like the luminous night around her
She has at heart a certain dawn.

VII

Rest from loving and be living.
Fallen is fallen past retrieving
The unique flyer dawn's dove
Arrowing down feathered with fire.

Cease denying, begin knowing.
Comes peace this way here comes renewing
With dower of bird and bud knocks
Loud on winter wall on death's door.

Here's no meaning but of morning.
Naught soon of night but stars remaining,
Sink lower, fade, as dark womb
Recedes creation will step clear.

VIII

- HE. We whom a full tornado cast up high,
Two years marooned on self-sufficiency,
Kissing on an island out of the trade-routes
Nor glancing at horizon,—we'll not dare
Outstay the welcome of our tropic sun.
- SHE. Here is the dark Interior, noon yet high,
Light to work by and a sufficiency
Of timber. Build then. We may reach the trade-
routes.
We'll take the winds at their word; yes, will dare
Wave's curling lip, the hot looks of the sun.
- HE. Hull is finished. Now must the foraging eye
Take in provisions for a long journey:
Put by our summertime, the fruits, the sweet roots,
The virgin spring moss-shadowed near the shore,
And over idle sands the halcyon.
- SHE. No mark out there, no mainland meets the eye.
Horizon gapes; and yet must we journey
Beyond the bays of peace, pull up our sweet roots,
Cut the last cord links us to native shore,
Toil on waters too troubled for the halcyon.
- BOTH. Though we strike a new continent, it shall be
Our islet; a new world, our colony.
If we miss land, no matter. We've a stout boat
Provisioned for some years: we need endure
No further ill than to be still alone.

IX

Waning is now the sensual eye
Allowed no flaw upon the skin
And burnt away wrinkle and feature,
Fed with pure spirit from within.

Nesciently that vision works.
Just so the pure night-eye, the moon,
Labours, a monumental mason,
To gloss over a world of stone.

Look how she marbled heath and terrace,
Effacing boundary and date.
She took the skyj earth was below her
A shining shell, a featherweight.

No more may pupil love bend over
A plane theorem, black and white.
The interlocking hours revolve,
The globe goes lumbering into light.

Admiral earth breaks out his colours
Bright at the forepeak of the day;
Hills in their hosts escort the sun
And valleys welcome him their way.

Shadow takes depth and shape turns solid:
Far-ranging, the creative eye
Sees arable, marsh, enclosed and common,
Assents to multiplicity.

X

Twenty weeks near past
Since the seed took to earth.
Winter has done his worst.
Let upland snow ignore ;
Earth wears a smile betrays
What summer she has in store.
She feels insurgent forces
Gathering at the core,
And a spring rumour courses
Through her, till the cold extreme
Sleep of grove and grass is
Stirred, begins to dream.
So, when the violins gather
And soar to a final theme,
Broadcast on winds of ether
That golden seed extends
Beneath the sun-eye, the father,
To ear at the earth's ends.

XI

There is a dark room,
The locked and shuttered womb,
Where negative's made positive.
Another dark room,
The blind, the bolted tomb,
Where positives change to negative.

We may not undo
That or escape this, who
Have birth and death coiled in our bones.
Nothing we can do
Will sweeten the real rue,
That we begin, and end, with groans.

XII

As one who wanders into old workings
Dazed by the noonday, desiring coolness,
Has found retreat barred by fall of rockface;
Gropes through galleries where granite bruises
Taut palm and panic patters close at heel
Must move forward as tide to the moon's nod,
As mouth to breast in blindness is beckoned.
Nightmare nags at his elbow and narrows
Horizon to pinpoint, hope to hand's breadth.
Slow drip the seconds, time is stalactite,
For nothing intrudes here to tell the time,
Sun marches not, nor moon with muffled step.
He wants an opening,—only to break out,
To see the dark glass cut by day's diamond,
To relax again in the lap of light.

But we seek a new world through old workings,
Whose hope lies like seed in the loins of earth,
Whose dawn draws gold from the roots of darkness.
Not shy of light nor shrinking from shadow
Like Jesuits in jungle we journey
Deliberately bearing to brutish tribes
Christ's assurance, arts of agriculture.
As a train that travels underground track
Feels current flashed from far-off dynamos,
Our wheels whirling with impetus elsewhere
Generated we run, are ruled by rails.
Train shall spring from tunnel to terminus,
Out on to plain shall the pioneer plunge,
Earth reveal what veins fed, what hill covered.
Lovely the leap, explosion into light.

XIII

But think of passion and pain.
Those absolute dictators will enchain
The low, exile the princely parts:
They close a door between the closest hearts:
Their verdict stands in steel,
From whose blank rigour kings may not appeal.

When in love's airs we'd lie,
Like elms we leaned together with a sigh
And sighing severed, and no rest
Had till that wind was past:
Then drooped in a green sickness over the plain
Wanting our wind again.

Now pain will come for you,
Take you into a desert without dew,
Labouring through the unshadowed day
To blast the sharp scarps, open up a way
There for the future line.
But I shall wait at the railhead alone.

Small comfort may be found,
Though our embraced roots grope in the same ground
Though on one permanent way we run,
Yes, under the same sun.
Contact the means, but travellers report
The ends are poles apart.

XIV

Now the full-throated daffodils,
Our trumpeters in gold,
Call resurrection from the ground
And bid the year be bold.

To-day the almond tree turns pink,
The first flush of the spring ;
Winds loll and gossip through the town
Her secret whispering.

Now too the bird must try his voice
Upon the morning air;
Down drowsy avenues he cries
A novel great affair.

He tells of royalty to be ;
How with her train of rose
Summer to coronation comes
Through waving wild hedgerows.

To-day crowds quicken in a street,
The fish leaps in the flood:
Look there, gasometer rises,
And here bough swells to bud.

For our love's luck, our stowaway,
Stretches in his cabin;
Our youngster joy barely conceived
Shows up beneath the skin.

Our joy was but a gusty thing
Without sinew or wit,
An infant flyaway ; but now
We make a man of it.

XV

I have come so far upon my journey.
This is the frontier, this is where I change,
And wait between two worlds to take refreshment,

I see the mating plover at play
Blowing themselves about over the green wheat,
And in a bank I catch-
The shy scent of the primrose that prevails
Strangely upon the heart. Here is
The last flutter of the wind-errant soul,
Earth's first faint tug at the earthbound soul.

So, waiting here between winter and summer,
Conception and fruition, I
Take what refreshment may be had from skies
Uncertain as the wind, prepare
For a new route, a change of constitution.

Some change of constitution, where
Has been for years an indeterminate quarrel
Between a fevered head and a cold heart;
Rulers who cannot rule, rebels who will not
Rebel ; an age divided
Between to-morrow's wink, yesterday's warning.

And yet this self, contains
Tides continents and stars—a myriad selves,
Is small and solitary as one grass-blade
Passed over by the wind
Amongst a myriad grasses on the prairie.

You in there, my son, my daughter,
Will you become dictator, resolve the factions?
Will you be my ambassador
And make my peace with the adjacent empires?

XVI

More than all else might you,
My son, my daughter,
Be metal to bore through
The impermeable clay
Ard rock that overlay
The living water.

Through that artesian well
My self may out,
Finding its own level.
This way the waste land turns
To arable, and towns
Are rid of drought.

XVII

Down hidden causeways of the universe
Through space-time's cold
Indifferent airs I strolled,
A pointless star: till in my course
I happened on the sun
And in a spurt of fire to her did run.

That heavenly body as I neared began
To make response,
And heaved with fire at once.
One wave of gathered heat o'erran
Her all and came to a head,
A mountain based upon an ardent bed.

(Faith may move mountains j but love's twice as strong,
For love can raise
A mountain where none was:
Also can prove astronomers wrong
Who deem the stars too hot
For life:—here is a star that has begot.)

Soon from the mother body torn and whirled
By tidal pull
And left in space to cool
That mountain top will be a world
Treading its own orbit,
And look to her for warmth, to me for wit.

XVIII

It is time to think of you.
Shortly will have your freedom.
As anemones that renew
Earth's innocence, be welcome.
Out of your folded sleep
Come, as the western winds come
To pasture with the sheep
On a weary of winter height.
Lie like a pool unwrinkled
That takes the sky to heart,
Where stars and shadows are mingled
And suns run gold with heat.
Return as the winds return,
Heir to an old estate
Of upland, flower and tarn.

But born to essential dark,
To an age that toes the line
And never o'ersteps the mark.
Take off your coat: grow lean:
Suffer humiliation:
Patrol the passes alone,
And eat your iron ration.
Else, wag as the world wags—
One more mechanical jane
Or gentleman in wax.
Is it here we shall regain
Championship? Here awakes
A white hope shall preserve
From flatterers, pimps and fakes
Integrity and nerve?

XIX

Do not expect again a phoenix hour,
The triple-towered sky, the dove complaining,
Sudden the rain of gold and hearts first ease
Tranced under trees by the eldritch light of sundown.

By a blazed trail our joy will be returning:
One burning hour throws light a thousand ways,
And hot blood stays into familiar gestures.
The best years wait, the body's plenitude.

Consider then, my lover, this is the end
Of the lark's ascending, the hawk's unearthly hover:
Spring season is over soon and first heatwave ;
Grave-browed with cloud ponders the huge horizon.

Draw up the dew. Swell with pacific violence.
Take shape in silence. Grow as the clouds grew.
Beautiful brood the cornlands, and you are heavy;
Leafy the boughs—they also hide big fruit.

XX

Sky-wide an estuary of light
Ebbs amid cloud banks out of sight.
At her star-anchorage shall swing
Earth, the old freighter, till morning.

Ride above your shadow and trim
Cargo till the stars grow dim:
Weigh then from the windless river;
You've a treasure to deliver.

Behold the incalculable seas
Change face for every cloud and breeze:
But a prime mover works inside,
The constant the integral tide.

Though black-bordered fancies vex
You and veering moods perplex,
Underneath's a current knowing
Well enough what way it's going.

Stroked by their windy shadows lie
The grainlands waving at the sky.
That golden grace must all be shed
To fill granaries, to make bread.

Do not grieve for beauty gone.
Limbs that ran to meet the sun
Lend their lightness to another }
Child shall recreate the mother.

XXI

Your eyes are not open. You are alone.
You then, to be my first-born, this is for you.

May know, as I, sleet from a bland sky falling,
Perfidious landmark, false dawn:
Look out through panes at a spoilt holiday,
And weep, taking eternity to bed.

When the hair grows, perceive a world
Officered by semi-cads and second baboons,
Be stood in the far corner.

Later, after each dream of beauty ethereal,
Bicycling against wind to see the vicar's daughter,
Bedisappointed.

And yet there is yet worse to come:
Desire worn to the bone leaves room for prided attrition.
For they shall ride in bloody uniform,
Offering choice of a sooner death or a later j
Mark you to ground, stop the earths,
Jog home to supper under a bland sky.

Yes, you may know, as I do, self foreshortened,
Blocked out with blackness finally all the works of days.
O you who turn the wheel and look to both sides,
Consider Phlebas, who shall be taller and handsomer than
you.

One shall rub shoulders with the firmfoot oak
And with all shifting shade join hands:
Shall have the heels of time, shall shoot from afar
And find the loopholes of the armoured train.

When the machine's run in, will get
Free play, better no doubt for the contracting
Of an indeterminate world.

Day and night will make armistice for this one,
Entering the walled garden who knows the hour of spirit
Reconciled to flesh.

Then falling leaf falls to renew
Acquaintance with old contours, with a world in outline.
Is time now to set house in order, bury
The dead and count the living, consolidate
The soul against proved enemies:
Time with the lengthening shadow to grow tall.

Thus the free spirit emerges, in courts at ease,
Content with standing-room, pleased in a small allotment.

XXII

In this sector when barrage lifts and we
Are left alone with death,
There'll be no time to question strategy.
But now, midsummer offensive not begun,
We wait and draw mutinous breath,
Wondering what to gain
We stake these fallow fields and the good sun.

This has happened to other men before,
Have hung on the lip of danger
And have heard death moving about next door.
Yet I look up at the sky's billowing,
Surprised to find so little change there.
Though in that ample ring
Heaven knows What power lies coiled ready to spring.

What were we at, the moment when we kissed—
Extending the franchise
To an indifferent class, would we enlist
Fresh power who know not how to be so great?
Beget and breed a life—what's this
But to perpetuate
Man's labour, to enlarge a rank estate?

Planted out here some virtue still may flower,
But/our dead follies too—
A shock of buried weeds to turn it sour.
Draw up conditions—will the heir conform?
Or thank us for the favour, who
Inherits a bankrupt firm,
Worn-out machinery, an exhausted farm?

XXIII

This was not the mind's undertaking,
But as outrageous heat
Breaking in thunder across hills
Sweetens our aching dust.

Such is not answerable to mind,
Is random as a flake
Blindly down-dancing here or clouds
That take their windy course.

Thin from thin air re?son issues;
We live on living earth
Whose trees enlarge their fruit without
Misgiving or excuse.

Reason is but a riddle of sand;
Its substance shifts in storm.
Space-spanned, God-girdled, love will keep
Its form, being planned of bone.

XXIV

Speak then of constancy. Thin eyelids weakly thus
Batted to beauty, lips that reject her, is not this ;
Nor lust of eye (Christ said it) denied the final kiss.

Rather a set response, metal-to-magnet affair ;
Flows with the tidal blood, like red of rose or fire
Is a fast dye outlasts the fabric of desire.

Happy this river reach sleeps with the sun at noon,
Takes dews and rains to her wide bed, refusing none
That full-filled peace, yet constant to one sea will run.

So melt we down small toys to make each other rich,
Although no getting or spending can extend our reach
Whose poles are love, nor close who closer lie than leech.

For think—throbbing our hearts linked so by endless band,
So geared together, need not otherwise be bound.

XXV

And since, though young, I know
Not to expect much good,
Our dreams from first to last
Being treacherous underfoot;

Best I dare wish for you,
That once (my son, my daughter)
You may get home on rock
Feet tired of treading water.

Lucky, will have also
An outward grace to ease
The axles of your world
And keep the parts at peace:

Not the waste random stuff
That stops the gannet's wing;
I mean, such oil ensures
A turbine's smooth running.

XXVI

Beauty breaks ground, O, in strange places.
Seen after cloudburst down the bone-dry watercourses,
In Texas a great gusher, a grain-
Elevator in the Ukraine plain ;
To a new generation turns new faces.

Here too fountains will soon be flowing.
Empty the hills where love was lying late, was playing,
Shall spring to life: we shall find there
Milk and honey for love's heir,
Shadow from sun also, deep ground for growing.

My love is a good land. The stranger
Entering here was sure he need prospect no further.
Acres that were the eyes' delight
Now feed another appetite.
What formed her first for seed, for crop must change her.

This is my land. I've overheard it
Making a promise out of clay. All is recorded—
Early green, drought, ripeness, rainfall,
Our village fears and festivals,
When the first tractor came and how we cheered it.

And as the wind whose note will deepen
In the upgrowing tree, who runs for miles to open
His throat above the wood, my song
With that increasing life grew strong,
And will have there a finished form to sleep in.

XXVII

Dropping the few last days, are drops of lead,
Heavier hang than a lifetime on the heart.
Past the limetrees that drug the air jackdaws
Slanting across a sluggish wind go home:
On either side of the Saltway fields of clover
Cling to their sweetness under a threatening sky.
Numb with crisis all, cramped with waiting.
Shallowly breathes the wind or holds his breath,
As in ambush waiting to leap at convoy
Must pass this way—there can be no evasions.
Surly the sky up there and means mischief;
The parchment sky that hourly tightens above us,
Screwed to storm-pitch, where thunder shall roll and roll
Intolerably postponing the last movement.

Now the young Challenger, too tired to sidestep,
Hunches to give or take decisive blow.
The climbers from the highest camp set out
Saying goodbye to comrades on the glacier,
A day of rock between them and the summit
That will require their record or their bones.
Now is a charge laid that will split the hill-face,
Tested the wires, the plunger ready to hand.
For time ticks nearer to a rebel hour,
Charging of barricades, bloodshed in city:
The watcher in the window looking out
At the eleventh hour on sun and shadow,
On fixed abodes and the bright air between,
Knows for the first time what he stands to lose.

Crisis afar deadens the nerve, it cools
The blood and hoods imagination's eye,
Whether we apprehend it or remember.
Is fighting on the frontier: little leaks through
Of possible disaster, but one morning
Shells begin to drop in the capital.
So I, indoors for long enough remembering
The round house on the cliff, the springy slopes,
The well in the wood, nor doubting to revisit
But if to see new sunlight on old haunts
Swallows and men come back *but if* come back
From lands *but if* beyond our view *but if*
She dies? Why then, here is a space to let,
The owner gone abroad, never returning.

XXVIII

Though bodies are apart
The dark hours so confine
And fuse our hearts, sure, death
Will find no way between.

Narrow this hour, that bed
But room for us to explore
Pain's long-drawn equator,
The farthest ice of fear.

Storm passes east, recurs:
The beaked lightnings stoop:
The sky falls down: the clouds
Are wrung to the last drop.

Another day is born now.
Woman, your work is done.
This is the end of labour.
Come out into the sun!

XXIX

Come out in the sun, for a man is born to-day!
 Early this morning whistle in the cutting told
 Train was arriving, hours overdue, delayed
 By snow-drifts, engine-trouble, Act of God, who cares
 now?—

For here alights the distinguished passenger.
 Take a whole holiday in honour of this!

Kipfer's back from heaven, Bendien to Holland,
 Larwood and Voce in the Notts eleven.
 Returning also the father the mother,
 Chastened and cheered by underworld excursion,
 Alive returning from the black country,
 Take a whole holiday in honour of this.

Now shall the airman vertically banking
 Out of the blue write a new sky-sign j
 The nine tramp steamers rusting in the estuary
 Get up full pressure for a trade revival;
 The crusty landlord renew the lease, and everyone
 Take a whole holiday in honour of this.

To-day let director forget the deficit,
 Schoolmaster his handicap, hostess her false face:
 Let phantastist take charge of flesh-and-blood situation,
 Petty-officer be rapt in the Seventh Symphony.
 For here a champion is born and commands you
 Tike a whole holiday in honour of this.

Wherever radiance from ashes arises—
 Willowherb glowing on abandoned slagheaps,

Dawn budding scarlet in a bed of darkness,
Life from exhausted womb outstriving—
There shall the spirit be lightened and gratefully
Take a whole holiday in honour of this.

EPILOGUE

LETTER TO W. H. AUDEN

A mole first, out of riddling passages
You came up for a breather into my field,
Then back to your engineering; a scheme conjectured
From evidence of earth not cast at random.
The surly vegetable said "What's this
Butting through sand for unapparent reasons?"
The animal said "This fellow is no runner."
Mineral said "Brother, you like the dark."
What are you at down there, nosing among
Saxon skulls, roots of our genealogies?
This is the field of ghosts. There are no clues here;
But dead creators packed in close fibre.
Perhaps you are going straight to some point, straighter
And further than these furrows I drive in daylight.

Daffodils now, the pretty debutantes,
Are curtsying at the first court of the year:
Their schoolgirl smell unmans young lechers. You
Preferred, I remember, the plump boy, the crocus.
Enough of that. They only lie at your feet.
But I, who saw the sapling, prophesied
A growth superlative and branches writing
On heaven a new signature. For I
Looked at no garden shrub, chantry of thrushes;
But such a tree as, gripping its rock perch
On a northern fell within the sound of hammers,
Gives shadow to the stonechat and reminder
Of chastity to men: grown venerable
Will give its name to that part of the country.

This was the second time that you had pulled
The rusty trigger summoning the stragglers.
Once more the bird goes packing, the skeleton
Sets teeth against a further dissolution.
And what have we to hope for who are bound,
Though we strip off the last assurance of flesh
For expedition, to lay our bones somewhere.
Say that a rescue party should see fit
To do us some honour, publish our diaries,
Send home the relics—how should we thank them?
The march is what we asked for; it is ended.
Still, let us wear the flesh away and leave
Nothing for birds, anatomy to men.

THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN

TO W. H. AUDEN

PART ONE

Come, then, companions, this is the spring of blood,
Heart's heyday, movement of masses, beginning of good.

R. E. WARNER

NOW to be with you, elate, unshared,
My kestrel joy, O hoverer in wind,
Over the quarry furiously at rest
Chaired on shoulders of shouting wind.

Where's that unique one, wind and wing married,
Aloft in contact of earth and ether ;
Feathery my comet, Oh too often
From heav'n harried by carrion cares.

No searcher may hope to flush that fleet one
Not to be found by gun or glass,
In old habits, last year's hunting-ground,
Whose beat is wind-wide, whose perch a split second.

But surely will meet him, late or soon,
Who turns a corner into new territory ;
Spirit mating afresh shall discern him
On the world's noon-top purely poised.

Void are the valleys, in town no trace,
And dumb the sky-dividing hills:
Swift outrider of lumbering earth
Oh hasten hither my kestrel joy!

2

But Two there are, shadow us everywhere
And will not let us be till we are dead,
Hardening the bones, keeping the spirit spare,
Original in water, earth and air,
Our bitter cordial, our daily bread.

Turning over old follies in ante-room,
For first-born waiting or for late reprieve,
Watching the safety-valve, the slackening loom,
Abed, abroad, at every turn and tomb
A shadow starts, a hand is on your sleeve.

O you, my comrade, now or to-morrow flayed
Alive, crazed by the nibbling nerve I my friend
Whom hate has cornered or whom love betrayed,
By hunger sapped, trapped by a stealthy tide,
Brave for so long but whimpering in the end:

Such are the temporal princes, fear and pain,
Whose borders march with the ice-fields of death,
And from that servitude escape there's none
Till in the grave we set up house alone
And buy our liberty with our last breath.

3

Somewhere beyond the railheads
Of reason, south or north,
Lies a magnetic mountain
Riveting sky to earth.

No line is laid so far.
Ties rusting in a stack
And sleepers—dead men's bones—
Mark a defeated track.

Kestrel who yearly changes
His tenement of space
At the last hovering
May signify that place.

Iron in the soul,
Spirit steeled in fire,
Needle trembling on truth—
These shall draw me there.

The planets keep their course,
Blindly the bee comes home,
And I shall need no sextant
To prove I'm getting warm.

Near that miraculous mountain
Compass and clock must fail,
For space stands on its head there
And time chases its tail.

There's iron for the asking
Will keep all winds at bay,
Girders to take the leaden
Strain of a sagging sky.

Oh there's a mine of metal,
Enough to make me rich
And build right over chaos
A cantilever bridge.

4

Make no mistake, this is where you get off,
Sue with her suckling, Cyril with his cough,
Bert with a blazer and a safety-razor,
Old John Braddelum and Terence the toff.
And now, may I ask, have you made any plans?
You can't go further along these lines;
Positively this is the end of the track;
It's rather late and there's no train back/

So if you are wanting to get anywhere
You must use your feet or take to the air,
The penny-a-liner, the seven-course-diner,
Prebendary Cute and the water-diviner—
Are you sure you don't want to go somewhere?
"Is it mountain there or mirage across the sand?"
That's Terra Incognita, Bogey-Man's-Land:
Why not give it a trial? You might go further
And fare much worse. "No, no, that's going rather
Too far ; besides, the whole thing may just be a sell."
Then book your bed-sitter at the station hotel
Or stay at the terminus till you grow verminous,
Eating chocolate creams from the slot-machines ;
But don't blame me when you feel unwell.
Line was a good line, ballasted on grit,
Surveyors weren't fools, platelayers didn't quit,
Viaduct for river, embankment for marsh,
Cutting for tough rock, signal for smash.
Can you keep the system going? Can you replace
Rolling stock? Is everything all right at the base?
Supposing they cut your communications
Can you live on here without any rations?
Then don't blame me when you're up the tree,
No trains coming through and you're feeling blue,
When you're left high and dry and you want to cry,
When you're in the cart and you've got a weak heart,
When you're up the pole and you can't find your soul,
When the shops are all looted and you've run out of coal
So it's me for the mountain. But before I begin
I'm taking a light engine back along the line
For a last excursion, a tour of inspection,
To clear the head and to aid the digestion.

Then I'll hit the trail for that promising land;
May catch up with Wystan and Rex my friend,
Go mad in good company, find a good country,
Make a clean sweep or make a clean end.

5

Let us be off! Our steam
Is deafening the dome.
The needle in the gauge
Points to a long-banked rage,
And trembles there to show
What a pressure's below.
Valve cannot vent the strain
Nor iron ribs refrain
That furnace in the heart.
Come on, make haste and start
Coupling-rod and wheel
Welded of patient steel,
Piston that will not stir
Beyond the cylinder
To take in its stride
A teeming countryside.

A countryside that gleams
In the sun's weeping beams ;
Where wind-pump, byre and barrow
Are mellowed to mild sorrow,
Agony and sweat
Grown over with regret.
What golden vesper hours
Halo the old grey towers,

What honeyed bells in valleys
Embalm our faiths and follies!
Here are young daffodils
Wind-wanton, and the hills
Have made their peace with heaven.
Oh lovely the heart's haven,
Meadows of endless May,
A spirit's holiday!

Traveller, take care,
Pick no flowers there!

PART TWO

Drive your cart and your plough over the bones
of the dead.

WILLIAM BLAKE

6

NEARING again the legendary isle
 Where sirens sang and mariners were skinned,
 We wonder now what was there to beguile
 That such stout fellows left their bones behind.

Those chorus-girls are surely past their prime,
 Voices grow shrill and paint is wearing thin,
 Lips that sealed up the sense from gnawing time
 Now beg the favour with a graveyard grin.

We have no flesh to spare and they can't bite,
 Hunger and sweat have stripped us to the bone;
 A skeleton crew we toil upon the tide
 And mock the theme-song meant to lure us on:

No need to stop the ears, avert the eyes
 From purple rhetoric of evening skies.

7

First Defendant speaks

I that was two am one,
 We that were one are two.
 Warm in my walled garden the flower grew first,
 Transplanted it ran wild on the estate.
 Why should it ever need a new sun?
 Not navel-string in the cold dawn cut,
 Nor a weaned appetite, nor going to school
 That autumn did it. Simply, one day
 He crossed the frontier and I did not follow:
 Returning, spoke another language.

Blessed are they that mourn,
That shear the spring grass from an early grave:
They are not losers, never have known the hour
When an indifferent exile
Passes through the metropolis *en route*
For Newfoundland.

Mother earth, understand me. You send up
So many leaves to meet the light,
So many flights of birds,
That keep you all their days in shade and song;
And the blown leaf is part of you again
And the frozen blackbird falls into your breast.
Shall not the life-giver be life-receiver?
Am I alone to stand
Outside the natural economy?
Pasteurise mother's milk,
Spoon out the waters of comfort in kilogrammes,
Let love be clinic, let creation's pulse
Keep Greenwich time, guard creature
Against creator, and breed your supermen!
But not from me: for I
Must have life unconditional, or none.
So, like a willow, all its wood curtailed,
I stand by the last ditch of narrowing world,
And stir not, though I see
Pit-heads encroach or glacier crawl down.

8

This was your world and this I owe you,
Room for growing, a site for building,
The braced sinew, the hands agreeing,
Mind foreseeing and nerve for facing.

You were my world my breath my seasons
Where blood ran easy and springs failed not,
Kind was clover to feet exploring
A broad earth and all to discover,
Simple that world, of two dimensions,
Of stone mansions and good examples;
Each image actual, nearness was no
Fear and distance without a mirage.
Dawn like a greyhound leapt the hill-tops,
A million leaves held up the noonday,
Evening was slow with bells pealing,
And night compelling to breast and pillow.
This was my world, Oh this you gave me,
Safety for seed, petal uncurled there;
Love asked no proving nor price, a country
Sunny for play, for spring manoeuvres.

Woman, ask no more of me;
Chill not the blood with jealous feud:
This is a separate country now,
Will pay respects but no tribute.
Demand no atavistic rites,
Preference in trade or tithes of grain;
Bound by the limiting matrix I
Increased you once, will not again.
My vision's patented, my plant
Set up, my constitution whole;
New fears, old tunes cannot induce
Nostalgia of the sickly soul.
Would you prolong your day, transfuse
Young blood into your veins? Beware

Lest one oppressed by autumn's weight
May thrill to feel death in the air.
Let love be like a natural day
That folds her work and takes to bed;
Ploughland and tree stand out in black,
Enough memorial for the dead.

9

Second Defendant speaks

Let us now praise famous men,
Not your earth-shakers, not the dynamiters,
But who in the Home Counties or the Khyber,
Trimming their nails to meet an ill wind,
Facing the Adversary with a clean collar,
Justified the system.
Admire the venerable pile that bred them,
Bones are its foundations,
The pinnacles are stone abstractions,
Whose halls are whispering-galleries designed
To echo voices of the past, dead tongues.
White hopes of England here
Are taught to rule by learning to obey,
Bend over before vested interests,
Kiss the rod, salute the quarter-deck ;
Here is no savage discipline
Of peregrine swooping, of fire destroying,
But a civil code ; no capital offender
But the cool cad, the man who goes too far.
Ours the curriculum
Neither of building birds nor wasteful waters,
Bound in book not violent in vein:

Here we inoculate with dead ideas
Against blood-epidemics, against
The infection of faith and the excess of life.
Our methods are up to date; we teach
Through head and not by heart,
Language with gramophones and sex with charts,
Prophecy by deduction, prayer by numbers.
For honours see prospectus: those who leave us
Will get a post and pity the poor;
Their eyes glaze at strangeness;
They are never embarrassed, have a word for everything,
Living on credit, dying when the heart stops;
Will wear black armllets and stand a moment in silence
For the passing of an era, at their own funeral.,

10

You'll be leaving soon and it's up to you, boys,
Which shall it be? You must make your choice.
There's a war on, you know. Will you take your stand
In obsolete forts or in no-man's-land?
That ancestral castle, that picturesque prestige
Looks well on paper but will it stand a siege?
All modern conveniences—still, I should change
Position now the enemy knows the range.
Blockade may begin before you're much older—
Will you tighten the belt and shrug the shoulder
Or plough up the playing-fields, sow new soil,
Build a reservoir and bore for oil?
"Take a sporting chance," they tell you. But will it suffice
To wear a scrum-cap against falling skies?
"Play the game": but supposing the other chap kicks,
You'd like to have learnt some rough-house tricks.

It boils down to this—do you really want to win
Or prefer the fine gesture of giving in?
Are you going to keep or to make the rules,
Die with fighters or be dead with fools?
Men are wanted who will volunteer
To go aloft and cut away tangled gear;
Break through to blocked galleries below pit-head,
Get in touch with living and raise from the dead:
Men to catch spies, fly aeroplanes,
Harrow derelict acres and mend the drains.
There'll be work for you all if you're fain without feigning
To give up toys and go into training.
But you'll have to forget a great deal you've learnt,
The licence of Saturn, lacerations of Lent,
Self-abuse, your dignity, the Bad and the Good,
Heroism in phantasy and fainting at blood.
And you'll have to remember a great deal you've forgotten,
How to love a girl and how to sew a button,
Tiger's shock-tactics, elephant's defence,
The integral spirit and the communal sense.
Can you sing at your work? Enforce discipline
Without insignia? Then you've still a chance to win.

II

Third Defendant speaks

I have always acted for the best.
My business is the soul: I have given it rope,
Coaxed it heavenward, but would not let it escape me.
The peoples have sought a Ruler:
I conjured one for each after his own image;
For savage a Dark Demon, for Hebrew a Patriot,

For Christian a Comforter, for atheist a Myth.
The rulers have sought an Ally:
I have called down thunders on the side of authority,
Lightnings to galvanise the law;
Promising the bread of heaven to the hungry of earth,
Shunting the spirit into grassy sidings,
I have served the temporal princes.
There have been men ere now, disturbers of the peace,
Leaders out of my land of milk and honey,
Prescribing harder diet;
Whom I thrashed, outlawed, slew, or if persisting
Deified, shelving them and their dynamite doctrines
Up in the clouds out of the reach of children.
I have always acted for the best:
Hung on the skirts of progress, the tail of revolution,
Ready to drug the defeated and bless the victor.
I am a man apart
Who sits in the dark professing a revelation:
Exploiting the Word with the letter I turn
Joy into sacraments, the Holy Ghost to a formula.
But an impious generation is here,
Let in the light, melt down my mysteries,
Commission the moon to serve my altars
And make my colleagues village entertainers.
That tree of Grace, for years I have tended,
Is a slow-grower, not to be transplanted,
They'll cut it down for pit-props;
That harvest of Faith, not without blood ripened,
They have ploughed in; their dynamos chant
Canticles of a new power: my holy land is blasted,
The crust crumbles, the veins run vinegar.

12

Oh subterranean fires, break out!
Tornadoes, pity not
The petty bourgeois of the soul,
The middleman of God!

Who ruins farm and factory
To keep a private mansion
Is a bad landlord, he shall get
No honourable mention.

Who mobbed the kestrel out of the air,
Who made the tiger tame,
Who lost the blood's inheritance
And found the body's shame ;

Who raised his hands to brand a Cain
And bless a submarine-
Time is up: the medicine-man
Must take his medicine.

The winter evening holds her peace
And makes a crystal pause ;
Frozen are all the streams of light,
Silent about their source.

Comrade, let us look to earth,
Be stubborn, act and sleep:
Here at our feet the lasting skull
Keeps a stiff upper lip:

Feeling the weight of a long winter,
 Grimaces underground ;
 But never again will need to ask
 Why spirit was flesh-bound.

And we whom winter days oppress
 May find some work to hand,
 Perfect our plans, renew parts,
 Break hedges down, plough land.

So when primroses pave the way
 And the sun warms the stone,
 We may receive the exile spirit
 Coming into its own.

13

Fourth Defendant speaks

To sit at head of one's own table,
 To overlook a warm familiar landscape,
 Have large cupboards for small responsibilities—
 Surely that does outweigh
 The rent veil and the agonies to follow?
 Me the Almighty fixed, from Eve fallen,
 Heart-deep in earth, a pointer to star fields,
 Suffering sapflow, fruitage, early barrenness;
 Changeable reputed, but to change constant,
 Fickle of fashion no more than the months arej
 Daily depend on surroundings for sustenance,
 On what my roots reach, what my leaves inhale here.
 Grant me a rich ground, wrapped in airs temperate,
 Not where nor'-easters threaten the flint scarps ;
 Consequence then shall I have, men's admiration
 Now, and my bones shall be fuel for the future.

Yet have I always failed.
For he, who should have been my prime possession,
Was not to be possessed.
I leant o'er him, a firmament of shadow,
But he looked up through me and saw the stars.
I would have bound him in the earth-ways,
Fluid, immediate, the child of nature.
But he made bricks of earth, iron from fire,
Turned waves to power, winds to communication;
Setting up Art against Chaos, subjecting
My flux to the synthetic frost of reason.
I am left with a prone man,
Virtue gone out of him; who in the morning
Will rise to join Crusades or assist the Harlequins.
Though I persuade him that his stars are mine eyes'
Refraction, that wisdom's best expressed in
The passive mood, — here's no change for the better:
I was the body slave, am now the spirit's.
Come, let me contemplate my own
Mysteries, a dark glass may save my face.

I 4

Live you by love confined,
There is no nearer nearness;
Break not his light bounds,
The stars' and seas' harness:
There is nothing beyond,
We have found the land's end.
We'll take no mortal wound
Who felt him in the furnace,
Drowned in his fierceness,
By his midsummer browned:

Nor ever Jose awareness
Of nearness and farness
Who've stood at earth's heart careless
Of suns and storms around,
Who have leant on the hedge of the wind,
On the last ledge of darkness.

We are where love has come
To live: he is that river
Which flows and is the same;
He is not the famous deceiver
Norearly-flowering dream.
Content you. Be at home
In me. There's but one room
Of all the house you may never
Share, deny or enter.
There, as a candle's beam
Stands firm and will not waver
Spire-straight in a close chamber,
As though in shadowy cave a
Stalagmite of flame,
The integral spirit climbs
The dark in light for ever.

15

Consider. These are they
Who have a stake in earth
But risk no wing on air,
Walk not a planet path.

Theirs the reward of all
That live by sap alone,

Flourishing but to show
Which way the wind has gone.

While oaks of pedigree
Stand over a rich seam,
Another sinks the shaft,
Fills furnace, gets up steam.

These never would break through
The orbit of their year,
Admit no altered stress,
Decline a change of gear.

The tree grips soil, the bird
Knows how to use the wind ;
But the full man must live
Rooted yet unconfined.

PART THREE

Never yield before the barren.

D. H. LAWRENCE

16

LOOK west, Wystan, lone flyer, birdman, my bully boy!
 Plague of locusts, creeping barrage, has left earth bare
 Suckling and centenarian are up in air,
 No wing-room for Wystan, no joke for kestrel joy.

Sky-scrapers put high questions that quench the wind'
 breath,
 Whose shadow still comes short of truth, but kills the gras;
 Power-house chimneys choke sun, ascetic pylons pass
 Bringing light to the dark-livers, charged to deal death.

Firework fetes, love displays, levitation of dead.,
 Salvation writ in smoke will reassure the town,
 While comfy in captive balloons easily brought down
 Sit frail philosophers, gravity gone to the head,

Gain altitude, Auden, then let the base beware!
 Migrate, chaste my kestrel, you need a change of air!

17

First Enemy speaks

Begin perhaps with jokes across the table,
 Bathing before breakfast, undressing frankly,
 Trials of strength, innocent invasions ;
 Concealing velvet hand in iron grip
 Play the man, let woman wait indoors.
I do like doing things with you.

Shoot home the bolt, draw close the silken cordon
 Regrets for youth, malice at mutual friends,

Excluding company with a private smile,
Longer looks noting, change of tune. Ah, now
To find one's touch, anticipate the last movement!
You are so different from the others.

This is my act, who can play Cleopatra,
Can hear state secrets, see the guarded plans:
A man my empire, darling I proclaim
Through sultry eyes dominion appetites—
To be called a queen, be a subject for sonnets.
You can't really think me beautiful?

Then set the stage, lights for a final tableau—
I never shall love the dark since Maurice died—
Buzzards are wheeling above, horns blowing around;
We come to a point, circle the trembling prey
In sunny fern or many-mirrored bedroom.
I love to watch your face.

Now am I in the very lists of love,
Clutching the terminals may surely hope
To make a contact. Feel, body, Oh fail not!
Shall the harsh friction the gritted teeth of lust
Not generate a spark, bring me to life?
I've never felt like this before.

So, so again. And he that was alive
Is dead. Or sleeps. A stranger to these parts.
Nerve insulated, flesh unfused, this is
No consummation; yet a dear achievement:
Reach for the powder-puff, I have sinned greatly.
I suppose you hate me, now.

18

Not hate nor love, but say
Refreshment after rain,
A lucid hour ; though this
Need not occur again.

You shall no further feast
Your pride upon my flesh.
Cry for the moon: here's but
Aninstantaneous flash.

My wells, my rooted good
Go deeper than you dare:
Seek not my sun and moon,
They are centred elsewhere.

I know a fairer land,
Whose furrows are of fire,
Whose hills are a pure metal
Shining for all to share.

And there all rivers run
To magnify the sea,
Whose waves recur for ever
In calm equality.

Hands off! The dykes are down.
This is no time for play.
Hammer is poised and sickle
Sharpened. I cannot stay.

19

Second Enemy speaks

Now sir, now madam, we're all plain people here,
Used to plain speaking: we know what is what,
How to stretch a point and where to draw the line.
You want to buy. I have the goods.

Read about rector's girls
Duke's disease synthetic pearls
Latest sinners tasty dinners
Plucky dogs shot Sinn Feiners
Flood in China rape in Wales
Murderer's tears scenes at sales
That's the stuff aren't you thrilled
Sit back and see the world.

Yet, though abiding by the law and the profits,
I have a solemn duty and shall not shirk it
Who stand *in loco parentis* to the British Public,
We must educate our bastards.

Professor Jeans spills the beans
Dean Inge tells you a thing
A man in a gown gives you the low-down
A man with a beard says something weird
Famous whore anticipates war
Woman mayor advises prayer
A grey-haired gugga says leave it to mother
Run off and play no more lessons to-day.

And thirdly, brethren, you must be saved from yourselves,
From that secret voice, that positive contagion.
I'll have no long faces on this ship while I'm captain.
And you know what happens to mutineers.

Is the boss unkind? Have you dropped a stitch?

Smile! All together! You'll soon be better.
Have you got a grouch? Do you feel an itch?
There, there! Sit down and write uncle a letter.
Lock the front door, here are your slippers,
Get out your toys and don't make a noise ;
Don't tease the keepers, eat up your kippers,
And you'll have a treat one day if you're good boys.

20

Fireman and farmer, father and flapper,
I'm speaking to you, sir, please drop that paper;
Don't you know it's poison? Have you lost all hope?
Aren't you ashamed, ma'am, to be taking dope?
There's a nasty habit that starts in the head
And creeps through the veins till you go all dead:
Insured against accident? But that won't prove
Much use when one morning you find you can't move.

They tell you all's Well with our lovely England
And God's in our capital. Isn't it grand
Where the offal of action, the rinsings of thought
From a stunted peer for a penny can be bought?
It seems a bargain, but in the long run
Will cost you your honour, your crops and your Son.
They're selling you the dummy, for God's sake don't buy
it!

Baby, that bottle's not clean, don't try it!

You remember that girl who turned the gas on—
They drove her to it, they couldn't let her alone.
That young inventor—you all know his name—
They used the plans and he died of their fame.

Careful, climber, they're getting at your nerve!
Leader, that's a bribe, they'd like you to serve!
Bull, I don't want to give you a nightmare,
But, keep still a moment, are you quite sure you're there?

As for you, Bimbo, take off that false face!
You've ceased to be funny, you're in disgrace.
We can see the spy through that painted grin;
You may talk patriotic but you can't take us in.
You've poisoned the reservoirs, released your germs
On firesides, on foundries, on tubes and on farms.
You've made yourself cheap with your itch for power
Infecting all comers, a hopeless whore.

Scavenger barons and your jackal vassals,
Your pimping press-gang, your unclean vessels,
We'll make you swallow your words at a gulp
And turn you back to your element, pulp.
Don't bluster, Bimbo, it won't do you any good;
We can be much ruder and we're learning to shoot.
Closet Napoleon, you'd better abdicate,
You'd better quit the country before it's too late.

21

Third Enemy speaks

God is a proposition,
And we that prove him are his priests, his chosen.
From bare hypothesis
Of strata and wind, of stars and tides, watch me
Construct his universe,
A working model of my majestic notions,
A sum done in the head.

Last week I measured the light, his little finger;
The rest is a matter of time.

God is an electrician,
And they that worship him must worship him
In ampere and in volt.
Scrap sun and moon, your twilight of false gods:
X. is not here or there;
Whose lightning scrawls brief cryptograms on sky,
Easy for us to solve
Whose motions fit our formulae, whose temple
Is a pure apparatus.

God is a statistician:
Offer him all the data; tell him your dreams.
What is your lucky number?
How do you react to bombs? Have you a rival?
Do you really love your wife?
Get yourself taped. Put soul upon the table:
Switch on the arc-lights; watch
Heart's beat, the secret agents of the blood.
Let every cell be observed.

God is a Good Physician,
Gives fruit for hygiene, crops for calories.
Don't touch that dirty man,
Don't drink from the same cup, sleep in one bed:
You know He would not like it.
Young men, cut out those visions, they're bad for the eyes:
I'll show you face to face
Eugenics, Eupeptics and Euthanasia,
The clinic Trinity.

22

Where is he, where? How the man stares!
Do you think he is there, buttoned up in your stars?
Put by that telescope;
You can't bring him nearer, you can't, sir, you haven't a hope.
Is he the answer to your glib equations,
The lord of light, the destroyer of nations?
To be seen on a slide, to be caught on a filter? The Cause
Limed in his own laws?
Analyst, you've missed him. Or worse and worst
You've got him inside? You must feel fit to burst.
Here, there, everywhere
Or nowhere. At least you know where. And how much do
you care?

Where then, Oh where? In earth or in air?
The master of mirth, the corrector of care?
Nightingale knows, if any,
And poplar flowing with wind; and high on the sunny
Hill you ma/find him, and low on the lawn
When every dew-drop is a separate dawn.
In the moment before the bombardment, poised at peace
He hides. And whoever sees
The cloud on the sky-line, the end of grief,
Dust in the distance that spells a relief,
Has found. Shall have his share
Who naked emerges on the far side of despair.

This one shall hear, though from afar,
The dear first call of new life, through fear
Piercing and padded walls:
Shall arise, shall scatter his heirlooms, shall run till he falls.

That one is slower, shall know by growing,
Not aware of his hour, but suddenly blowing
With leaves and roses, living from springs of the blood.
These ones have found their good:
Faring the rifles in a blind alley
Or stepping through ruins to sound reveille
They feel the father here,
They have him at heart, they shake hands, they know he is
near.

23

Fourth Enemy speaks

I'm a dreamer, so are you.
See the pink sierras call,
The ever-ever land of dew,
Magic basements, fairy coal.
There the youngest son wins through,
Wee Willie can thrash the bully,
Living's cheap and dreams come true;
Lying manna tempts the belly;
Crowns are many, claims are few.

Come along then, come away
From the rush hour, from the town:
Blair and overcast to-day
Would put a blackcap out of tune,
Spoil the peacock's June display.
Rigid time of driving-belts
Gives no rest for grace-notes gay:
Fear and fever, cables, bolts
Pin the soul, allow no play.

You're a poet, so am I:
No man's keeper, intimate
Of breeding earth and brooding sky,
Irresponsible, remote,
A cool cloud, creation's eye.
Seek not to turn the winter tide
But to temperate deserts fly:
Close chain-mail of solitude
Must protect you or you die.

Come away then, let us go;
Lose identity and pass
Through the still blockade of snow,
Fear's frontier, an age of ice:
Pierce the crust and pass below
Towards a red volcanic core,
The warm womb where flesh can grow
Again and passion sleep secure
In creative ebb and flow.

24

Tempt me no more; for I
Have known the lightning's hour,
The poet's inward pride,
The certainty of power.

Bayonets are closing round.
I shrink; yet I must wring
A living from despair
And out of steel a song.

Though song, though breath be short,
I'll share not the disgrace
Of those that ran away
Or never left the base.

Comrades, my tongue can speak
No comfortable words,
Calls to a forlorn hope,
Gives work and not rewards.

Oh keep the sickle sharp
And follow still the plough:
Others may reap, though some
See not the winter through.

Father, who endest all,
Pity our broken sleep ;
For we lie down with tears
And waken but to weep.

And if our blood alone
Will melt this iron earth,
Take it. It is well spent
Easing a saviour's birth.

25

Consider these, for we have condemned them;
Leaders to no sure land, guides their bearings lost
Or in league with robbers have reversed the signposts,
Disrespectful to ancestors, irresponsible to heirs.

Born barren, a freak growth, root in rubble,
Fruitlessly blossoming, whose foliage suffocates,
Their sap is sluggish, they reject the sun.

The man with his tongue in his cheek, the woman
With her heart in the wrong place, unhandsome, unwhole-
some ;

Have exposed the new-born to worse than weather,
Exiled the honest and sacked the seer.
These drowned the farms to form a pleasure-lake,
In time of drought they drain the reservoir
Through private pipes for baths and sprinklers.

Getters not begetters; gainers not beginners;
Whiners, no winners; no triers, betrayers;
Who steer by no star, whose moon means nothing.
Daily denying, unable to dig:
At bay in villas from blood relations,
Counters of spoons and content with cushions
They pray for peace, they hand down disaster.

They that take the bribe shall perish by the bribe,
Dying of dry rot, ending in asylums,
A curse to children, a charge on the state.
But still their fears and frenzies infect us;
Drug nor isolation will cure this cancer:
It is now or never, the hour of the knife,
The break with the past, the major operation.

PART FOUR

He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

26

JUNCTION or terminus—here we alight.
A myriad tracks converge on this moment,
This man where all ages and men are married,
Who shall right him? Who shall determine?

Standing astonished at the close of day
We know the worst, we may guess at good:
Geared too high our power was wasted,
Who have lost the old way to the happy ending.

A world behind us the west is in flames,
Devastated areas, works at a standstill }
No seed awakes, wary is no hunter,
The tame are ruined and the wild have fled.

Where then the saviour, the stop of illness?
Hidden the mountain was to steel our hearts.
Is healing here? An untrodden territory
Promises no coolness, invites but the brave.

But see! Not far, not fiction, a real one,
Vibrates like heat-haze full in the sun's face
Filling the heart, that chaste and fleet one,
Rarely my kestrel, my lucky star.

O man perplexed, here is your answer.
Alone who soars, who feeds upon earth—
Him shall you heed and learn where joy is
The dance of action, the expert eye.

Now is your moment, O hang-fire heart ;
The ice is breaking, the death-grip relaxes,
Luck's turned. Submit to your star and take
Command, Oh start the attacking movement!

27

Wystan, Rex, all of you that have not fled,
This is our world, this is where we have grown
Together in flesh and live; though each alone
Shall join the enclosed order of the dead,
Enter the silent brotherhood of bone.

All you that have a cool head and safe hands
Awaken early, there is much to do;
Hedges to raze, channels to clear, a true
Reckoning to find. The other side commands
Eternity. We have an hour or two.

Let us speak first against that ancient firm
Who sell an armament to any cause,
Fear and Pain brothers: call them bullies and curs
Who take us into corners and make us squirm.
Finding the weak spot, fumbling at secret doors.

Let us tell them plainly now they haven't a chance,
We are going about together, we've mingled blood,
Taken a tonic that's set us up for good ;
Their disguises are tabled, their movements known in ad-
vance,
We have found out who hides them and gives them food.

Lipcurl, Swiveleye, Bluster, Crock and Queer,
Mister I'll-think-it-over, Miss Not-to-day,
Young Who-the-hell-cares and old Let-us-pray,
Sir Apres-moi-le-deluge. It is here
They get their orders. These will have to pay.

Hear, the ice-wall of winter at our back,
Spring's first explosions throbbing across the plain,
Earth's diastole, flood-tide of heart and vein:
Collect your forces for a counter-attack,
New life is on the way, the relief train.

28

Though winter's barricade delays,
Another season's in the air ;
We'll sow the spring in our young days,
Found a Virginia everywhere.

Look where the ranks of crocuses
Their rebel colours will display
Coming with quick fire to redress
The balance of a wintry day.

Those daffodils that from the mould
Drawing a sweet breath soon shall flower,
With a year's labour get their gold
To spend it on a sunny hour.

They from earth's centre take their time
And from the sun what love they need:
The proud flower burns away its prime,
Eternity lies in the seed.

Follow the kestrel, south or north;j
Strict eye, spontaneous wing can tell
A secret. Where he comes to earth
Is the heart's treasure. Mark it well.

Here he hovers. You're on the scent ;
Magnetic mountain is not far,
Across no gulf or continent,
Not where you think but where you are.

Stake out your claim. Go downwards. Bore
Through the tough crust. Oh learn to feel
A way in darkness to good ore.
You are the magnet and the steel.

Out of that dark a new world flowers.
There in the womb, in the rich veins
Are tools, dynamos, bridges, towers,
Your tractors and your travelling-cranes.

29

But winter still rides rough-shod upon us,
Summer comes not for wishing nor warmth at will:
Passes are blocked and glaciers pen us
Round the hearth huddled, hoping for a break,
Playing at patience, reporting ill.
Aware of changed temperature one shall wake
And rushing to window arouse companions
To feel frost surrender, an ice age finished;
Whose strength shall melt from the mountains and run
Riot, careering down corries and canyons.
What floods will rise then through rivers replenished,
Embankments broken, and bluffs undone,
Laid low old follies, all landmarks vanished.
Is it ready for launching, the Argo, the Ark,
Our transport, our buoyant one, our heart of oak?

Make haste, put through the emergency order
For an overtime day, for double shifts working:
Weather is breaking, to-morrow we must board her,
Cast off onto chaos and shape a course.

Many months have gone to her making,
Wood well-seasoned for watertight doors,
The old world's best in her ribs and ballast,
White-heat, high pressure, the heart of a new
In boiler, in gadget, in gauge, in screw.
Peerless on water, Oh proud our palace,
A home for heroes, the latest of her line;
A beater to windward, obedient to rudder,
A steamer into storm, a hurricane-rider.
Foam-stepper, star-steerer, freighter and fighter-
Name her, release her, anoint her with wine!

Whom shall we take with us? The true, the tested,
Floods over to find a new world and man it,
Sure-foot, Surveyor, Spark and Strong,
Those whom winter has wasted, not worsted,
Good at their jobs for a break-down gang:
Born haters will blast through debris or granite,
Willing work on the permanent ways,
And natural lovers repair the race.
As needle to north, as wheel in wheel turning,
Men shall know their masters and women their need,
Mating and submitting, not dividing and defying,
Force shall fertilise, mass shall breed.
Broad let our valleys embrace the morning
And satisfied see a good day dying,
Accepting the shadows, sure of seed.

30

You who would come with us,
Think what you stand to lose—
An assured income, the will
In your favour and the feel
Of firmness underfoot.
For travellers by this boat
Nothing to rest the eyes on
But a migrant's horizon,
No fixtures or bric-a-brac—
Wave walls without a break.
Old acquaintance on the quay
Have come to clutch your knee—
Merry-Andrew and Cassandra,
Squeamish, Sponge and Squanderer,
The Insurance Agent, the Vicar,
Hard Cheese the Confidence-Tricker,
Private Loot, General Pride,
And Lust the sultry-eyed.
Others you hate to leave
Wave with autumnal grief,
The best of what has been,
Props of an English scene ;
A day we may not recover,
A camp you must quit for ever.

Now, if you will, retract.
For we are off to act
Activity of young
And cut the ravelled string.

Calm yourselves, you that seek
The flame, and whose flesh is weak
Must keep it in cold storage:
For we shall not encourage
The would-be hero, the nervous
Martyr to rule or'serve us.
Stand forward for volunteers
Who have tempered their loves and fears
In the skilled process of time,
Whose spirit is blown to a flame
That leaves no mean alloys.
You who have heard a voice—
The siren in the morning
That gives the worker warning,
The whisper from the loam
Promising life to come,
Manifesto of peace
Read in an altered face—
Who have heard ; and believe it true
That new life must break through.

31

In happier times
When the heart is whole and the exile king returned
We may sing shock of opposing teams
And electric storms of love again.

Our voices may be tuned
To solo flight, to record-breaking plane;
Looking down from hill
We may follow with fresh felicities

Wilful the light, the wayward motion of trees,
In happier times when the heart is whole.

In happier times
When the land is ours, these springs shall irrigate
Good growing soil until it teems,
Redeemed from mortgage, drilled to obey;
But still must flow in spate.
We'll focus stars again; though now must be
Map and binoculars
Outlining vision, bringing close
Natural features that will need no glass
In happier times, when the land is ours.

Make us a wind
To shake the world out of this sleepy sickness
Where flesh has dwindled and brightness waned!
New life multiple in seed and cell
Mounts up to brace our slackness.
Oppression's passion, a full organ swell
Through our throats welling wild
Of angers in unison arise
And hunger haunted with a million sighs,
Make us a wind to shake the world!

Make us the wind
From a new world that springs and gathers force,
Clearing the air, cleaning the wound;
Sets masses in motion and whips the blood.
Oh they shall find him fierce
Who cling to relics, dead wood shall feel his blade.
Rudely the last leaves whirled,

A storm on fire, dry ghosts, shall go in
Fear and be laid in the red of their own ruin.
Make us the wind from a new world!

32

You that love England, who have an ear for her music,
The slow movement of clouds in benediction,
Clear arias of light thrilling over her uplands,
Over the chords of summer sustained peacefully;
Ceaseless the leaves' counterpoint in a west wind lively,
Blossom and river rippling loveliest allegro,
And the storms of wood strings brass at year's finale:
Listen. Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?

You who go out alone, on tandem or on pillion,
Down arterial roads riding in April,
Or sad beside lakes where hill-slopes are reflected
Making fires of leaves, your high hopes fallen:
Cyclists and hikers in company, day excursionists,
Refugees from cursed towns and devastated areas;
Know you seek a new world, a saviour to establish
Long-lost kinship and restore the blood's fulfilment.

You who like peace, good sticks, happy in a small way
Watching birds or playing cricket with schoolboys,
Who pay for drinks all round, whom disaster chose not;
Yet passing derelict mills and barns roof-rent
Where despair has burnt itself out—hearts at a standstill,
Who suffer loss, aware of lowered vitality,
We can tell you a secret, offer a tonic; only
Submit to the visiting angel, the strange new healer.

You above all who have come to the far end, victims
Of a run-down machine, who can bear it no longer;
Whether in easy chairs chafing at impotence
Or against hunger, bullies and spies preserving
The nerve for action, the spark of indignation—
Need fight in the dark no more, you know your enemies.
You shall be leaders when zero hour is signalled,
Wielders of power and welders of a new world.

33

Come for a walk in our pleasant land:
We must wake up early if we want to understand
The length and breadth and depth of decay
Has corrupted our vowels and clogged our bowels,
Impaired our breathing, eaten pride away.
What do they believe in—these yellow yes-men,
Pansies, politicians, prelates and pressmen,
Boneless wonders, unburstable bouncers,
Back-slappers, cheer-leaders, bribed announcers
Broadcasting All-Clear as the raiders draw near;
Would mend a burst dam with sticking-plaster
And hide with shocked hand the yawn of disaster—
What do they believe in? A god of gold,
A gilt-edged proposition; but it seems they've been sold.
All you fine ladies, once you were flowers
England was proud of, rich blooms, good growers;
But overblown now; and we can't afford you
Your missions and fashions, your synthetic passions;
We don't want to bed you and we'd rather not board you:
Weedy, greedy, unsatisfied, unsexed,
You're not living in this world, and as for the next—

You could hand white feathers on the judgment day
And give the damned a charity matinee.
Our holy intellectuals—what are they at?
Filling in hard times with literary chat,
Laying down the law where no one listens,
Finding the flaw in long-scrapped systems
And short cuts to places no more on the map:
Though off their feed now and inclined to mope.
Nasties, nudists, bedlamites, buddhists,
Too feeble to follow, unable to guide,
It's time we asked them to step aside.
Children of the sahib, the flag and the mater,
Grim on golf-courses and haggard on horses
They try to live but they've ceased to matter:
Who'll give a penny to the poor old guy?
These were the best that money could buy
And it isn't good enough. For what can they fight?—
The silver spoon, the touched hat, the expensive seat:
Marching at the orders of a mad physician
Down private roads to common perdition.
Where is the bourgeois, the backbone of our race?
Bent double with lackeying, the joints out of place ;
Behind bluffs and lucky charms hiding to evade
An overdue audit, anæmic, afraid.
Trimmers and schemers, pusillanimous dreamers,
At cinemas, shop-windows and arenas we've found them
Bearing witness to a life beyond them.
They're paying for death on the instalment plan
Who hoped to go higher and failed to be men.
We'd like to fight but we fear defeat,
We'd like to work but we're feeling too weak,
We'd like to be sick but we'd get the sack,

We'd like to behave, we'd like to believe,
We'd like to love, but we've lost the knack.

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(FOR FRANCES WARNER)

What do we ask for, then?
Not for pity's pence nor pursy affluence,
Only to set up house again:
Neither a coward's heaven, cessation of pain,
Nor a new world of sense,
But that we may be given the chance to be men.
For what, then, do we hope?
Not longer sight at once but enlarged scope;
Miraculous no seed or growth of soul, but soil
Cleared of weed, prepared for good:
We shall expect no birth-hour without blood
Nor fire without recoil.

Publish the vision, broadcast and screen it,
Of a world where the will of all shall be raised to highest
power,
Village or factory shall form the unit.
Control shall be from the centres, quick brain, warm heart,
And the bearings bathed in a pure
Fluid of sympathy. There possessions no more shall be part
Of the man, where riches and sacrifice
Are of flesh and blood, sex, muscles, limbs and eyes.
Each shall give of his best. It shall seem proper
For all to share what all produced.
Men shall be glad of company, love shall be more than a
guest
And the bond no more of paper.

Open your eyes, for vision
Is here of a world that has ceased to be bought and sold
With traitor silver and fairy gold;
But the diamond of endurance, the wrought-iron of passion
Is all their currency.
As the body that knows through action they are splendid,
Feeling head and heart agree ;
Young men proud of their output, women no longer stale
With deferred crisis; the old, a full" day ended,
Able to stand down and sit still.
Only the exploiter, the public nuisance, the quitter
Receive no quarter.

Here they do not need
To flee the birthplace. There's room for growing and work-
ing-
Bright of eye, champions for speed,
They sing their own songs, they are active, they play not
watch:
Happy at night talking
Of the demon bowler cracked over the elm-trees,
The reverse pass that won the match.
At festivals knowing themselves normal and well-born
They remember the ancestors that gave them ease,
Harris who fought the bully at Melbourne,
What Wainwright wrote with his blood, Rosa in prison—
All who sucked out the poison.

Numbing with fear all flesh upon
A fiery-hearted globe.

An age once green is buried,
Numbered the hours of light;
Blood-red across the snow our sun
Still trails his faint retreat.

Spring through death's iron guard
Her million blades shall thrust;
Love that was sleeping, not extinct,
Throw off the nightmare crust.

Eyes, though not ours, shall see
Sky-high a signal flame,
The sun returned to power above
A world, but not the same.

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Now raise your voices for a final chorus,
Lift the glasses, drink to-morrow's health—
Success to the doctor who is going to cure us
And those who will die no more in bearing wealth.
On our magnetic mountain a beacon burning
Shall sign the peace we hoped for, soon or late,
Clear over a clean earth, and all men turning
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

Drink to the ordered nerves, the sight restored ;
A day when power for all shall radiate
From the sovereign centres, and the blood is stirred
To flow in its ancient courses of love and hate:

When the country vision is ours that like a barn
Fills the heart with slow-matured delight,
Absorbing wind and summer, till we turn
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

For us to dream the birthday, but they shall act it-
Bells over fields, the hooters from the mine,
On New Year's Eve under the bridegroom's attic
Chorus of coastguards singing Auld Lang Syne;
Now at hope's horizon that day is dawning,
We guess at glory from a mountain height,
But then in valley towns they will be turning
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

Beckon 0 beacon, and 0 sun be soon!
Hollo, bells, over a melting earth!
Let man be many and his sons all sane,
Fearless with fellows, handsome by the hearth.
Break from your trance: start dancing now in town,
And, fences down, the ploughing match with mate.
This is your day: so turn, my comrades, turn
Like infants' eyes like sunflowers to the light.

