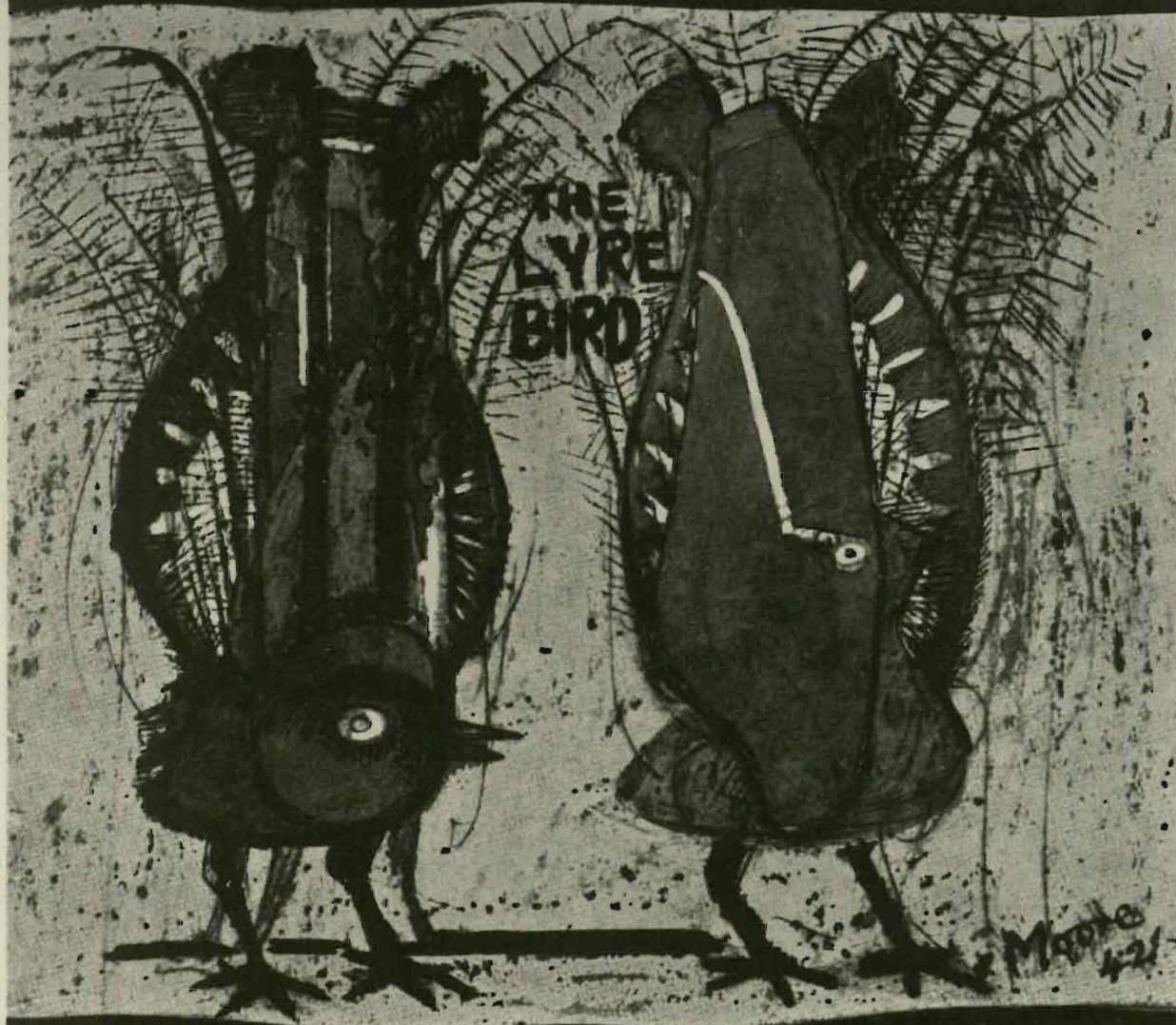


# POETRY

LONDON



NOVEMBER 1942  
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NO 8

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## ABOUT CONTRIBUTORS

**KENNETH ALLOTT:** Associate Editor of the now defunct *New Verse*; has published a study of Jules Verne.

**LAURENCE CLARK:** A young poet now serving in the Indian Army. Contributed to Nos. 1 and 7.

**STEPHEN COATES:** Teaches at Kidstones School in Yorkshire. First appeared in the Cambridge anthology *Poets of Tomorrow* (Hogarth Press) and contributed to *Poetry in Wartime* (Faber).

**G. S. FRASER:** Went out to Egypt with the Royal Army Service Corps in 1941; now works for a paper in Cairo; *The Fatal Landscape and other poems* (PL) 1941; his long poem, *A Letter to Anne Ridler*, was broadcast by the B.C.C. recently; one of the most interesting of the younger critics.

**W. S. GRAHAM:** First appeared in PL No. 7; one book of poems published recently by the Parton Press.

**KEITH DOUGLAS:** Oxford poet of promise, is out East serving with the Tank Corps. He has appeared previously in Oxford publications only.

**GEOFFREY GRIGSON:** Established a reputation as the editor of *New Verse*; *Several Observations*, Poems (Cresset Press); *New Verse*, an anthology (Faber); *The Romantics*, anthology of prose and verse (Routledge).

**JOHN HALL:** Regular contributor to PL; helps to run the International Arts Centre in Bayswater.

**JOHN HEATH-STUBBS:** Appeared in 1941 in *Eight Oxford Poets* (Routledge). Has recently published an interesting elegy with the same firm.

**SÉAN JENNETT:** Of Irish extraction, is a typographer in London. Messrs. Faber are issuing his first book of poems in February.

**SIDNEY KEYES:** Co-editor and contributor to *Eight Oxford Poets*; in the Army; *The Iron Laurel*, poems (Routledge).

**FRANCIS KING:** Contributed to *Poetry in*

*Wartime* (Faber); at present engaged on war work.

**PATRICIA LEDWARD:** Edited *Poems of This War*, which has now gone into a second edition as well as an American edition (C.U.P.); is a Driver in the A.T.S.

**EMANUEL LITVINOFF:** Of Russian extraction, is a 2/Lt. in the Army; *The Untried Soldier*, poems (Routledge).

**H. B. MALLALIEU:** 2/Lt. R.A.; contributed to *New Verse* and *Twentieth Century Verse*; one book of poems (Fortune Press).

**FRED MARNAU:** Czechoslovak poet living in London; first appeared with a group of five poems in PL No. 6; is married to SENTA, who was for a time first 'cellist in the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra.

**NICHOLAS MOORE:** Young lyrical poet of promise; three books of poems with the Fortune Press; *Buzzing round with a Bee*, Poems (PL).

**NORMAN NICHOLSON:** Contributed to PL Nos. 6 and 7; edited *An Anthology of Religious Verse* for Penguin Books; Nicholson & Watson are shortly publishing his first novel.

**BARBARA NORMAN:** A new poet whose work we like; first publication.

**ROBERT PAYNE:** First publication; works at the British Embassy in Chungking.

**KATHLEEN RAINE:** Poet and critic; PL will shortly issue her first book of poems, *Stone and Flower*, with drawings by Barbara Hepworth.

**FRANCIS SCARFE:** Has recently published the Book Society Recommendation *Auden and After*, a book of criticism on contemporary poets. Has published two books of poems, both with the Fortune Press.

**TERENCE TILLER:** Teaches in Cairo; *Poems*, published by the Hogarth Press.

**VERNON WATKINS:** In the R.A.F.; *Ballad of the Mari Lwyd and Other Poems* (Faber).

**GEORGE WOODCOCK:** Editor of *Now*, who also works on the Editorial Board of *War Commentary*; is at present writing a book on Anarchism for PL.

# POETRY

LONDON

EDITOR: TAMBIMUTTU

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VOLUME 2,

NUMBER 8

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## PREFACE

The spate of new poems within these covers might make the general reader question their value. Anything that deviates from our common experience is immediately suspect, and it is not in the experience of the casual reader that so much verse worthy of dissemination is being written. Quantity, to the connoisseur, always diminishes the value of the product, be it poetry or pottery, and the contributors to PL might stand condemned solely on their number.

That there have been only a handful of interesting poets in any age seems to be supported by historical evidence, and it is reasonable to assume that the present age is no exception. I, for one, am mistrustful of the historical evidence because the passages of remote history are obscure, whereas the present is always at hand for investigation.

Present-day evidence seems to say that every age must have possessed its galaxies of poets worthy of consideration, more numerous than any text-book could recapitulate. To substantiate my statement I will devote most of No. 10 to the work of poets who have never before appeared in print, and the readers will be able to judge for themselves. Poets owe a great deal to each other, and the major works executed are influenced by the minor

and obscure ones, so that it would be as just to describe them as products of their time as of the individual craftsmen.

The communal origin of poetry is a fact worth investigating in the present; and the study of the minor poetry is necessary for the understanding of any period. I also believe that for every minor poet whose name is now well known to a public who care for such matters (through exploitation of the opportunities offered and encouragement received) there are several to-day whose work is as interesting and full of promise. I am also of the opinion that had such a magazine as PL existed before for publishing young poets, the number of interesting poets in the 'thirties would have been much greater. In creative work the opportunities offered a person count as much as the capacity for such work.

Although each new number of PL has introduced more new poets, I think most of those we have published are significant and deserving of a hearing. With a more liberal education and the advances made in modern publishing there is more poetry being written, made public, and read, in this century than in any other, a fact which should be a source of satisfaction to everyone.

## KENNETH ALLOTT

### THE MEMORY OF YEATS

O mirror which time unsilvers now, now  
That the clocks stop, ormulu or gilt glassy Victorian  
Between black ferns, now that the Parthenon  
Shudders and disintegrates into secular dust,  
And all the libraries of the great are fallen,  
And one last acid wave  
Washes and scoops mind's cave and leaves it to oblivion;

O sea-wracked, lost before the wax of the Purification  
With the wild voices off the slushy streets,  
With the gas lit in the office afternoon,  
Hissing hatred from a faulty mantle  
Like a fish garrotted in air;  
O heart's confessional, buried in a bitter winter  
Before crocus or snowdrop  
When water of war crept higher,  
The tears to flow in many a prefecture  
From submarine cisterns of loss and revenge;  
You, who were taken from us before the snow,  
How will it be with us now?

'A bas les aristos!' but who now will scratch  
The eyes of the hateful Bethel, babbling texts,  
Or assault the backside of the Saxon ruin  
Waving its cheque-book by St. George's Channel,  
Or sorrow again as when the Irish made  
Their Easter duty of rebellion?  
Never a bomb in railway waiting-room  
Shall speak as you spoke from a round tower  
Of pride and minstrelsy. The regalia of power  
Are buried centuries deep, and dead the throaty music of the swan:  
You have emigrated like all Irishmen.

For the voice modulating through seven heavens, more potent than poteen,  
Prince of bushido reared where the staple potato  
Furnishes the illicit still with political magic  
And the cotton-plant and bog-auricula  
Weep on moss under the coasting buzzard;  
Where the platonic weapon of the blackthorn shillelagh  
Stammers its Erse among cromlechs and Celtic crosses  
With snake-charming Patrick and a hundred masses

Per diem for the souls in purgatory—  
 He will not return this anniversary.  
 He will not return this anniversary  
 Though Shannon light a hundred thousand lamps  
 Burning a brogue of gaiety and heart-lore  
 While seminaries fondle the syllogism  
 In their crepuscular Holy Ghostliness  
 (Dari, Celarent, Ferio and Barbara);  
 Though Ulster like an amputated limb  
 In its north of flax and shipyards bickers to enlistment,  
 In its baffled basalt and steam-hammers' clangour:  
 For The Harp That Once will not sound any more.

O western non-pareil, grieve not to be  
 Never to grieve again, never to hear  
 The owls of midnight in the hazel-wood,  
 Or see first smoke rising from a waking city  
 In summer when the amazing fuchsia  
 Is resonant yet with the topheavy bee;  
 For you belong to the freemasonry  
 Of the rising peat-drenched wind and robber sea  
 Of winter. No more have you to fear  
 The minatory tongue of the mad partisan  
 Or howling schoolroom recitation.  
 You are enfranchised of destroying pity;  
 You are elect to linger here  
 As man and myth  
 As long as our intemperate literature.

## AUDREY BEECHAM

### POEM

There are only two or three  
 spaces in eternity  
 where the wary head at night  
 trusts its dream posterity.

There has never been a friend  
 but whose pattern in the eye  
 scarred a warning on the sky.

When years later make amend  
 the situation is unwound—  
 no recoil to make or mend.  
 compensation hurries late  
 to an altered ground.

What did you find on the shore?  
 Nothing but a rancid shell  
 and a crab who could not walk  
 to the pool he loved so well.

Lurking in the beard of death  
 half alive, are those who saved  
 in their lungs some earthy breath  
 to reject the ether's wave.

## LAURENCE CLARK

### TO THE MUSE

I never thought I should address my Muse!  
 But now, sitting disturbed, and sad, and late,  
 I voice this song to her. Reader, excuse:  
 It is my soul's insurance bond with fate.  
 For when I stare into the future's face  
 And see no smile nor glint of recognition,  
 How can I but think on that child of grace  
 Who follows me unto the tomb's perdition?  
 Who mocks me now, in penning me this paper;  
 Who shines through failure, bitterness, farewells;  
 Who touches minds to mine with her lit taper;  
 Combs tangled thinking out; makes sorrow strange;  
 Whose syllables ring on like silver bells  
 On villages and fields, though all else change.

### MEMO

Confronted with the ghost of Corrigan—  
 Such ones do not return if they go to battle:  
 God takes the excuse to get them back to him—  
 Confronted with this ghost in a restaurant  
 Life's sad, pedantic, diplomatic shapes  
 Are suddenly uprooted and absurd,  
 Like a line of trees caught up in a shell-fire.



Then nothing remains of a leaden-biased world  
 But that clear smile, its lonely apotheosis,  
 And that clear glance, banishing  
 Like a warm sulk of wind this autumn night  
 Along the Embankment, by the bombed buildings,  
 Into a harvest moon, which concentrates  
 Its yellow rings upon the masted Thames.

*from*

## FIRST FORTNIGHT OF WAR

### THE CITY-FOLK

The peace which mothered this city-folk is gone  
 With the autumn's last, red, frozen creeper of light.  
 Detached, their chilling world floats spiralling on  
 Into dark places of winter and night,  
 Spinning wide in the sky like a wobbling top.  
 When will it topple and stop?

Perhaps not at all. They have credentials here,  
 Bus tickets may take them to a journey's end.  
 The newspapers may keep their way quite clear  
 With old iterations which they intend,  
 Or else a uniform or public job  
 May keep them on without stop.

For still, as I marvelling see, this unmothered swarm  
 Of city-folk can run to its incubators,  
 The mothly heat of the tubes to keep them warm,  
 Safe cinemas where they can mock at dictators,  
 And they can still drink their tea in this Lyons' shop.  
 Their thing may not stop.

Upon these spirals they may float forth at the end,  
 They may rise vindicated in these ways.  
 Apocalypse may take a usual trend,  
 Leave them their tea-shops and familiar trays;  
 Or history may like a cricket hop,  
 And shake, not stop, their top.

What thoughts with which to greet the descending year!  
 But winds have not yet risen to a gale,  
 Offensives whispered of are not yet here,  
 We sit and wait a chapter in a tale;  
 While folk in town like children spin their top,  
 And trust it will not stop.

## STEPHEN COATES

---

### POEM

#### *Outside.*

Look! the thermometer is ungracious. The physician  
Has muddled his medicines again. The hand is raised,  
Higher than the Stirling it has clutched the sun,  
Sirius is threatened. Heart over head is tumbled.

The ambulance must be summoned, the theatre prepared.  
The latest anaesthetic needs the most skilful anaesthetist.  
There must be no students in, nor inexperienced nurses  
At this old and most-of-all terrifying operation.

Close the window. Black out. Time will be wanted.  
Bring down the new and powerful arc-lamp.  
The instruments have been sterilized and counted.  
Adjust the mask, the goggles. The door is bolted.

#### *Inside.*

Beside the river a boat is knocking against the bank.  
Inside the boat is a monkey and a young girl.  
The sun is shining on her bare legs which it caresses  
And she does not mind its hairy kisses on her breasts.

Beware for her. Her hands are idle, her green eyes,  
Looking outwards, are unaware. All is too close.  
Take out the knife, with fine gut tie the legs,  
Watch scientifically for the right attitude

And cut. It is all over. The mooring can be cut now,  
The boat drifts, bumps into a rock, rocks  
Rocks too much, turns over and the girl is floating,  
She drifts down the river and is lost—to sight.

It took less time than was expected. The scar  
Can be dealt with later by a plastic surgeon,  
Now lips and feet and green sad and serious eyes are lost  
To drift and wander in the red and delectable river.

G. S. FRASER

TO A SCOTTISH POET

Goddess or ghost, you say, by shuddering,  
And ominous of evil to our land,  
Twisting to ugliness the mouths that sing,  
Parching the lover's moist and balmy hand,

Goddess or ghost, you say, by silence known,  
The silence ticking in the rotten wood  
Like our numb pain, that can no longer groan:  
A grief so old, it gives the mind no food.

I also on bleak nights in Causewayend  
Where the slate sky distorts the slaty stone  
And the shawled women to their burrows wend,  
Have felt my country suffering alone.

The slate sea splashes on the slaty pier  
In lost St. Andrews, where no poets now  
Defy the crocodile to shed its tear  
Or take what time the bitter years allow,

And the same sea is loud in Aberdeen:  
Passing the gas-works and the fish-and-chips  
One comes in summer on the radiant scene,  
The golden beach, the girls with golden hips,

The sun that cooks and savours all their sex:  
Then I have thought my country might arise  
Like these half-sleeping girls with tawny necks  
And summer's sensual softness in their eyes.

These skies bled warmth: and while my blood stays young,  
That starving peace, or this protracted war,  
Vows broken, or friends lost, or songs unsung  
Shall leave no permanent and vexing scar.

Goddess or ghost, you say, by shuddering,  
And ominous of evil to our land. . . .  
I say, defy her, while our blood can sing;  
While we stand insolent, as poets stand.

## ROBERT GITTINGS

SEPTEMBER 3rd, 1939

Eating an apple from an English tree  
With Autumn at our feet, we are at war.  
It might be madness on a martian star  
For all the evidence that eyes can see—  
Wasps at their prey of plums, intent as we,  
But wiser in their limits—calendar  
Of ripeness everywhere but us, who are  
Seasonless, reasonless, mortal and unfree.

No words can put this right. Our proper place  
Is now our proper selves. The only hope  
For man is still man though mankind be cursed.  
Horror may slash the earth's and every face  
With hate. Yet if we fill our harmless scope  
We, the last Adam, need not be the worst.

## W. S. GRAHAM

### HERE NEXT THE CHAIR

Here next the chair I was when winter went  
Down looking for distant bothies of love  
And met birch-bright and by the blows of March  
The farm bolder under and the din of burning.

I was what the whinfire works on towns  
An orator from hill to kitchen dances.  
In booths below bridges that spanned the crowds  
Tinkers tricked glasses on lips and saw my eyes.

Like making a hut of fingers cupped for tears  
Love burned my bush that was my burning mother.  
The hoodiecrow in smoke in a wobbling wind  
If a look is told for fortune saw my death.

So still going out in the morning of ash and air  
My shovel swings. My tongue is a sick device.  
Fear evening my boot says. The chair sees iceward  
In the bitter hour so visible to death.

### I, NO MORE REAL THAN EVIL

I, no more real than evil in my roof  
Speak at the bliss I pass I can endure  
Crowding the glen my lintel marks,  
Speak in this room this traffic builds  
About my chair and table for my nature.  
I feel the glass collide with light and day.

Outside this lull is happening the young  
Who cough their stories in the curving siding.  
I, no more real than my enclosure  
Devise my eye to irrigate my love  
For where the slates slew down my roof  
The sky tilts back its shingle with no sign.

From inward through my window's needle eye  
Children cartwheel from prison in procession  
And stage their fear on mulls of rock  
And build boundaries with ochre bricks.  
Thunder falls round the fieldmice and the house.  
Through all the suburbs children trundle cries.

I, no more real than when my hill of head  
Finds evil in my dredged up heart,  
Press down my padding question on the floor.  
What things the young will take for song or grief.  
The flagstone under sky is canopy  
For other air where other thunder falls.

### WHO, WITH A PEN

Of the resonant rumour of sun, impulse of summer  
My bride is born. Love finds not here ambition.  
I am the dunce of sacrifice yet at the sun's table  
With vein after vein unmaking the cadence of blood  
My hope is wildly heaven's, certain of conflict.  
Who, with a heart bound to his writing battle  
Would sign humanity and index legendary bliss?

Questions ring bells and thistles blow the time.  
 Chime speaks in silken floaters. The answer settles.  
 Blood builds its platform on a love-me-not  
 And calculates from exile the seed's dominion.  
 Love cascades myrtle gospels from the nipple's hill.  
 Who, with a nettle forefinger sparking covenants  
 Will sting humanity and point the docken ground?

How shall I deal her the shock of summer?  
 Well the Spring knows and the hovering ram  
 That prances the long black gunwale of days.  
 Questions bud arteries and tribunals cast berries.  
 The weasel prints lust in a palace of maggots.  
 Who, with a map of picnics primed for April  
 Could probe humanity and hoist a sign of veins?



## KEITH DOUGLAS

### THE PRISONER

Today, Cheng, I touched your face  
 with two fingers, as a gesture of love;  
 for I can never prove enough  
 by sight or sense your strange grace,

but mothwise my hands return  
 to your fair cheek, as luminous  
 as a lamp in a paper house,  
 and touch, to teach love and learn.

I think a hundred hours are gone  
 that so, like gods, we'd occupy.  
 But alas, Cheng, I cannot tell why,  
 today I touched a mask stretched on the stone

person of death. There was the urge  
 to break the bright flesh and emerge  
 from the ambitious cruel bone.

## GEOFFREY GRIGSON

### JOURNEY IN MAY

White players on the May grass  
The sky between them brown, and Bredon  
Blue: black bags of seed  
Bending over the ridged, warm ground,

Each a black breast full.  
And a few cattle under the faded fruit  
Flowers: the furtive wave of favour  
From the plain bride in her moment,

In the Baptist Chapel, Cinderella's blunt  
Feet in silver shoes. Again and again  
Aubretia's  
Reach-me-down, cheap blue.

### THE WELL IN THE VALLEY

In the holy well tucked into the green hill  
The yellow wings of the moths, dead souls  
Of the dead, lie on the round pool.

A bent pin perhaps will bring your wish: but  
Is this still a centre of mysteries, or  
A holy place of the mother of David?

In the rotting, bearded alders underneath, grows  
The Royal Fern, and the mallard collects there  
Its blue sad eggs in the warm down,

The lean salmon slide back through the pools:  
And in the farm the pathway is closed,  
And foxes are bred in pens for their silver fur.

Forgotten above the well, behind the island of oaks,  
The uneven ground and the ragwort and brambles  
Over the stumps of the chapel, where

They prayed for the black souls of those who believed  
In God, in the Mother of God, and David's mother;  
And then the bell called

More clearly in the valley, than now these wild ducks  
And the fern and the young red of the oaks; though sold  
In the twisted ink, all all

Forgotten. Still this holy well persists, which  
Forewent them, and the yellow wings float  
On the round water; and the guide-book

Declares there are Maltese crosses circling the granite  
Rim: liverworts now entirely conceal them.  
And the legend, how the farmer who bought

The bells, removed the basin with oxen, and the chain  
Snapped and the basin rolled back to its cell.  
Which God commanded it? The cottages

About, of mud mixed with straw, are in ruins,  
The death, copulation, and birth under their flaked  
Whitewash are of woodlice and spiders:

The limekiln is choked and the wet lead mines  
Chuckle to the stone of water, the ravens nest  
In the mine-house, the buzzard spirals

Over the red oaks, the woodpeckers whinney  
And the polished adder in the deserted orchard coils  
By the orpine: 'Live Long' they call it.

Herodsfoot, Coldrennick, Plashtown,  
Yearls Coombe, Keglenna—they are not incidents even  
On the straight road of the screaming dipper,

They are unknown to the jerking sandpiper, the red and black  
Warrior ants piling their stick nest in the hedge,  
The tabby gone wild, hunting

Under the bracken. Stir the still wings  
And wish—wish for what? Would you be the suave adder  
Or the exhausted salmon slipping back to the sea?

Be the spiralling buzzard or the neat dipper,  
Or lichen bearding the alder? Or else the river  
Smoothing the quartz in its unfeeling,



Folding eternity? Do you envy the other ages?  
Of the well and the souls, the bell, the incense, the predatory  
Men or the solid progression of farmers?

Envy the clack and clink of the mines,  
The fumes of the limekiln, the islanded heron,  
Or otter, or orpine, or the spider and louse?

O in the wild tropic of this valley give up no will  
For wish. In its deadly life, still,  
Still, although the foreign foxes whine

And the hunt horns and shrieks for the otter, under  
The willowed dumps of the waste glitter  
The fierce oddments of silver, and still

Lies black and pure, unworried, holding the wings  
Of yellow, this round, perverted symbol, past  
The mud and brambles, of our will.



## JOHN HALL

### THE FAIRS

Usually they came by night, bringing  
Through the summer darkness their heavy loads,  
Caravan and waggon, the mighty equipment  
Of music and magic along our roads.

Some must have seen them, running to windows,  
Peeping at those famous, forbidden clans,  
Known how in the darkness a gipsy's eyes  
Burn brighter than stars when the moon wanes.

But we, ignorant in sleep, only next morning  
Ran to the common and saw the hammers  
Weave their intricate business and the tents  
Soaring into the firmament of summer.

Enemy or friend, whoever you be there  
Blotting the sun out with gauntlet hand,  
Come down to the fair, learn the old lore, hear  
The first political music of the land!

For, brother, when these thunderous days compel us  
Into our lonely selves, my ears have found  
Security in your voice and a sweet reason  
In the fair's most lost and melancholy sound.

### NO MERCY

Coming over the hill I knew no mercy  
For the pitiless sad stones stood up and cried  
'Why are you walking here?' And I replied  
'To get to a city where comfort is.'

So I came to a city where comfort is  
Usual in strong hands and lips and faces,  
But the people were cold there, and in their voices  
Were terrible meanings and hidden words.

The children in rags there drew scorn like swords,  
Called 'Why are you walking here?' and I replied  
'To get to the good sea before the tide  
Ebbs and the shipwrecks of bone appear.'

So I went down by lime and juniper  
And cattle coming home over the land:  
Before me the good sea, and behind,  
Winking and warning, the city's skull.

And bringing the ships in, the tide was full,  
The pitiless sad waves swirled up and cried  
'Why are you walking here?' And I replied  
'To fathom an ocean no planets pull.'



## JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

### ELEGY IN A TOWN CHURCHYARD

It stands aloof in its own green yard, the church,  
 On rich earth crowded thick with jostling corpses.  
 An old and beautiful church; it is a pity  
 These once green fields are fouled with the draggling skirts of the city—  
 Long winding trails of road that prowl and prowl round  
 And the glum houses that glower and tell no tales.

Within, strong pillars raise their heads and sing  
 Stone anthems; and a brazen eagle lifts  
 Upon broad wings the printed Word of God.  
 In the great window over the altar spattered with sunlight  
 A languid Christ hangs, like ripe fruit, in torment from the Tree,  
 While Angels stand around and gape in vitreous ecstasy.

Outside among the grass—stones, only old stones;  
 'In Loving Memory' of what?—a heap of clay-soured bones.  
 But the moss, more kindly, covers up the names,  
 Smoothing the agony of wakeful deathlessness.

Only the War Memorial stands, four-square and white and scrubbed,  
 And black names like long lines of ants climbing a tree.  
 Whose wounded bark oozes syrup, plain for all to see;  
 And here they hang yearly wreaths of paper poppies  
 From whose crisp petals no opiate ever distilled.

All around, hard roadways continually chafe the lurching feet,  
 But after bare boards and sleepless mattresses  
 All come here at last. We have built a beautiful house for the Dead,  
 And here their bed is soft in mould and green-quilted.



## SEÁN JENNETT

### SPRING TIDE

Spring strikes and rings the root to song  
and ravel out the tangled leaf in revels  
of live green along the girdering iron branch,  
and swings with sway of wind in grass the meadow levels.

O now the blackbird and the thrush all day  
sing sunk in hollow green, my sally tree,  
and the first grasshopper chirrs in a fist of grass,  
filing his fiddle sweetly at the first tuning try.

Rings on my rocking heart this rush of green  
and flush of song; and flashes in the steele  
of blood the new-firing sun, that all the winter,  
the ember of last year, lazed through its idle stroll;

but now flares forth with fine arousing eye  
and light lancet lunges through snoring barren sleep  
and the cold care of winter cracks: the core  
of careful heart upsets, and lets its wildness slip.

O now how gapes the gap of singularity.  
Reins wring the rathe frame, the eager passions goad,  
augur of love; and the blaze and the burst of it  
rage in the common race and coupling of blood.

### ANDROMEDA AND PERSEUS

Andromeda, ringed on rock, had hope  
in sea and sky and neighbouring earth; nor found  
the monster terrible that did not come,  
nor Perseus great, so willing to defend.

Though to the eager-minded dreams are real,  
are augury and intelligence for belief:  
yet for the stubborn heart the waking vision  
is nearer in the end to actual life.

Andromeda, praying to sullen god,  
humble to live, yet felt no ache of fear  
invade; and ordered god to battle,  
sure that it was herself he would fight for.

Now, now the monster on the water springs,  
or in sharp air slides down a taloned angle,  
and Perseus, that great hero, takes  
his careful stance on the uncertain shingle.

In that dread moment when he dares the dragon  
he hears the wash and slapping of the sea  
on shore; and over the hiss of wings  
the things the idle and the withered say:

He cannot win. It cannot be defeated.  
He is young and foolish and does not understand.  
He ought to submit now, with no more trouble.  
By willingness shown honour has been sustained.

And chained Andromeda looks on that face  
battered in battle, and the steady eyes,  
and hearing the strong sword whistle on the air  
sees that his nerves are hard, his heart at ease.

But is disgusted that her hero's hands  
are red as blood. He takes a tighter hold  
on that head of writhing snakes and stony stare:  
his left hand grips it like a shield.

Now shoots the monster from the scalding sky  
roaring, and spits out ravaging fire:  
but suddenly is stopped and turns away,  
wings beating slow: and screams for fear

and feels his heavy vitals unresponding,  
the valiant muscle crusting, the rigid  
nightmare agony of impotence,  
the locking heart, the fiery blood grown frigid.

Perseus the victorious still holds up  
in his right hand his sword, and in his left  
swings high the horrid head, his fearsome shield,  
its knot of snakes a pennant in the wind's lift.

The dragon shakes in air, stiffens and falls  
with blasting crash among the flashing waves:  
and still Medusa's head stares out to sea,  
and still its hair of living serpents weaves.

Andromeda casts off her chains—they were  
frail for the arm though to the eye complex—

and comes to Perseus with dissembling face  
and all the honour of the battle plucks

from him the victor. Now he veils the head  
and lays it down before her eager feet  
for a love token: and this simplicity  
makes her the mistress of his fate.

And he stands looking at his nerveless hands  
with Gorgon's blood dyed and with monster's breath  
burned red. The middle course is his now, and  
stale glory rotting to inglorious death.

\* \* \* \*

So from this island now looks over sea  
the half-way man: and round the belly of the earth  
the battle rolls away: and only the evil word  
can interrupt at his unscorching hearth,

only the shaking dream, the clamorous threat  
of underlings, and the bull-dozing, wild  
equality: his brain must be kept clear  
of madness for the planning of the world.

### MISSING

The silver star that shone in the living eye  
is shattered under the frigid lid;  
and once the jagged gasp in the extended throat  
was the voice of a liling lad.

Now where the heart's veins sucked the purple blood  
and white nerves sang to the clear of day  
the crawling rats along the athletic curve  
obliterate the form of boy;

and swollen maggots coil in the convoluted  
silent corridors of the brain:  
until at last the dear considerate earth  
marries him to the brown.

And so the lad that in his lusty habit  
jollied with the pretty girls  
is broken by the shearing plough: and in  
his dissolute cell the seed unfurls.

## SIDNEY KEYES

### TWO VARIATIONS

(I)

The warm night curves around me like a hand:  
Thus after the intricacies of day  
The open windows and the stone-eyed bishop  
Books' eager faces and the necessity for love  
It brings me certainty in every breath.

Beyond what vision watches God's white face?  
What tombstone thought may hide his beating heart?  
And have I heard him speak yet? In the night  
Truth comes much easier, no more afraid  
Of the clock's questioning and the plaster skull.

There is no revelation, says the darkness:  
Only lie down in hope like children  
Waking to empty Sunday morning  
And the silly voices of pigeons in the tower.

(II)

It is not you I believe in but your silence.  
When rainclouds leaned across the smooth-tongued city  
And even the staircase smelt of summer  
I followed you that time but never found you.

When shadows hung about the streets  
And every pinnacle stood sharp at dusk  
I looked for you that time but never saw you.  
It is not you I worship but your wisdom.

Graven in moonlight every thought and moment  
Serene the folded eyes of pediments  
Your face was empty and acanthus-crowned.  
It is not you I fear but your great glory.

### THE UNCREATED IMAGES

The commerce of lithe limbs is fool's delight.

O hours and watches, O unending summer  
Within the lover's blood and cloudy blooms  
That nightly rise and break about his body—  
These are the currency of dreams and language,  
The uncreated images of truth.

Night's wink is momentary, and dividing  
The coloured shapes of passion which it spawned,  
Night strikes through membrane to the gristled socket  
And tumbles like a pebble through the skull.

There is no speech to tell the shape of love  
Nor any but the wounded eye to see it:  
Whether in memory, or listening to the talk  
Of rain among the gutters; or at dawn  
The sentry's feet striking the chilly yard,  
There is no synonym for love's great word—  
No way of comforting the limbs  
That have lain lovelocked at an earlier season,  
Nor any coin to close the tired eye  
That day chastises with its rods of light.  
The separate limbs perform a faithless task—  
The eye devours created images.

The commerce of lithe limbs is fool's delight,  
Cry limb and eyeball, waiting for the night.

## SEASCAPE

*For Renée*

Our country was a country drowned long since  
By shark-toothed currents drowned:  
And in that country walk the beautiful generations,  
The dancing generations with grey eyes,  
Whose touch would be like rain, the generations  
Who never thought to justify their beauty.  
There once the flowering cherry grasped the wall  
With childish fingers, once the gull swung crying

Across the morning or the evening mist:  
Once high heels rattled on the terrace  
Above the water's talk, and the wind lifted  
The hard leaves of the bay; the white sand drifted  
Under the worm-bored rampart, under the white eyelid.

Our country was a country washed with colour.  
Its light was good to us, sharp limning  
The lover's secret smile, the fine-drawn fingers:  
It drew long stripes between the pointed jaws



Of sea-bleached wreckage grinning through the wrack  
 And turned cornelian the flashing eyeball.  
 For here the tide sang like a riding hero  
 Across the rock-waste, and the early sun  
 Was shattered in the teeth of shuttered windows.

But now we are the gowned lamenters  
 Who stand among the junipers and ruins.  
 We are the lovers who defied the sea  
 Until the tide returning threw them up  
 A foreign corpse with blue-rimmed eyes, and limbs  
 Drawn limp and racked between the jiggling waves.

### ROME REMEMBER

The bright waves scour the wound of Carthage.  
 The shadows of gulls run spiderlike through Carthage.  
 The cohorts of the sand are wearing Carthage  
 Hollow and desolate as a turning wave.  
 But the bronze eagle has flown east from Rome.

Rome remember, remember the seafowl's sermon  
 That followed the beaked ships westward to their triumph.  
 O Rome, you city of soldiers, remember the singers  
 That cry with dead voices along the African shore.

Rome remember, the courts of learning are tiled  
 With figures from the East like running nooses.  
 The desolate bodies of boys in the blue glare  
 Of falling torches cannot stir your passion.  
 Remember Plato's soul, that old caged eagle.  
 Remember the soft funeral Etruscans.

O when the rain beats with a sound like bells  
 Upon your bronze-faced monuments, remember  
 This European fretful-fingered rain  
 Will turn to swords in the hand of Europe's anger.  
 Remember the Nordic snarl and the African sorrow.

The bronze wolf howls when the moon grows red.  
 The trolls are massing for their last assault.  
 Your dreams are full of claws and scaly faces—  
 And the Gothic arrow is pointed at your heart.

Rome remember your birth in Trojan chaos.  
 O think how savage will be your last lamenters:  
 How alien the lovers of your ghost.

## FRANCIS KING

### ON A CHILD'S HAND

The sky hangs thunderous over ribs of stone;  
These crippled houses stir beneath my feet  
And show their wounded sides and splintered bones  
As I explore the terrors of the street.

Now walk the city's cataracts and falls;  
Where once we sauntered over tranquil waves  
Your eyes shall see the skeletons of walls  
And whitened relics plundered from our graves.

But if, when you are summoned by a groan,  
A hand still bleeds beneath the casual sun,  
They do not blame the ravager alone:  
That hand accuses us, and everyone.

### ENDYMION AND THE MOON

*For P. H.*

Grey walls betray the poet and the lover  
As you converse above another's bed;  
My curses on the promised afternoon  
(Cool lawns, and fountains playing in my heart)  
That gave me laughter for the words I said.  
Still leaning on the wisdom of your smile  
I heard the march of history in the clock  
And saw the planets wheeling like the ghosts  
Of ravished women through a wounded head.

The fungus grows upon these angry lips  
And, where the blossom sang, the soldier's blood  
Has stained our pity with a murdered hand:  
I cannot tread the city of your touch.  
Yet find the attic where the mounted stair  
Gives access to the metaphors of death;  
Go, draw oblivion's curtain on the scene  
That Europe storms before a waiting crowd,  
And if you think of me, describe a sky  
Forever crumbled by the need for love.

Guns ring about the garden of the mind,  
 Steel hardens in the arteries, and death  
 Has shadowed circles round the patient's eyes:  
 Before the anxious rising of this star  
 Our myth is neither credible nor great.

## PATRICIA LEDWARD

### AIR RAID SHELTER

At last, after the watching,  
 After the long long straining,  
 Straining for the core of the sun,  
 After reflecting all eternity,  
 All the soft ripples of eternity at dusk,

At dusk, like the heavy pod on the vetch,  
 It may be that, with unimaginable pain,  
 We shall burst apart  
 And scattering ourselves in circling flares  
 Shall know what it is to live, to be re-born.

To be re-born and scattered in the air  
 We shall be wide and free to grow again,  
 Illimitable freedom, to be free, to be dead,  
 At last to sing softly with the night wind,  
 To sing at last in the very core of the sun.

### THE CORN RIPENS

The corn ripens, now the sun  
 Twists eager fingers round the grain.  
 The sap leaps up with love and soon  
 The seed will poise in polished splendour.

Here, in these uplands, where the chalk is dry  
 And valleys feel no more the slide of streams,  
 Where hills of dusty grass transfix the sky  
 And only larks and yellowhammers chip the silence.

This year the crops are thin, the soil is white  
 With drought, and poppies press the roots  
 Lift murderous flowers to emulate the wheat,  
 Spatter the promise of next year's bread with blood

They blow their deathly opium on the air,  
 Filling the morning with visions of other fields—  
 O even in this land of labouring hours  
 War rends the earth with poisoned steel.



## EMANUEL LITVINOFF

### WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN WORLD, IN WAR

What do you look for in world, in war,  
 Yes, what will your anger discover?  
 A boy is wild with grief and with joy,  
 Lust drives him on the guns for glory,  
 And plucking a poppy for his dream girl  
 He finds in his fingers a thistle.

This man is driven by a worm in his heart,  
 The ponderous throb of power aching and breaking  
 The limited artery will leave his bones bare:  
 No mastery nor monument.

What do you see? Over the dark ridge  
 Are many promises under one heaven.  
 One shall see all delight in the curve of a thigh;  
 His voluptuous fingertips are sensual instruments  
 Of death. Another, planting his life for seed,  
 Prays for tall corn at harvest.

Then there are bitter legions, resigned and grim,  
 Doomed to a hopeless dying or a grey return,  
 Who clamber recklessly over the world's wound  
 Ruined and obstinate as the defeated cities,  
 Stark and broken in death, pitiful in life.

And for those who see in war a sacrament,  
 No misery but mystery, the priestess in the widow,  
 Praise in the singing blood; and for those  
 Who are their priests raising a dark hand to God,  
 All waste, all sin, all sorrow.

Tomorrow is in our roots, there will be no leaf  
 Grown on the dead tree. Branches brittle  
 As delusions of a lost year splinter upon us.  
 Earth heaves and sobs this season of our sickness,  
 The hostile sky grafts blindness on our eyes.  
 We are of the desperate tree cling to our roots.

### PASSOVER

Brother, there is no change in pattern.  
 The story has its symbol, Lord, History is pattern.  
 Say: divide, division, exile and exile,  
 say: birth but betterment.

So even if you cease to building upon mind  
 See from the fortress how the fortress falls.  
 Still will the patient one speak to the beast, saying:  
 These must be fulfilled. How many times?  
 From man to manhood, that is all: then from good  
 to Godhood. This greater mystery shall you know.

Pierce no great veil, the weapon is your sword;  
 guard no great treasure, the guardian is death:  
 but to know throw away your arms  
 and to have, seek not to hold.

And I say, brother, no myth is greater than truth;  
 no truth, no myth, but mystery is bondage under  
 your mind's Pharaoh, and you are out from Egyptian prison house  
 must come before these myths are truths and mysteries  
 no more. So we share our symbols and our tales.  
 Break with me the bread of affliction, we consume  
 a time of trouble—the falling bombs no less—  
 but more striving in dark lands,  
 our grave, our Polish ghetto, our manacled hands  
 pounding prison walls, and I say we will consume  
 all these unleavened sufferings like the bread.

Now take with me the herbs, bitter for all these things,  
to show we savour not suffer affliction and to say  
in other times: these we have known and tasted,  
these were the pangs. And eating sweetness we shall say:  
even these were good and hope was in them.

So sip our wine, brother, wine for all joy,  
all laughter in a true time, and for blood  
more holy and more common than any German myth.  
O, brother! this generation will yet sing on the hillside  
after the wilderness has gone. But do not take the paschal lamb  
to slaughter for your lintels—you are the lamb.  
This body is the house your Father gave, so precious house  
of love and fertility and the open door.  
You will pour wine into the womb, wine for your joy and glory for Israel's holy seed.  
So eat this egg from its salt water and take this symbol  
for life and the salt of life.

Tonight the angel of death flies over the land. His shadow turns  
water in sweet wells to poison, the trees to gibbets,  
his dreadful wings cut off the first fruit of the womb.  
He will take his due, your sacrifice must be blood of your lamb.  
Look, brother! there is blood on my door.

## H. B. MALLALIEU

### EXCERPT FROM A PLAY

*Scene:* PART OF A BATTLEFRONT.

*Characters:* MARK, LEWIS and SOLDIERS of the defeated army.

*Lewis.* Mark, you've got through. I'm glad to see you.  
Where are you going?

*Mark.* Until just now, like all the lucky few,  
I had intended to make for the ship:  
But now I feel that I am wanted here.  
And you?

*Lewis.* I am going home. The unwelcome visitor  
Who hopes eventually to prove his worth  
And makes his host smile away his shame.  
I know this valley and its pencil paths,  
Drawn by an old hand across unyielding rocks.  
And here, perhaps, imagination has left a print or two

Of my unpatterned selves. When I knew these hills  
 History regarded me as a favourite child,  
 Free to explore a yet unpeopled valley,  
 And build my colonies regardless of its laws.  
 That child may still be waiting in the woods,  
 Pretending there's a secret in the wind,  
 Or that the hills are unawakened giants,  
 Whose sleep absorbs evil like a rag.

*Mark.* It is impossible ever to go back.  
 Once you took the wrong path from the valley,  
 Though even that you could not help:  
 And Time or History sends a different man  
 To the remembered place again.

*Lewis.* But there is someone else. The man  
 I dared not be. The dumb stranger  
 Who heard my stabbing words and cried  
 For speech to give him power to live.  
 The one who loved but did not utter love.  
 The shy boy hiding behind my smile,  
 Whose quick imagination died at the tongue.  
 Yes, the stranger is you, too. He is everyone.  
 The dreamer who walks upon the edge of waking,  
 Who cannot reconcile the look and word.  
 The abandoned whose pathetic glance  
 Breaks through the maudlin confidence of friends.  
 You have heard him in most intimate moments  
 Stutter for words and lapse into awkward silence.  
 What cowed him, made him finally afraid?  
 We could not think freely in his terms,  
 For our minds do not break easily from the mould  
 Of tangible circumstance and we are claimed  
 By that which we imagine to control,  
 Ourselves in action on Time's turning world.  
 The rest is residue from age to age,  
 The refuse art or poetry collects,  
 A song in the wind, a child's sight  
 Coloured by picture books of fairy queens.  
 All that I was lies buried in this war,  
 Except that dreamer who was passive then.

*Mark.* These are problems I do not understand,  
 Questions I do not pose. Good and Evil  
 Are but products of history as it moves.  
 Defeat has cast you from the struggle's orbit,  
 For me it is a stage to victory.

*Lewis.* I cannot help you further in that.  
 But I will offer you shelter  
 If you'd care to come.

*Mark.* Even your welcome is not assured.  
But I will come I promise you,  
Sometime later if I'm still alive.  
Meanwhile. . . .

*Lewis.* Wait. You said you were making for the ship,  
But changed your mind. Is there a chance  
That way? Would it be better to forget  
The past wherein my clinging roots  
Grow limp in the dry soil. It is Spring  
And blossom covers this valley as a song  
Covers the scene with one that memory draws  
Faint but persistent across our real sight.  
But it is Spring in half the world.

*Mark.* To go back would mean disappointment  
At best: at worst it would mean death.

*Lewis.* While we talk the minutes of our safety run.

*1st Soldier.* The ship. Let us make for the ship.

*Mark.* If there is still time. . . .

*(The ship's siren is heard.)*

*2nd Soldier.* She leaves. It is too late.

*3rd Soldier.* Come. There will be another.

*Lewis.* Heavily from the harbour she moves.  
Look how she is weighted down with sorrow,  
And so slowly. But there is hope beyond the harbour.  
The open sea is marvellously blue:  
Already the ship seems confident,  
She pushes beyond the lighthouse.  
The gulls scream happily behind her  
And smoke lingers towards the cliffs  
Left forever. The dust of a thousand lives  
Settling like memory on the chalky soil.  
Moving splendidly to a new life,  
Moving to safety through the crowded docks  
Towards the solitary sea.

*Mark.* At least a thousand will be saved.

*1st Soldier.* We talked too much. Our chance of freedom's gone.

*Mark.* They will obey the tide  
That sweeps us to the struggle once again.

*Lewis.* Yet I envy them. To cut adrift,  
Land on a new shore where no official  
Hands you a dossier on which your hopes,  
Like faded and blurred figures, stand  
Credited to the past. To cut from the past  
The roots that wind their anxious arms  
About the future, twisting and tainting it.



*2nd Soldier.* She's through the harbour gates.

*4th Soldier.* God speed her.

*5th Soldier.* She carried my wife away.

*6th Soldier.* Yes and mine, too,

*Mark.* The crowd on land is sullen.  
The gulls mock them.

(*Siren again.*)

*Lewis.* Lend me the glasses.

She turns outwards with confidence.  
All the vast sea promises her freedom.  
You can see the men on deck, their faces  
A blur of hope bright upon despair.  
The bandages of the wounded are dirty in the sun.  
There is one with crutches.

*3rd Soldier.* Look.

*Lewis.* It can't be true. These glasses lie.

*Mark.* There on the horizon almost  
A speck clouded in menacing smoke,  
Grey, low upon the sea, moving swiftly. . . .

*1st Soldier.* There to the north, another.

*Lewis.* They almost leap towards their prey.

*2nd Soldier.* She is going on.

*Mark.* It is impossible to return.

*3rd Soldier.* She must come back.

*4th Soldier.* Perhaps, the destroyers will let her through.

*Mark.* Our leaders are on board her,  
It would be valuable to have an accident,  
A mystery of the sea.

(*Noise of firing.*)

*1st Soldier.* It must be a warning.

*Lewis.* Now we are prisoners indeed. The sea  
Is barred, our ways have been imposed.

*2nd Soldier.* We must go. I cannot watch.

*5th Soldier.* I will wait to the end.

*6th Soldier.* The guns again.

*4th Soldier.* Unwieldy and derelict the ship looks.  
Hope has gone out of her. The sunlight  
Imprisons it in a mesh of death.

*Mark.* Our ways are drawn upon a hostile map.  
But once begun we are all surveyors,  
Charting our passage with a borrowed compass,  
Whose four restrictive laws abide.

*1st Soldier.* Listen. They are coming.

*Mark.* Lewis we must go. Where can I find you?  
For soon, I think, my path will cross with yours.

*Lewis.* I shall take the Perdita road;  
There is a cottage near our own estate.  
The old man is a friend. And Mark,  
Forget awhile. The hate may wear.  
I dare not watch this sea.

*Soldier.* The destroyers are close upon her.

*Lewis.* I'll see you then. (*Exit Lewis.*)

*Mark.* I'll see you then.  
For him, it's ended, so he thinks.  
You think so, too, most of you,  
Broken, defeated, utterly annulled.  
You think in terms of military deceit,  
Of wars fought with weapons,  
Meaningless. But the war is fought  
Finally in the mind of man.  
Even ourselves, this is not the end.  
Lewis leaves upon a hopeless journey,  
To reconstruct the debris of his past  
Into an edifice no architect could plan,  
To face again the love he dare not face,  
And she, perhaps, not caring. He walks  
Into a trap: and I'll be trapped with him.  
My story, too, meets his.

*Soldiers.* And what of us who do not play these parts,  
The unforgivable mass who fought and lost?

*Mark.* You are the hands of history,  
You are not deserted.

(*Renewed firing.*)

*Soldiers.* The ship. She heaves over.  
The sea is no longer proud of her.  
Smoke drips from the destroyers' guns.  
Hemmed on this continent  
To our houses of doom we are sent,  
Haunting our day like skeletons.



FRED & SENTA MARNAU

RED AND BLACK

*A Requiem for Helge*

Violoncello Solo

*Moderato*

The musical score is written for a single cello. It begins with a tempo marking of *Moderato*. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The piece is characterized by frequent triplet patterns and dynamic contrasts. The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *pp* (pianissimo) and *ff* (fortissimo). There are several crescendo and decrescendo markings. The score includes various articulations such as slurs, trills, and accents. The piece concludes with a final *mf* dynamic.

Is it uneasiness merely when we do not carry  
our dead to small rivers, not into gardens  
near our house? Wide elements only can hold the dead:  
narrow hearths would be like renunciation  
for them and for their boundless ways.  
Their farthest border shines for our consolation.  
See, how a tree dies:  
how the earth comes to woo, thousands of years  
overwinging heavily, becoming mountain and hill,  
and at last like the mother-beast dragging  
it deep down into her deep clay.  
How even the earth needs room for the dead.  
How she presses, prepares and asleep  
yet makes way for the newcomer. Toiling  
and giving no preference.  
Not to the growing, not to the going.

The trees wait for the earth to come.  
We are not waiting, to her urgently turning.  
You are heavy now, deep, know the unknown.  
And I am still lost in the meaning.  
My song becomes an aching, brooding symbol.  
The tree's defiance, the flower's soft scent  
are yours, not mine.

The word is old and crusty-edged;  
became the street refuse of time.  
Useless, rotting toadily in  
the mouth that has long been left  
by eye, ear, smell and heart.  
And images are only memories of knowledge  
and like words have tired of pen  
and tongue. How can I reach you now?  
The old knowledge, clear gesture came to me not  
as vision or meaning: only as ornament.

Angry ones we are, blasting ones,  
not to be conquered, terrible,  
the warning beat in the simple coat.  
Absent in worldly glitter of blueish ties,  
of five-bob happiness. What are flags to us?  
The lines of the hand alone still remain.  
But flags! All the flags! Ties they are,  
wound by the swarm, washed by the rain,  
bought at the grocer's. Absent we are:  
And yet we are strangely akin to the world's  
departing. O the stones and iron bars.

Circular paths we trod, you and I.  
Strange. Stars. Above all the others, far above.  
No more ranging us with the rest. No more  
going back to the past. Is not the grave closer to you,  
will you never return there? For these are not  
transitory: hair, forehead and chin, shoulder  
and core and hand, knee and ankle and  
the resting foot. These are marked, recognisable  
in the in-between-land where the dead live  
and many die before they die  
and where we, branded and curbed by the ache of the world,  
are sentries and sanctifiers.  
At base we are no different from each other,  
as my song is not mine or yours:  
we sing it both in our way: Thus it is ours.  
Is the grave not well known to you and even  
the bed of sobbing in the pent-up room?  
Do you remember the change: We were never prisoners:  
we were rats in the fear of the night,  
We were wolves without hunt or fight,  
roaring, condemning, and finally like  
strong wine: imperishable.  
And monks, silent in the waiting house.

Yours is the silence and I listen to you:  
who has been silent for long alone will succeed  
with a song, and a rosebush blossom to him  
full of light, loosened words.  
His will be colour and sound.  
To say again: Tree in spring.  
And show pictures: wind and birch.  
Call of morning, chattering dovecot.  
To stand in the noon and slowly, rounder,  
be sunflower and circle with the sun,  
turning the darkening face to its path,  
bowing low with the hour's advance.  
To dare with colour: red, green, yellow, blue,  
and their countless vassals.  
Take them from skies, take from the grass,  
take them from rain, take from the sea,  
take from the ferryman who waits this once more,  
take them from the last shepherd to call.  
Colour is everything. See how the men  
patiently wait for the crossing to bank and rest.  
Still as the sentry, the waves like a dream,  
and gently glides the ferry. The shepherd's hat,  
rhythmic and large in the shade of night.

The shepherd's hat: black cardinal.  
The land of mountains, rustling  
with rushing rivers. And now the landing:  
already in darkness, only the river is bright,  
and darker the ferryman walks, the shepherd.  
For it is darker under the plumbtrees  
and brighter are the white children's crosses,  
the children's hills beneath dark fruit.  
So different are here the peasants: not oppressing  
the children's death by the dense bodies  
of old dead or usual growing. For flowering is  
the children's death, not fruit.  
Children's cemetery, garden of plums.  
And you do not know, is it round fruit,  
is it eyes, is it plums?  
And you do not know, is it eyes?  
And you turn to the river.

And when you died, what is it, to die?  
Is dying different from wandering on?  
How does death come to be? Like coolness  
unhoped for before summer's rain, when first  
on the houses fall webs from above, fall like colours  
that are more yours now than mine:  
uncoloured colours, colours like questions.  
Fear growing out of the heart of a child,  
surprise that the easy lake changes,  
suddenly seizes the little sailboats,  
the children's toys, hoists them high, tosses  
and turns into sea that brings driftwood and dead.  
(But horror: also the boats are changed.  
By children carved with their box of toys.  
They know everything: windmills, warships, towers in storm.)

When the heart has finished singing the song  
of Denmark, the song of the Danube,  
storm song and storm-light. Till the pain  
of the vintners is past and the day of wrath.  
When the hour comes when all may idle,  
and no more work to be done. When even he gave up  
singing his song which his lips did not shape  
and in sorrowful wrath only raised his fist  
to strike: the deaf singer who needed  
no ear for his song which his lips  
did not shape. Music is music in that hour,  
word again word, red again red, and mourning  
is mourning, gladness gladness again, rock turns animal:

That much is certain: not before.  
 And you need no tongue for your song  
 and ears. And he who for always imprints you in earth  
 needs neither colours nor chisel. He changes everything  
 as he desires, as his pattern needs it.  
 Sometimes I think your hand also  
 is near and gently removes the stones or holds back  
 the thorns to open a path for me. Often I sense you  
 and walk, wondering, under your care.  
 But in the storms your wrath shouts to me  
 as though needing a tool.  
 What do you still know of our want,  
 the doubts of the poor and the orators deceits?  
 Do you know why there are no songs, no words?  
 Come, draw your sword! None given to you?

Should that be everything:  
 to raise the fist high over heart and head.  
 No day of wrath. Only lament.

*(Translated from the German by E. O. Sigler.)*



## NICHOLAS MOORE

### REQUIEM

Ah, raven, raven, smelling of decay,  
 Ah hawk, ah hawk, above the knotty ground,  
 Who hears the wailing wind of yesterday?  
 Who picks the linen of tomorrow's shroud?

The huskier the hero in his battle,  
 The colder and the older is the mound.  
 What has he done, O to deserve so little?  
 The hawks and ravens wheel: he raves aloud.

Yesterday and tomorrow are the same:  
 Lower him gently to the decent earth.  
 The battles and the women are a dream:  
 He goes amid the loud birds to his death.

## NORMAN NICHOLSON

### BEFORE I WAS BORN

Before I was born the sea was a waste of rocks;  
The grass was dry as raffia on the hills;  
Bramble and dogrose wired the woods and walls,  
With blossoms hard as coral on their stalks;  
Trees held their branches stiff as a reindeer's horn  
In the dead land, before I was born.

Empty hides, then, roared to the flat moon;  
Clay, fledged with feathers, flew in the sky;  
Bones, slated with scales, swam in the sea;  
The creatures knew no joy in sun or rain;  
There was no festival for the miraculous corn  
In the thankless land, before I was born.

Before I was born a clock ticked in the skull,  
Laughter was clatter of the cruel spring;  
There was no catechism of right or wrong,  
No hope of heaven and no fear of hell;  
There was no devil's halo in a crown of thorn  
In the undamned land, before I was born.

Before I was born the sky was as black as ink,  
The steeples spiked towards the hollow clouds,  
The frantic churchbells yelled their harsh tirades,  
The sun, if there were a sun, was a conjuring trick.  
Then was I no one, ears were blocked, eyes torn—  
But I am Nicodemus now I'm born.

## BARBARA NORMAN

Everywhere the torn carrion cities of earth  
the stillborn torment of iron loins  
downdriven to bitter roots,  
of nations that have learnt to  
crouch under a snarling sky and wake  
to the dull roses of a ravaged dawn—



A wall hangs like a wounded wing—

As though conscious of pain, factories  
project forgotten girders  
in long iron agony;  
iron guts dragged  
through the rigid ribs of time.

A wall hangs like a wounded wing—

The city humps in an insane silence,  
close-fisted, clutching the children of ashes  
to its crushed breast, like secrets—

Not even the ruins groan;  
only a pickaxe scratches the silence,  
pecking a brick carcass clean to the bone;

but a wall hangs like a wounded wing;  
and there are birds whose wings  
will never lift again to gather their young in.

### SONG OF THE MARY WHO DID NOT TURN BACK

Was it the Mastery of Man I sought?  
Was it the Mystery? Now it is past me.  
It is lost. And yet I seek it. . . .

Lord, I am weary, O Lord, weary,  
dead from the ravening of many men;  
from seventy times seven of my sins,  
how shall I come back again,  
bound as I am with the burden of my limbs?  
I am Mary! Lord, Lord, I am Mary!

For the redeeming of my kind,  
I have taken this onus on me,  
and an oath that I do seek  
till I do find . . .  
O God! O Galahead!  
Bodies like sweet bread —

But there is never a man's hair,  
massed, black-breathing or fire-fair,  
there are never a man's hands, white  
and incurious, as Man, thy hand would be;  
touch of it would be scarcely—it would—O it would not be!

My heart might fail for loss of it;  
but I shall keep the sweetness,  
the belief, the grief,  
the shining cross of it—  
of the Soul in the Substance  
as Quest of it; uncovering love of it,  
seeking—O seeking some sign of it. . . .

## FOR THE CHILDREN OF EVE

### THE WORD

Man—I have had a dream!  
a message of the freeing of you;  
such in the searching have I seen!  
O I have died of God's eyes!  
Of the seeing of you  
I have been with beauty  
That is too bright and too blinding;  
and of the finding—I am blind,  
and they are dumb to tell it, dumb.  
Out of the dark throat of the night  
they cry, but no words come—

### THE DREAM

At midnight by the gleaming ivy,  
I wandered in the dream of them;  
they moved in love that only They  
and Theirs may share—

Cold is the dark garden where they live;  
and on the cold white air,  
the black dank leaves  
lie heavier than thunder on an eyelid.  
Bitter the holly is there, black the ivy-leaf;  
broken the wreathing laurel and the myrtle-grief;  
there is no olive on the olive tree—  
but at the throat, the dark green Agony. . . .

### THE WAKENING

And when they leave the deep lips of the Dream,  
to walk into the waking wilderness,  
they come with cold, sad eyes,  
and long strange fingers  
that touch not for tenderness,  
and masks of painted mockeries  
to shield them from the unkind daylight that is ours.

They come like fading flowers . . .  
how fast they fail;  
pale they are,  
pale from the Vale of Tears;  
poor banished children of Eve,  
conceived in the Shadow of the Valley,  
whom unweeping, ever grieving, even  
to the grave go veiled. . . .

#### THE INVOCATION

Would then a woman stoop and loose her hair  
about the broken feet that are so tired,  
with mute, incurious touch heal them of pain;  
kneeling, heal them with golden oil  
the dense and the driven?  
Clement and loving—O Mary!  
No — Not the Virgin of virgins,  
the Holy, the Queen hailed-of-heaven,  
but the over-and-again forgiven of her sins,  
Magdaleine.



## ROBERT PAYNE

#### THE PERSIAN BOY

O we shall never end this war until  
The Persian boy is given back to us.  
Fair as gazelles he rode along the hill  
Under the archway of Tiberius,  
Impatient of summer flood or winter Nile.  
Like Alexander young again, he rode  
Into the heaving shadow of the peristyle.  
No sooner had the arrow sped, a sword  
Dipped in the blood of kings above his head  
Quivered in sunlight. You who are afraid  
Take heed of innocence, for this boy's wounds  
Have lips to utter celestial sounds.

A SONG FOR YAO AND SHEN

I speak of Yao and Shen,  
The difficult old wanderers,  
Kings of an age when men  
Stumbled over iron rocks,  
And the waters grew to a height  
Higher than mountain or hill,  
And the winds that grew each night  
Were pierced by the heron's quill.

These difficult days are lost.  
Innocence breaks on the wheel  
Of fire, and the threefold ghost  
Cries for the heron still.  
Heron and hound have gone  
Deep in the earth of men.  
Now dragon-seeds are sown:  
Earth will not grow again.

The gods will return at night.  
Invisible bright spears  
Will shield us from their sight;  
And we who make the wars  
Will cry with the icy wind  
The herons of the years.  
No lover, thief or friend  
Can shield us from the stars.

THE CHINESE SOLDIER SPEAKS OF DEATH

The grain is ripening in the seed:  
We who have seen the cities fall  
Take from our harvest all we need  
And leave on earth no death at all.  
When all the birds are singing wild  
And death lies caged within their tread,  
To die is greenness for the child  
And comfort for the lonely head.

Lest others climb the bitter tree  
I drove my knife within the soil:  
Killing the world's dark enemy,  
I ended all this human toil.  
In shielding light or summer storm  
The waving branches of the dead proclaim  
Historic images reform  
Into the style and semblance of my name.

This country nourished me and fed  
 Upon my wealth of blood and shame:  
 May others carve around my head  
 Heraldic emblems of my fame.  
 I was once proud to choose my fate;  
 The green earth takes me to its side.  
 The yellow wheat grows soon or late!  
 The yellow clay must be my pride.

—Changsha, January 1942.

## FRANCIS SCARFE

### THE PEARL OF LIFE

Flesh, wherein meet the sea, the sky, the earth,  
 Consumer and producer, master and slave,  
 I bend to you, as the fisher to the wave,  
 To know myself, to feel the weight of my birth.

For you, my still young limbs, have been my friends  
 From the hour of conception; you have borne  
 The weight of all the good and evil I have done,  
 And you will share my sorrows to the end.

As to the rock, Prometheus, I am bound  
 To you, my substance, and the struggling mind  
 Spirit and soul, man, god, are all confined  
 Within your shell the tiniest sting can wound.

So well I know you: the wise, cautious hands  
 Eager for touch of woman, water, glass;  
 The eyes, through which all other men must pass;  
 The faithless sex, as restless as quicksands.

And yet I know that you are less than me.  
 For all my ecstasy and sorrow proves  
 There is a vast, diviner Self that loves,  
 The self that moves to truth and poetry.

Now, in the kitchen garden, where the weeds  
 Are thriving, I consider living things.  
 I see the structure of the beetle's wings  
 Is not its will to flight, and it is not the bird that sings,

And not the sap which is the urge to live,  
And not the soil which scents the evening rose.  
From the same soil, lily or lettuce grows.  
Sun, fondling one plant, is another's grief.

So, when I look upon society  
I know it has not made me what I am.  
For no man can foresee how far the flame  
Of personality is trimmable; no city

Was yet so small that it could mould a man  
Into its shape, for each man is a world  
Within himself, is a seed whorled  
Infolded furled, a pattern which none can

Hope to unravel, and which none can make  
Though great his desire. For in the beginning  
Was the gift, and all that is worth winning  
Is the true self a mighty tree, an angel in God's wake.

In the beginning was the Self, which we call God.  
The petal's perfume and the skylark's call  
And every star and child, the smallest of the small  
Is self, each one a crystal face of good.

How shall I learn myself? Each day I learn,  
When in a friend I see myself denied,  
Each attribute is but another side  
Of the great crystal; and as the cold will burn

Far below zero, or as time is fast or slow  
According to each mind and circumstance  
And clocks measure in vain, each difference  
Proves me the same, but self in that I know

Sameness is only on a cosmic scale  
Written in millions. For though different words  
Make languages, for serfs and overlords  
And blacks and whites, objects they mean are real.

Through simple things the poet learns himself  
As children do, and learns what is divine  
From flesh and blood, from stones and bread, from wine,  
And such long learning is his greatest wealth.

God, till my thirtieth year I walked alone  
Away from you, along the bitter road  
Of lust and falsehood, proud that I was proud  
And thinking love was bone's reply to bone.

In the thick night I grappled with my strong  
And lovely foe, whose smell was heaven to me,  
Whose taste was magic, whose voice was poetry,  
Till the pain was heaven, and love like a great gong

Sang from my heart to the frontiers of the land  
Ruled by my senses, and in sensual joy I drowned  
Again and again, as a diver who has found  
The Pearl of Life, and dies with it in his hand.

And what was right and wrong, my naked dream  
In ending taught me; that those frontiers spread not far,  
That the blood's ecstasy is the spirit's war,  
For he is dead, who has not You in him.

O body, crystal vase, O fragile rose  
Seeking the sunlight, gentle on the air  
As a child's breathing, more bright and fair  
Than all the stars of heaven, for your creator knows

Your share of life is greater than the sun's;  
You who like fire are radiant with the love  
That none can take but is all yours to give,  
Who are not halved, but doubled, in your sons,

Warm alabaster palace of the mind  
Whose soul throbs through you with eternal tides  
That never shall be stilled, who have not died  
Through centuries, but have myriads of your kind,

May each man know himself, that he may be  
Alive in you, that he may give his best  
With heart to heart and breast on double breast  
And by his faith defy mortality.

For the true self, which I save from the wreck  
Of wasted days and ways, is vaster still  
Than boundless empires of the human will,  
And is your earthly shade, O Light I seek.

ODE TO CHRIST

Who stood beside my bed in the hours of childhood  
When darkness spread, who guided me past corners  
Where lurked my fear, preserved from beetles and spiders  
And the round surging of the deep sea waters

So simple help in trouble when my mother's weeping  
Struck at me through the wall, and my father's death  
Across the seas came home to me in my play;  
O you who solaced me far from home and mother

As I lay awake in the horror of the prison  
Of orphaned children, O you I sought in the woods  
Who answered me from trees with the voice of the cuckoo  
And whom in the swallow's nest I understood

O you I marvelled at in the grace of the silver birch  
And willows drinking sunlight from the waters,  
You whom I met in minnows and little fishes  
Full of boys' magic, but more in singing flights of birds,

To whom I came home as a boy with a bible in my heart  
And to whom I talked by night and by day starved,  
Who dried my tears and put the bell's tongue in my laughter  
And showed me the seven wonders of the world:

Great alien drifting star  
Exquisite silent jar  
Of cool red wine waiting the willing drinker  
And who through centuries pour to the roots of my being

Now that the weight of my life lies heavily upon me  
As the earth to the sun I turn to the friend of my childhood,  
So vastly changed by the uphill of the journey  
How shall I know you again, if I should find?

For I stand here in the middle of way  
And now look back to you, look forward to you,  
And cannot go back, and yet cannot go on  
Unless I shall find you there at the end of the lonely day,

Knowing no man or woman I have met, no book, no creed,  
No science and no truth, no poignant beauty  
Of paint, marble or word, no happiness of flesh  
Or mind, can ever replace your friendship.



O luckless bastard, scorned immortal one,  
You the great spat upon, great unbeliever  
Of creeds as ancient as the rocks you preached upon,  
But who believed in yourself as in your god,

Who did so manly all that is beyond  
A man's true instincts, loved beyond the flesh  
To the invisible desires and the eternal spasm  
Of recurring creation, to what was never begun and shall never end

Great friendless one, great vat of solitude,  
Strong solitary flaming whorl of relentless purpose  
Like an oak knot who grew against the flow of a dying culture,  
Flaw in the beaten chains of institutions and formulas,

O unknown quantity suddenly shed from the womb  
Into the dung of life, O you the motherless  
And whose father was in heaven, you who walked alone  
Towards the crown of thorns and for whom innocents died,

Lighthouse of suffering, who cleansed the scabs of sin,  
Toucher of sores, soother of lepers, cooler of brows,  
Spoiler of children, impossibly delicate one,  
Kisser of flowers and gentler singer than birds,

Whose wisdom purls like a tide through the sea of time,  
Symbol of all our ideals and desires  
And whose Cross shall burn once more above Europe's fires  
And whose voice shall rise beyond this hideous crime,

Inerrably good one, strict and kind and sound,  
Pure as the hands of children breaking bread,  
Beautiful as the eyes of a virgin waking to love  
And strong as the power of the male in his blood's pride,

O you whose life was the highest point of art  
And who in death showed how a god can die,  
Whose message throbs through unbelieving hearts  
Because your life and death had perfect symmetry,

O sad and terrible Christ from whom in shame we stray,  
Teach me your sadness, leaven my joy with the bitterness of your tears,  
That I may come to know you and draw near  
To your vast tragic pattern, and learn to pray;

O multiple, teach me the bounds of my nothingness  
That I might find myself in the void of these desolate days,  
For I am lost in a warring universe  
Where hate is master, and only death has praise

If it be not too late, great friend, you who gave all, forgive  
This dark eclipse of souls, this starless night of hate;  
Teach me to die, that I might learn to live;  
Teach me to live, that I might never die.

## TERENCE TILLER

### THE ACID OF THE HEART

The acid of the heart bleaches my morning.  
The cleverness of lust grows commonplace.  
Thought is intangible and has no meaning.  
One who came gently with a winter's grace  
into the flame of passionate concealing  
turns with remoteness to a shrouded face,  
the body a bandage over feeling:  
the limb torn off, its agony remaining.  
All endures, the waiting the defiling.  
Thought is intangible and has no meaning.

Now all our minutes dream of aftermaths,  
and the returning dust becomes a symbol.  
We lie alone dying incessant deaths  
but it is not for dying that we tremble:  
here at a touch the lemon-painted flax  
the jewelled mummy of our years may crumble;  
Marvell's chariot thunders at our backs;  
time passes time, the dream seductions pass,  
into this wind of blood this wandering sex.  
The cleverness of lust grows commonplace.

I the endurer am the mocker of me.  
One who was music is a silent house;  
under the hammers of this iron sea  
the light arms of love turn tremulous  
and there is no assurance between kisses.

Oh it is all uncertainty of choice  
 as the achievement or the humour passes  
 —thought being intangible, having no meaning  
 —as after dreams of horrors or embraces  
 the acid of the heart bleaches my morning.

‘ . . . ON ONE SIDE LAY THE OCEAN . . . ’

*Standing between the city and imagination  
 I hear the gravel of hurt faces whisper:*  
 We are the huge electrons of your passion;  
 oh leave the mad canaries and the lilywhite boys  
 for into the current there has crept disease;  
 we are of radium, we are decaying stuff,  
 thought is bent as a brook will sharpen angles:  
 the little mole is dying of diseased love.

See how the swarming harridan ferments in marshes  
 of soft thighs, and the insistent sewer unfolds  
 an aphrodisiac spindle; how the blushes  
 of newborn lust anger the impending limb.  
 There is no line or diver in the stream  
 whose wild dolphins will not pause to save  
 the gentle bridegroom cowering from the indignity,  
 and the brutality, of achieved love.

The unachieved is harder, though; when each confesses  
 into a darkness, into a serpent air.  
 Society is all its loneliness;  
 But you, or we, are haunted by the curing flesh  
 the poison body a despairing wish  
 for the broad arrow of kisses, for the knife  
 and prison of sexed hands. Have we an hour  
 not crying for the fulness of this confident love?

Thunder's upon the wasteful brotherhood of men,  
 clouding your darling photographs, your creased  
 unhappy letters: though you turn again  
 to that imprisoned happiness, the comfort of  
 her who for yesterday and unresolved love  
 gave symbols meaning—the scorpion and the mask  
 —thunder's upon the beauty and the pleasure of that slim  
 nostalgic watcher by the obelisk.

The little mole is dying. For the maniac song  
 curls in these gutters like a guilty blood;  
 and all the streets you answer and their echoes ring  
 with crooked nickel bells, a creeping wilderness  
 of commerce and of crushed unmeaning faces.  
 And the worse desolation of ourselves, our lives  
 between two substances: bringing you need  
 for the long chords of your concurrent loves.

Tomorrows are all earth; but yesterdays return  
 unchanging now the bitten earthworm or  
 the creature with hurt hands: something is born  
 and everlasting in your lovers'-transience.

*Be still: I know the sweetness and violence,  
 the bitterness and splendour of your twisted motion;  
 I hear the patient gravel of a twofold love  
 between the city and imagination.*

## VERNON WATKINS

### SONNETS OF RESURRECTION

*(In memory of David Lewis)*

#### PAPYRUS

I with papyrus fingers, bathed in myrrh,  
 Under the sad, laid stones where children play,  
 Taught by the syllable, for love of her,  
 Doomed to a spiral crypt, illumine day  
 Under twelve winds, four seasons, and five seas,  
 I throw on darkness death's eternal forms,  
 The elaborate sycamore, casting strange keys,  
 And twisted mulberry, which hides silkworms.  
 Their wind-born utterances I weave around  
 This sacred letter of a word untold  
 In all the winds' wild music, till the drowned  
 Draggd the moon down, and saw their lives unfold.  
 Then their souls cry, and in the tomb of sound  
 Glitters the waters' book, whose thread I hold.

## TEARS WEAR TIME DOWN

Tears wear time down, the heart beats out its urn.  
 Known lands' last grains unseal prodigious doors.  
 Sand grabs the light and folds the flying shores  
 Where a wave rides, but tells no tide's return.  
 O navel of night and sea, heart of the shell  
 Where the skies' moonlight, raving in still walls,  
 Moves like a rainbow back through numberless falls  
 Sucked from the beach to each domed wave's blind bell:  
 You tell me that no ghost is truly laid  
 But spinning on a dolphin's eye will turn,  
 Turn, turn, till all things are re-made.  
 What should we know, cast in the span we made,  
 Being of small dust gigantically born,  
 But that the earth lies broken on the spade.

## DRIFTWOOD

Why do men cling to driftwood? Christ, if resurrection be,  
 The least last grain in the hour-glass holding the twin skies  
 Bids fair to plunder light. Then the flood comes. Blood dies.  
*Blood dies.* That echo seething back, blind mast, mad, sightless tree,  
 Rocks, and Fate's whistling, shattering breakers hit the shuddering scree  
 For sorrow, for silence of him. Whose hurt is there, then? Will fast eyes  
 Break to the knock of sunlight? Will May come? O, how shall mankind rise,  
 He fallen? Mankind being one, how can he wake, till the last footprint walk upon the sea?  
 O strong, great hand, fold, fold, the waters. Ear, catch back, faint, sea-shell secret, voice and  
 thread.  
 Trust the fourth Fate of wood. Transfigured by the deafening spray,  
 The pagan creeds fly back, staining white stones, and overhead  
 Wheel the dark birds of Fate, while rainbow dolphins play.  
 Through paths of sea and air, all oracles, vultures for their dead,  
 Forebode black message, but lack that word his stillness spangled—O hear it—dares to say.

## FOUNTAINS

Fountains avenge, springs of eternal Winter,  
 Dust's worlds with worlds of sound. How fresh they are  
 Whose fingers are about the urn of care:  
 I see their arms circling the giant water.  
 Fallen lives flow gently to the listening ear  
 Hearing forever the mute, lovely pipe  
 Where judgment, lost in the miraculous drop,  
 Flies to the metaphor we cannot hear.  
 Then, in marled dust, in foul and ghastly mould,  
 The white roots of that vision veiled in ground  
 Of violet light, caught in the blind webs wound  
 By horrid spiders, chain the pulse I hold.  
 Then catch I dead leaves Winter has struck cold,  
 Voice of their vision, finger of their sound.

## GEORGE WOODCOCK

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### SONG FROM THE NORTH

Beyond the islands where my knees are set  
In solitary snow, in rock and ice,  
Lay out your South in sands of wine and heat,  
In hills of drowsy hands and sad olive trees.

Surrender so all ripeness of your fruit,  
Pomegranate coloured warmth, down youth on peach,  
Purple of pulp, the intricate flowering sweet  
Soft fig pouting to the greedy reach.

Be in mind's Avignon the dropping night,  
Winter where swallows live immune from frost  
And where Memnonic artifices shout  
The inarticulate blood within your breast.

So from your heart let the slow stems of ease  
Bind round my solitude a briar of peace.

### SPOKEN IN LOVE

Spoken in love, no new vernacular  
Rises this season from the heart  
Through the breaking images, the secular  
Figures of toil and sport.

Love in this season, as unicorn fabulous  
Feeds in countries far away.  
Under the passionate face and the sedulous  
Manner the heart is clay.

So in this spring when canker autumnal  
Lies as seed in the breaking bud  
Deeds are sterile and ice perpetual  
Sets pain in the slow blood.



## DAVID WRIGHT

### ILLUSIONS PERDUES

Doubtless that god of sea whose bony arms  
shrink salamander or expand  
in iron fluke of rolling whale, declares  
transgression of the water and the land,  
who firedrake or the fork-root crying weed  
returns to Proteus, Proteus god of sea,  
in the huge lock of question and demand  
purveying to this open palm, that stone.

### FOR GEORG RAPP

Who under green and yellow leaf of willow  
follows fool swallow lacing with sharp wing  
cupped river, slipping leapwing into hollow  
and arch sky from the water and the shade.  
For this cool water and the stranded oar  
recalls no coming calm unclouded day  
or mellow sky above a girdled shore:  
only fool poet for a one day's sun  
believes a summer and the laughing water.



# SYNTAX AND IMAGERY IN POETRY

by G. S. FRASER

A great deal of nonsense is being written just now about the difference between 'romantic' and 'classic' poetry. Mr. Herbert Read, for instance, in his preface to the volume, *Surrealism*, suggests that poetry is primarily an outlet for spontaneous impulse, and that classical form (a term, for him, including verse which rhymes or scans) falsifies poetry. Mr. Read also believes that literature is a political manifestation; that romantic literature is progressive, or democratic, or revolutionary, and that classical literature is reactionary.

It will be noted that Mr. Read's ideas are those of a man not primarily interested in literature for its own sake. He seems more interested in thwarted human impulses and revolutionary politics. Now, my interest in literature is a technical one; I admire and enjoy certain literary effects, and am interested to see how they are brought about. I find that it is possible to discuss this question quite adequately without continual reference to Freud or Marx. Literature can be studied as a specialised manifestation of language, in term of syntax and imagery; it is, in fact, unnecessary to use these tendentious words, romantic and classical, at all.

These words had originally a concrete reference to certain easily recognisable types of art. Classical art was art which recalled the art of Greece or Rome, and romantic art was art which recalled the medieval world. There is, obviously, a good deal of art which recalls neither. By philosophic critics, however, the words have been racked till they can be applied, by a simple dichotomy, to any kind of art at all. Hulme, the most intelligent man to be guilty of this distortion, identified the classical in art with a sense of limitation, and the romantic with a desire to break boundaries; clear and defined form, he said, was the character of classical art and a vague, uneasy, expansive excitement the character of romantic art. The romantic artist always expected more

from a given situation than it could actually give; he sought in the finite world the solace of the infinite. The romantic artist would be a progressive, a believer in on and on and on and up and up and up. The classic artist on the other hand would believe that fundamental change in human society is rare, and only brought about by drastic means. He would probably be a reactionary, defending the world he was used to; he might be a heroic classic-warrior.

The fact that these ideas are clear is not, in spite of Descartes, evidence that they are accurate; it will be noted also that they are simply the ideas which Mr. Read has turned inside out, and that they condemn a believer in progress (like myself) to a lifelong devotion to romantic literature. They may apply quite well, for all I know, to painting. There, it is quite easy to see what one means by clear and defined form or vagueness; the hard bounding line of Blake is classical and the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt is romantic. But in literature, what is vague, what is clear, what is formally elegant, and what is shapeless? It depends too much on the age and education of the reader. An old gentleman, bred on Tennyson, will find nothing but barbarous dissonance and disconnected imagery in a poem of Mr. Eliot's, *Prufrock*, for instance, which this generation admires for its formal elegance and its witty commentary on a certain (already vanishing) kind of social life. Tennyson himself, when his poems first appeared, annoyed Coleridge, who thought the most skilful of English versifiers should learn to scan. The constant development of language, and of our sensibility to language, make any absolute definition of the classical and the romantic poetry impossible. What was romantic to our fathers may be classical to us. A painting is clear or vague absolutely; but the clearness or vagueness of a poem varies indefinitely with the information and sympathy of its readers.



Criticism of language must, if it is to say anything definite and generally useful at all, use the categories of language; as I have said, the two categories to which I wish to call the reader's attention are imagery and syntax. It is my belief that the poetry which has, in the last twenty years or so, been praised for wit, unified sensibility, classical qualities, and so on—the poetry, say, of which Mr. Eliot approves—is poetry memorable for its syntactical qualities; and that the romantic, or imagist, or surrealist poetry which Mr. Read praises is poetry with a rather loose syntax, but with vivid images. These two uses of language depend, of course, not on one's political views, but on one's attitude to language itself. Roughly, to the classical poet language is a system of signs, with which it is possible to refer to complicated situations in a neat, concise, and moving fashion; whereas for the romantic language is a set of words which have an equivalent value, each separate word, to certain emotions and images.

Like everybody else, I owe a great deal to Dr. Richards and his books, especially his book on *Practical Criticism*. Nevertheless, Dr. Richards has a certain bias, in favour of syntax and against vivid images for their own sake. The effect of his choice of poems in *Practical Criticism* was to suggest that a good short poem has a difficult syntax; this difficult syntax arises from the attempt to express a fairly complicated set of feeling in relation to a given *real* (that is to say, waking) situation. Poetry, in fact, for Dr. Richards, was a mode of grappling with and defining complicated emotional situations. Any mark of observation, of common sense, of wide-awakeness in the poet was to be commended; and the reader, also, was to be taught to shy from any dreamy maundering, anything too vaguely literary, too obviously and conventionally 'poetic.' Dr. Richards' stars, on the whole, were Donne, Hopkins, and Hardy; all great poets, but all tough. Of what may one call the tender-minded poet, he chose (except for Christina Rossetti) uniformly second-rate samples. I do not wish to disparage Dr. Richards' taste; but

I do wish to point out that, from Spenser to Tennyson, there are many agreeable poems, of loose, fluent syntax and brilliant imagery, which lead us into an imaginary world, and do not grapple with or define anything. And such poems are written even now.

Surrealism, for instance, is often more striking in its practice than plausible in its theory; and Surrealism starts practically from the postulate that poetry should be unreal, dream-like, fluent, and of immediate impact. The Surrealists tend to string surprising images together, one after the other, with slick contrasts, like montage in the movies. Their type of syntax is agglutinative, and . . . and . . . and, with the 'and' missed out most probably. The poets whom Dr. Richards admires tend, rather, to use *just* imagery (which may or may not be surprising according to how observant one is oneself): the shock of their poetry comes from the tight syntactical structure, which links together into a unity a surprisingly wide range of thoughts and feelings. Surrealism, on the other hand, takes a single emotion or idea as a starting point, and works out all its subconscious associations, till the tired hand, in sheer embarrassment, stops tapping the typewriter.

An illustration would be in order. Consider an acknowledged triumph of wit, of unified response, of syntax: Marvell's *Coy Mistress*.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's wingéd chariot hurrying near  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.

When Marvell wrote 'Time' at the beginning of the second line he knew he was going to write 'eternity' at the end of the fourth; with no cheap couplet snap, the words balance each other. Notice that the most *real* image, in the surrealist sense, is in the first line;

But at my back I always hear . . .

That calls up a real physical equivalent, a slight frisson. But the other two images, the chariot and the deserts, are illustrative, like end-cuts of a chapter; they are emblems,

like Quarles'. It is an interference to see either the chariot or the deserts as real things, except as one would see a plate in a book. Time is motion, behind us; eternity is stillness, before us. The ideas are more important than the images. Notice the peculiar effect, too, of 'deserts of vast eternity.' Almost any poet intent, first of all, on vivid images, would have written 'vast deserts.' Marvell, however, is not keen on calling up the banal Sahara but on making his statement about eternity. For his special purpose, the seduction of a young woman, he translates the idea of timeless ecstasy (eternity is a *nunc-stans*, say the philosophers) into the idea of endless time upon one's hands, with no urgency, interest, or occupation; and then, by a metaphor, he translates this idea into the even more boring and dreary image of endless featureless space. If he said 'vast deserts of eternity,' 'vast' might not be applied in the metaphor. (Compare, 'My love is like a red, red rose': if one really wished to imply a florid complexion, one would have to write: 'My red, red love is like a rose.')

There has been, perhaps, too much attention paid in recent criticism to the metaphysical poets and their peculiar type of syntactical accomplishment. There are earlier poets, Spenser, Raleigh, who have a different appeal, the appeal of brilliant imagery and fluent syntax. . . . An interesting example of a poem (affected by the Spenserian tradition) which in its fluent, dreamy diffuseness is almost surrealist survives in Raleigh's *21st and Last Book of the Ocean to Cynthia*. Even the title would please the surrealists, especially as there is no evidence that the other twenty books ever existed.

Surrealist poetry is more interesting than merely imagist poetry (than Mr. Pound's, for instance) because the poets have more than a merely aesthetic interest, they yield themselves up to personal obsessions. (Fluent, loose syntax makes this possible; tight, careful syntax, like that of this essay for instance, keeps you wide awake and, at least, anxious to appear sane.) Raleigh, too, had his obsession; a friend of Marlowe's, a

member of the School of Night, and a scoffer and sceptic in religion—'Raw is the reason that doth *lie* within an atheist's head.' says a contemporary lampoon—he nevertheless came to believe devoutly in the most startling of secular myths; in the immortal youth and beauty of Queen Elizabeth, the remote desirable virgin, inspiring generation after generation of lovers with chaste and hopeless flames. There was this much of truth in it, that Elizabeth liked very young men about her, and that as Raleigh grew older he grew out of favour:

I have served her all my youth,  
But now old, as you see:  
Love likes not the falling fruit  
From the withered tree.

This beautiful image is repeated in *Cynthia*.

From fruitful trees I gather withered leaves. . . . Here, it will be noticed, the difference, in syntax, in reference, in metaphor, does not affect the power of the image. The emotion is in the words, the images—the idea of a tree with withered leaves and heavy fruit, the vague autumnal contradiction of ripeness and decay—and not in the application of the images. Whereas, with Marvell's chariot and deserts, it is the reference, the metaphor, the neat application to the world outside the poem, which make the effect.

*Cynthia* is not like Raleigh, as *The Coy Mistress* is like Marvell. There is nothing in it of the 'bold-faced,' arrogant, self-possessed courtier who wrote *The Lie*. It is a sleepy, dreamy, dissolving poem (Raleigh's Devonshire dialect, in the original oddly-spelt manuscript, gives it a delicious burr). The waking personality disappears. It is a poem of agonising repetitions and recurrences, reaching down, as Tennyson does sometimes, to plangent depths of primitive melancholy.

To seek for moisture in the Arabian sand  
Is but a loss of labour and of rest;  
The links which time did break of hearty  
bands.

Words cannot knit or wailings make anew.  
Seek not the sun in clouds when it is set . . .  
On highest mountains, where those cedars  
grew,  
Against whose banks the troubled ocean  
beat,

And were the marks to find they hoped port,  
Into a soil far off themselves remove.  
*On Sestus shore, Leander's late resort,*  
*Hero hath left no lamp to guide her love.*

One vivid and arbitrary image falls, with the inevitability of a dream, upon another; the Arabian sand, the broken chain, the clouds behind which the sun has set. Then we get what purports to be a sentence, but what is not; is it the banks or the cedars or the mountains which were the marks and which remove themselves? Grammar cannot tell us; only the word 'soil' suggests the cedars removing themselves, image and not syntax keeping us right. This dreamy, undefining motion of language (presenting vivid objects, but not making their relations clear) is typical of the whole poem. Just as one is getting hopelessly weary and bewildered, however, what has gone before is suddenly illuminated by some clear, concise image, some tightly syntactical lines, like the elegiac couplet I have italicised.

The whole poem would repay very detailed analysis on these lines; it is one of the most beautiful and moving of dreamy poems in the language. It contains lines which present an adequate equivalent for physical beauty.

The incarnate, snow-driven white, and delicate azure. The most interesting thing about such an analysis, however, would be that it would prove the fallacy of hard-and-fast opposition of romantic and classic, vague and definite, or even of imagery and syntax in poetry. Raleigh gets his effects not only by the weight of feeling in his separate words, but by a special kind of syntax, also; for to use a very loose syntax, which will give every separate image its slow weight, is just as much an art, even if an unconscious one, as to tighten syntax till every word, every image exists only as part of a complex

system of reference. Also, to point Raleigh's romantic effect, to avoid tedious bewilderment with his vague meander of feeling, some occasional passages of very tight syntax are necessary.

Every successful poem, probably, can be analysed as a relation between vivid ob-  
sessional images and the structure of language. Some poets will tend to get their effects more by a grip on the structure of language, by using language as a system of signs, by referring neatly or movingly to some state of affairs *outside* the poem; others will tend to use the poem to call up the same flux of images which obsesses themselves and by loosening or simplifying the structure of language, to make an easy pathway for their images. For these, language will not be so much a system of signs as a set of equivalents; as they write, the word becomes magically efficacious, becomes the soul of the thing. The mark of this gift is an ability to use vague words movingly. Let me quote Raleigh again:

Leaving us only woe, which like the moss,  
Having compassion of unburied bones,  
Cleaves to mischance and unrepaired loss. . . .

*Woe, mischance, unrepaired loss*, all get the uncritical weight of the voice, and are as concrete as moss and unburied bones; they are all concrete words, all equivalents: the only referent, the only abstract word is *compassion*. Only it, a word of Christian philosophy, points us to the larger world outside this fascinating dream.

The entirely self-possessed poet will be a rare thing, and so will the poet entirely lost in his dream; but it should be possible to fix most poets on a sliding scale between these two hypothetical extremes. No man is so wholly intellectual as to use words entirely as referents and no man so primitive as to use them entirely as equivalents; but in any poet, it should be possible to count the referents and the equivalents; to analyse the sentences, and see how far the poet is carried out of the logical sequence of his thought by arbitrary images, or how far an attempt to be consistent, to be logical, stifles

the growth of real poetic pleasure. Poetry, like everything else, is a balance; between mere madness on one hand and mere sanity on the other. What I have been saying in terms of language itself has been said, I know, before, by other critics, more eloquently, in terms of feeling, psychology,

creative impulse and traditional form, and so forth. All I claim to have done here is to have produced a terminology which not only is an equivalent of but a referent for the facts. I see in it the germs of a scientific critical method.

## POINTS OF VIEW

### THE POET AS CRITIC

by KATHLEEN RAINE

*Auden and After.* FRANCIS SCARFE,  
(ROUTLEDGE), 6s.

Books of criticism are rarer than books of verse, and to become a minor critic requires more intelligence, and no less sensibility to the poetic essence, than to become a minor poet. Because to understand and appraise a poetic world other than our own, requires an intellectual, moral, and æsthetic effort much greater than that of spinning out our own thoughts into verses. Therefore this is an interesting book, and, because Mr. Scarfe has made a successful effort to externalise some of his ideas, a very readable one.

Tambimuttu holds it as a precept that poets are the best critics. One might add that the best poets are the best critics of all, because they do not criticise literature at all. For the best poetry is a direct appraisal of life, and makes criticism of the literary microcosm a superfluity. But not all poets are good critics. Sometimes their poetic single-mindedness is an obstacle to understanding the mind of another writer. Stephen Spender, for all his occasional poetic penetration into the mind of other poets, provided they are like himself in essentials, lacks this faculty. Yeats was notoriously subjective in his likes and dislikes of the work of other poets, and his Oxford Book of Modern Verse could not be called a critical selection. But Mr. Scarfe has the faculty of seeing through the lens of another poet's vision. This, it might be argued, is due to a weakness in his

own poetic single-mindedness. But I must repeat, if a critic is less than a great poet, he is yet far beyond a minor one, if he has the capacity for subjecting himself to experiences other than his own fantasies.

The criticism of the arts is only a subsidiary activity, when the poets are doing their work. Critics cannot tell poets what to write or how to experience. Poets alone can ever know the upper limits of their art, and of their experience. But it is the proper work of critics to set a lower limit for poetry. To remind poets of what has already been written, to preserve whole the background of poetry. And this not only in the technical sphere, but in a much wider sense also to apply those two rules that the eighteenth century gave us—Nature and Good Sense. To stop poets, in fact, from writing nonsense.

Mr. Scarfe has many of the qualities of a good critic, but he is not doing his whole duty. He writes clearly and well, and he has some of that wit that arises from a sense of proportion. But he is letting down the minimum standard of poetry, that it is a critic's duty—his only duty—to uphold, and if possible to raise. Poets get past him too easily. Mr. Scarfe is doing no good to anyone, and much harm to poetry, by writing about Frederick Prokosch, Geoffrey Grigson, Julian Symons, Hugh Sykes Davies, as poets at all. These, and some others mentioned in this book as poets, never were and never will be poets.

But this is only a minor aspect of a deeper fault. The author does not distinguish between great matters and small. He does discriminate between the special flavour of one small poet and another—Kenneth Allott, Ruthven Todd, Geoffrey Grigson, Dylan Thomas, Day Lewis. But that is not enough, since he does not feel with an equal certainty of instinct the difference between the deep truth and the shallow truism. It may be that the lack of experience that time can mend is Mr. Scarfe's only limitation. But I do not feel convinced that this is so.

There is a popular belief that disembodied spirits living in the 'astral' sphere are only visible to those who are like-minded. They cannot see or communicate with spirits whose nature is far from their own. It is certainly true in this world. Mr. Scarfe has a clear focus on the minor poets, and to him, Dylan Thomas's mental world is the most real of all. This I deduce from the fact that he writes so well about this poet, even while exaggerating his stature. Mr. Scarfe lives and has his being in the world of minor poetry. The figures that overstep the boundaries of this world, step out of his sight.

It is certainly not an easy task to appraise Mr. Eliot as a poet. 'Auden,' Mr. Scarfe writes, 'has no individual poem which can rival *Prufrock*, *Ash Wednesday*, *The Waste Land*, *East Coker*, *Dry Salvages*, unless it be his poem *Spain*, which would give Eliot a score of five to one against Auden.' That is no way to write about poetry. If Auden could once, let alone six times, touch the same depth as Eliot, he would be as great a poet. Quantity is nothing, neither is the 'variation of method and style' to which Mr. Scarfe attributes Eliot's greater importance. It is quality—greatness, depth, the mastery implied in the true sense of the word beauty—that must be the test. And Mr. Scarfe applies all tests but this one.

Mr. Scarfe sees the world of poets too much from the inside. Amongst themselves, there are good, bad, and indifferent poets, and the stocks and shares are for ever rising and falling. But the only poets who count, are those who step out of that anteroom, and

grasp the real poetry of life itself. That is the only way to touch the heart of the world. But sometimes poets who, in the anteroom might not pass for outstanding figures, work that miracle. It may be true that Stephen Spender is 'potentially' a greater poet than Auden, as Mr. Scarfe thinks. Or that Dylan Thomas has 'assimilated Joyce, Freud and the Bible'—and that is a good deal. But the fact remains, that Auden with his clap-trap style and unattractive stock-in-trade, touches the human heart at times, and that none of the others do.

I myself habitually read new poetry from a sense of duty, and a sincere hope that there will be evidence that the new poets are making progress. Not from any expectation that they will open my eyes to life and death. With the exceptions of Eliot and Auden, not one of Mr. Scarfe's galaxy has in any way enlarged my understanding of life. Eliot has, profoundly, and Auden much less; but no other poet one jot. At best, I have thought that Stephen Spender, or Dylan Thomas, or less often one of the younger poets—Henry Treece, or Anne Ridler—has expressed extremely well, or at least adequately, something I already knew. That is a great deal, certainly. The more common experience is to read poems that one knows are untrue. But the world's heart looks for more than its own reflection in the work of poets. And the bulk of young poetry is an insult to that great heart that we do not love or know enough. We exhibit tiny selves, hoping that the world will admire us for our cleverness; forgetting that our work is to give more potent life to those who read poetry from a deep need to learn and understand.

As a common reader—tired with the anxiety of earning £5 a week and getting the children off to school in the mornings; and with wondering, sometimes in the words of Shakespeare, or the Bible or James Joyce, and occasionally in my own—why we are born, and what the world is—I protest against Mr. Scarfe's claim, on behalf of young poets, largely ignorant of the scope of life, to be performing, in lines such as the following,

the task of 'preservation of the finest feelings, the highest aspirations, and the purest achievements of humanity.'

Encompass me my lover  
With your eyes' wide calm

and

Now with the world breaking everywhere  
around us  
The war against the past is on, to decide  
now  
Whether release or the end. Do not escape  
to an island  
Or lose yourself comfortably in routine.  
Live  
As for love; carry the thunder of raging  
youth  
Hopefully to new building; live as for love.

or

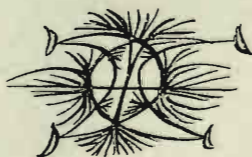
With the coming of the morning  
More will come than our personal song  
But it will be a part of the people's,

The revolution in the world  
That makes a star more than a star.

These quotations, selected to prove his point, are no evidence that their authors can either write or think or experience deeply. The second quotation, from John Waller, and the phrase 'live as for love,' has some sincerity, certainly, but Mr. Scarfe has overstated his case in a way that does no service to young authors. As for the other two quotations, if that is the finest highest and purest, poetry had better put up the shutters, for it is bankrupt. Where is Mr. Scarfe's respect for Nature and Good Sense?

Edith Sitwell's *Aspects of Modern Poetry* is still a better estimate of Grigson and New Verse, Auden, Eliot, than Mr. Scarfe's present essays. She is seldom wrong in her estimates, and since she does not scatter indiscriminate praise—Houseman, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, and many other writers of importance come in for shrewd and generally well-earned rebuke—her praise carries weight. One is prepared to accept her estimate outside the Movement. Besides her wit, and sense of proportion, Miss Sitwell, a poet herself, knows how much can fairly be expected of poetry. This enables her to say, and to say without essential malice, or loss of dignity, when work falls below standard, and why. For Mr. Scarfe, work is never below standard, for he has no real standard.

By standard, I still mean, in the context of criticism, a permissible minimum. And why need this be so? The poetry of poets whom any of us might have seen or spoken to—Eliot, Yeats, Rilke—exceeds anything that Europe has produced since Wordsworth. One might expect the standard to be set too high, not too low. Is the past of poetry too great, that the young poets and critics should avert their eyes from it? That might be a reason not to write. It could not ever justify letting pass inferior work. But so long as men live, poetry will be essential to life, and whatever the past has been, the present is in our hands, and will be judged for ever by our actions, and our work. Immortality, like death, can catch us unprepared, and history may well write us off as a 'bad' period. Let those of us who want notice, consider first whether we will bear scrutiny. Mr. Scarfe has done some poets poor service in exposing their bankruptcy to the public.



## POETS AND JOURNALISTS

by FRANCIS KING

In a typically unemphatic introduction to *Poems of this War*\* Edmund Blunden talks of 'the informal and sketch-like pieces which the present volume contains.' This seems to imply both a criticism and a commendation. On the one hand the book escapes being in any sense 'literary' or pretentious. On the other, it is too fragmentary, too hurried, too curt. Here are a collection of notes for poems, scribbled on the backs of envelopes while waiting for a parade or a fatigue or an operational flight. Or so it would seem. Exceptions there are, of course. Alexander Comfort, John Hall and N. K. Cruikshank—to mention three names—all seem to have established some sort of control and organisation. But the Litvinoffs, the Bakers, the Curls, strike one as being mere improvisers, journalists. They interest—and that is all. One notices the same defects as in old news-reel photographs or the thousands of personal reminiscences produced by the Blitz. Interesting, yes. But will 'Fighter Pilot' wear as well as Rex Warner's 'The Aerodrome'? I doubt it.

Still, it is useless to ask for something which cannot be produced in the barracks or the camp. Life in the services is unfavourable to the slow maturing of a work of art. One might as soon seek for literary graces in Captain Scott's diary of his last voyage. These young men, or most of them, have much to say but little time to say it in. They are incoherent, or brusque, or pathetically trite. And it is impossible not to be depressed. Here is talent, genuine talent, wasted on a sort of adolescent shorthand. I do believe that Litvinoff or Sansom could be good poets, and not merely intelligent reporters. But a bugle blows, the column moves off. And the talent is lost to us. The blurb calls the volume 'the book of a generation.' The claim is valid, I think. These scanty notes, these emotional jottings, pulled somehow,

\* *Poems of this War*, edited by Patricia Ledward and Colin Strang (C.U.P.), 5s.

anyhow, into verse, are in a sense typical. Even at their most patriotic, they have an undertone of interrupted careers, waste, and the sheer boredom of routine.

So, it would seem that the best war-poems in this anthology are by those who are non-combatant—a queer paradox. I do not know whether Cruikshank and Whistler are in the Forces, but I do know that Alexander Comfort is not. And he seems to write with the greatest eloquence about the mess we are in. His poems are not mere *reportage*: they are closely-knit, disciplined, controlled. They stand as works of art. *For sleeping now* is full of a savage compassion, which is all the more moving because it is suppressed. Compare its economy with Clifford Dyment's *Air Raid*. You can then see how important leisure is in the writing of a poem.

It would be natural to look for discoveries in a book of this kind, devoted, as it is, to the work of the younger generation. But apart from a certain vague promise, discernible among the naïvetés and the slipshod technique, it is difficult to pick out names with the enthusiasm of a tipster. Still, Cruikshank is obviously a poet of great sensibility. His *Poor at War* is touching, never banal; and he can be grimly concise. John Hall is hardly a discovery, but he should be mentioned. Somehow he has never quite received his due. He seems to me to be able to write with an almost rhetorical vigour, immense virtuosity, and stunning effect. Occasionally he blusters, it is true. But at least he is not timid, like so many of the water-colourists who make up the rest of the collection. In any case, the writer of the following stanza obviously possesses a highly individual style of his own:

'Love is the worm that lights me by  
Willow and well where darkness is  
Deeper than water, and your voice  
The question and answer of the sky.  
Love is the worm that lights me by.'

Again, Lawrence Whistler is hardly a discovery. There are some very successful poems in his prim, rather old-maidish vein. But *The Burning Glass* deserves special mention. Next, Alan Rook. Occasionally he seems to be like a lettuce that has gone to seed—no heart, no crispness. But he can be relied upon. And Sylvia Read. *To Friends Unknown, Unseen* is mysteriously satisfying.

So much for the poets—those who are interested not only in saying something but in how to say it. Now the reporters. First and foremost, I liked Patricia Ledward's *In Memorium* for Timothy Corsellis. In a pert little review in *Horizon*, Diana Witherby poked fun at this poem, rather as one might giggle at one of those ponderous *In Memoriam* notices in *The Times*. It is the easiest thing in the world to do. The whole poem is full of appalling banalities—sentiments that can only be described by Mgr. Ronnie Knox's adjective 'spinal.' But it is all genuine, authentic. I felt absurdly touched—and not only because I had met

Corsellis. The poem did move me, even as some badly-phrased, mis-spelled letter from a friend after a bereavement. Still, Miss Witherby thought it all rather quaint; I may be a sentimentalist.

Kenneth Neal pleased me greatly. He has a gentle, sardonic gift: his poems are all quietly observed, thoughtful, unassuming. Apart from Cruikshank, he seems to me to be the most promising newcomer. If he ever has the time to think consecutively, if he ever comes out of the war without his sensibilities hopelessly impaired, he should achieve much in his bitter and personal vein. A name to remember.

This review may give the impression that the book is a disappointment. Quite the reverse. Depressing it certainly is. But it is always interesting. And apart from the spectacle of much talent floundering in the porridge-al abyss of the British Army, there are also Messrs. Hall, Comfort, Cruikshank, Whistler, and Neal. They deserve reading.

## TIME AND THE POET

by GEORGE WOODCOCK

*Poets of Tomorrow*, No. 3 (Hogarth Press), 6s.

Almost every poet whose work is published nowadays can be placed in one of two classes. Either he is a shell left on the present by the ebb of a passing poetic era. Or he carries from that passing era a quality of life which will enable him to survive as a poet and adapt himself to the new continent in which he must write.

For we live in a different age from that we enjoyed in September, 1939, and even up to the collapse of France in the following year. That was an age of confidence in abstractions, of triumph and adoration for the restless, sterile intellect. Political and psychological systems laid out the world's needs and our own with encouraging simplicity. Demagogues and well-meaning scientists laid out our future with astrological

self-assurance. Literary lackeys mirrored the accepted visions of party and politician. And the serious artists were likewise influenced by the prevailing feeling of sureness. But their sureness was pessimistic—of the inevitability of war, for instance, which was characteristic of almost all the significant poets.

Accepted systems found their counterparts in the extremes of poetry. Communism was reflected in social realism. Freudian psycho-analysis was extended in surrealism. The tendency to elevate the intellect above the emotions dominated various trends towards the intellectual utilisation of poetry into something very like a conventional game with a set code of refined and obscure symbolism. In the most representative poetry of the period, the work of Spender, Auden and



their allied group, we find elements of all three extreme approaches. Almost every poet had a determinist attitude of some kind which gave his poetic conceptions a mechanistic flavour. The age in pessimism showed the culmination of the nineteenth century materialism which had started with such an optimistic belief in progress.

Yet this systematised world was bounded by time. We could say there must inevitably be a war, but we could not say when it would come. And time was also a limit, for we could not see what would happen once war had come. We could guess—and did, and we could plan our own actions over the duration. But we could not be sure that the events we expected would happen, or even that we would maintain our own intentions. Thus, under the systems, under the cocksure ideas which influenced poets and shaped their poetry, lay the disturbing enigma. Our political, psychological, æsthetic creeds gave no answer. Beneath the cant and the dogma and the poetic parlour games, we were all asking our question. It was the dominant theme of the poetry of the 1930's.

War came, and its events broke down our beliefs. There was a retreat from communism, and surrealism, never robust in an English climate, waned almost to nothing. Above all, there was a general weakening in the reliance on the power of the intellect. The war had broken the systematic chains, and poetry was free again to follow its course. With the breakdown of the creeds that governed poetic conceptions came a weakening of intellectual sureness. At the same time, the feeling of insecurity that had dominated the years before was partially dissipated. The war was here, and finding that the change it made to our lives was gradual, often deferred and sometimes pleasant, we set about accepting changed conditions. Poets, who for years had been turning outward in anxious observance of the progress of history towards conflict, turned in again, now history had delivered itself, and regarded events of the war with an indifference surprising when one compares it with their absorbed interest in the Spanish war.

The early years of the 1930's produced a number of outstanding poets. It is hardly necessary to recite the names of Auden, Spender, MacNeice. These poets were followed by a number of interesting younger poets in some degree related to them. These included Kathleen Raine, Ruthven Todd, Roy Fuller, Charles Madge, Kenneth Allot, and Julian Symons. At the same time there appeared two highly individual poets in Dylan Thomas and George Barker. By 1938 there seemed high hopes of the rise of a really vital poetry. But the strength of the movement was not sustained, and in the two years to the end of the decade no important new poet arose, nor did the existing poets show a development commensurate with our hopes.

Here I dissociate myself from the childish disparagement of Auden and Spender by those whose poetry has been rejected by *New Verse* or *Horizon*. But I think that during the past five years neither of these poets has shown any significant development in the quality of his work.

Their movement had lost its impetus, and as its leading poets began to develop into truly individual figures, sculptured in their own achievement, it ceased to progress as a living body. The outbreak of war, following the departure of Auden to America, completed the breakup of the group as a significant unit. This fact was symbolised in the expiry of the magazine *New Verse* which had been its mouthpiece. Such a movement could not be adapted to the new environment and the changing values. It had served its purpose in bringing poetry back into touch with the concrete present, and now it was itself outdated. It was therefore natural that it should decline and those important poets it had nurtured take their places in the new poetic order as individuals capable of producing in a changed world.

Yet certain writers maintained the illusion of the continued existence of such a movement. A number of young poets continued to write in a style derived from the mannerisms of the 1930's. And the mandarins chose to encourage these young men and bring their work together in a group manifestation.

Horizon published a number of these neo-1930's poets. And now the Hogarth Press, connected through Lehman and New Writing with the Auden-Spender group, has produced a volume in its *Poets of Tomorrow* series which contains the work of some of these writers.

The poets are Lawrence Little, David Gascoyne, Laurie Lee and Arthur Harvey. Adam Drinan, who is also included, seems a poet of an entirely different class, and I except him from any remarks I shall make concerning the book in general, and will treat him separately at the end of the review.

The general tone of this book is weak and decadent. Technically, the poetry is atavistic, reverting towards Georgianism. The poets tend to use dated affectations, stale images and aspidistra styles. They have all the nostalgia of the Georgians, and all their concern for petty things, without the element of music and the transient sweetness which were the Georgian virtues.

Lawrence Little's poetry is at its best in describing scenes and events, and in this has a quite journalistic virtue. There is an unpleasant baldness in his manner, which has not the excuse of underlying strength. At its worst his verse descends to such dulness as:

I shall wake  
Up, when this ride is over,  
And find that I am dead, and this thin  
Room a coffin, for I am cold inside  
And death is drifting upon me  
With each man's breath.

At its best, as in 'Scene' it shows a rather immature sensitiveness.

David Gascoyne prefaces his poems by expressing a preference for 'the unadorned sobriety of realistic sense.' This intention is curiously at variance with the preciousness evident in almost all his poems. They hark back in style to Georgian and even pre-Georgian standards, and though there may be a period charm in such antiquarian pastiches, they have little poetic justification. The most graceful poem is *Chambre d'Hotel*:

While a sad Sunday's silver light  
Slid through the rain of afternoon  
And slimed the town's grey stone,  
We side-by-side without a word  
Above the island's cobbled quays  
Round which rolled on a swollen Seine  
Lay staring at the white  
And barren ceiling; till it seemed  
We'd lain forever thus entombed  
Deep in unspeaking spleen.

The only emotion convincingly expressed in such verse is nostalgia, and that is poetically negative. Mr. Gascoyne's present style is, in my opinion, not so interesting as his surrealist past.

If the characteristic quality of Gascoyne's poems is preciousness, that of Laurie Lee's is prettiness.

Village of winter carols  
and gawdy spinning tops,  
of greenhanded walnuts  
and games in the moon.

Such poetry might have suited the whimsy atmosphere of a Squire anthology, but it is out of place among the poetry of 'tomorrow.' Nevertheless, Laurie Lee's poems are very readable and have a delicacy of touch which makes him the most pleasing of these four poets. There is a convincing sincerity about such verse as:

All day the purple battle of love  
as scented mouths position  
soft fields of contesting languour  
and jealous peaks of suspicion  
All day the trumpeting of fingers,  
the endless march of desire  
across the continent of an eyelid  
of the desert of a hair.

Arthur Harvey is the writer of the four whose verse is closest to the curious 'proletarian' writing of university men which appeared in *New Writing*. It is characterised by the sentimentality of the bourgeois writing about the hardships of the working class. There can be no doubt of the sincerity of Mr. Harvey's sympathy for the labouring men and women of whom he speaks. But he

writes as no true worker would, and one feels his contact with working men could have had little real depth. The dull tragedy he represents is not a faithful picture of the life of the poor. Even for the downtrodden there are passages of genuine pleasure. In such a poem as *Hands*:

Sleeping hands, palms upwards,  
Sleeping on sleeping knees;  
Fingers, sleep-slack,  
Burning blue dungarees,

we see all the qualities of Harvey's work displayed. The excessive feeling of tragedy in the lot of the working man. The intellectual's guilty worship of physical or manual ability.

Brick-yard hands and granite hard,  
Mighty, muscle-mighty,  
Fighting hammers, smashers  
On piston-driven corded arms.

And finally the dull bathos that presents he hidden hostility in such an attitude.

Heavy hands, sure, bone-ridged,  
Rough, rough-rasping,  
Light on knees  
As raspberry leaves on rivers.

Harvey's work demonstrates the fundamental unreality of the kind of 'realism' which was a characteristic of the *New Writing* approach to literature.

All these four writers, I feel, are poetically flotsam from the pre-war past, and have not yet proved their right to live as poets in the present age. They are poets of yesterday, rather than of tomorrow or, which is far

more poetically valid, today.

Adam Drinan stands apart as a poet already showing a strength of speech and an emotional profundity unusual in modern poetry. He has the Celtic music, a vivid and full imagery, and a true inner realism which gives his work a conviction beyond its immediate charm. He has felt bitterly the wrong done to his own land by the attack of imperfect progress, and writes with impressive power of the desolation of the Highlands.

Our pastures are bitten and bare  
our wool is blown to the winds  
our mouths are stopped and dumb  
our oatfields weak and thin.

Nobody fishes the loch  
nobody steals the deer.  
Let us go down to the sea.  
The friendly sea likes to be visited.

Our fathers sleep in the cemetery  
their boats, cracked, by their side.  
The sea turns round in his sleep  
pleasurecraft nod on the tide.  
Sea ducks slumber on waves  
sea eagles have flown away.  
Let us put out to sea.  
The fat sea likes to be visited.

Drinan appears among us as a poet already mature, whose future work is to be anticipated with interest. For Drinan's work on its own merit, and for the work of the remaining four poets as poetry out of its time the wrong way round, this collection is well worth reading and, indeed, purchasing.

## A BOOK OF NEW LYRIC

By DEREK STANFORD

*Lyra* (GREY WALLS PRESS), 5/- net.

This short volume of verse represents the work of twenty-five young poets. Speaking roughly the weltanschauung of these writers may be described as a denial of Socialist Realism; a turning away from the too solid wood of reason, from the hard stones and dried twigs of statistics so carefully gathered by Mass Observation; a refusal to

duplicate in art and letters the ready-made world of Marxian economics, where æsthetic perception is subjected to political precedent and intuition of character interpreted according to the sliding scale of Communist social values. More positively the movement may be seen as a substitution of the imaginative personal myth in place of the totalitarian dogma.

But to generalise in the field of art is as dangerous, perhaps, as necessary. To adduce from literature a philosophy is the critics' complement to the poet, but composition from premise or axiom taxes the image and atrophies the sensitivity. This latter was somewhat too often the case with the poets of the 'thirties and the Spanish Civil War. From which I do not intend to imply that politics has nothing to do with poetry, but that poets should have nothing to do with politicians; their verse should be a spontaneous judgment and not a Party-coloured slogan. Or as Herbert Read says in introducing the poets of this book: 'By the end of the Spanish Civil War the poetry of action had fought in the last ditch, action had overtaken poetry, and a new front had become necessary.' This new front may be viewed as the revolt of the organic feelings against the mechanistic and logic-laden mind. Its products are diverse without being disharmonious, and this volume provides us with the phenomenon of individualities lined up without antithesis. Poets as different as Henry Treece, Anne Ridler, Francis Scarfe and Alex Comfort exist side by side and create an impression of varied abundance unrestrained by the need for hard-copied consistency.

The element of expectancy, the sense of hush in which the mind turns inwards towards itself and futurity is felt in the lines of Tambimuttu:

'Where, where will we find us after wreck,  
Deep river, sand, or shallow?'

and in the lines of Norman Nicholson:—

'The known land is forgotten; the name  
Of the unknown is land is a charm.'

While in the verse of Roy McFadden we feel the presence of 'grave eyes . . . questioning the dawn.'

For Henry Treece lamenting 'so much useless blood, that might have relearned love, discovered God!' the way to life's

reintegration lies through the resurrection of the myth, and his five-page poem *The Boat Returns* is the history of the European myth in miniature. In his poem for Hitler, *A Birthday Greeting*, G. S. Fraser explores the labyrinth of the Fascist myth with the clue-yarn of Freudian psychology:

'Lust, that the poet figures as a lily,  
A towering lily, a receptive rose,  
Hardens for you to one tall factory-chimney  
Whose war-mad furnace roars without  
repose.'

Yet another treatment of the myth is suggested by the verse of Vernon Watkins, whose concern with it is racial.

The way back from our dehumanised living is glimpsed in the poetry of the pacifist Alex Comfort with its anatomical and botanical metaphors through respect, recognition and understanding of the first realities: the body of flesh and the fields which provide its nourishment.

Wrey Gardiner's poetry seems to originate in the still-centre of subjectivity from which his verses are so many excursions into the outer world grown strange through absence of the brain and eye so long turned inwards. 'Look,' says the poet, 'into your heart and write' of 'the mind's clear pool no thorn can stain.'

In the verse of Nicholas Moore with his wide and spontaneous sympathies we discover the uninhibited expression of the innately active poetic nature.

The poems of John Bayliss reveal a synthesis of image and melody, pattern and music. The half-chimes of his assonance are peculiarly charming; and his technique seems based on the successful opposition of form and fluidity to formlessness.

Perhaps this book may be said to illustrate the remarks of John Middleton Murray, that 'True Romanticism is true individualism,' the poetry of which has ever surpassed its politics.

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