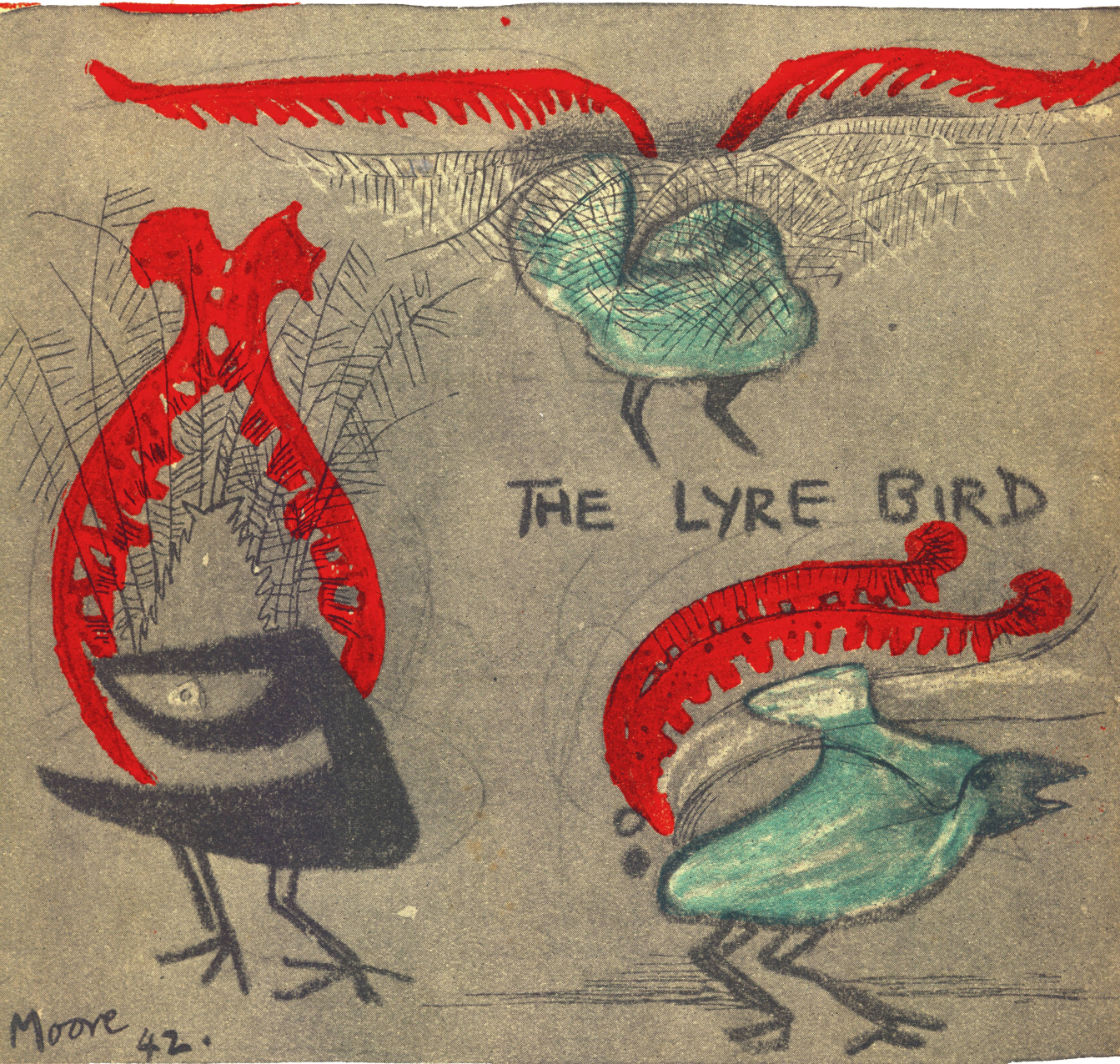


POETRY

(LONDON)



No. 7

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER, 1942

ONE & SIX



POETRY IN WARTIME

edited by TAMBIMUTTU

Mr. Tambimuttu has made a reputation as the editor of the only periodical devoted to verse by young writers which began after the war started.

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MSS. (with stamped addressed envelopes) should be sent to the Editor, business and general communications to the Secretary, Craven House, Kingsway, W.C.2. Holborn 2766.

POETRY

LONDON

Editor : TAMBIMUTTU

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This issue of P L is dedicated to

T. S. ELIOT

with respect and affection

EIGHTH LETTER

I

As Editor of this periodical I wish to make a complete statement in positive terms, relating each statement to a belief I hold to be true. Perhaps I have stated it already in one of my Letters. The basic statement nevertheless seems most real to me, and the one that is needed to-day.

The most complete I have yet made about the ideals and purpose of POETRY (London) was the *First Letter* (PL January-February, 1939). That letter written in simple and general terms was the point of departure into more particular statements, through philosophy in Letters 3 and 6, and psychology in Letter 4. The simple and general statement in the *First Letter* remains unchanged by subsequent developments, and indeed I wish to stress it, because it is the only one I can believe with any certainty since it is the simplest. The others were written in the hope that they would be amplified by persons with more specialized knowledge of the methods of approach such as the philosophical and the psychological.

This method of working seems to me both real and organic since it does not falsify by emphasis on the limitations of ideas and language, but rather tends towards exposing the truth behind the language ; where ideas are not falsified in meaning by isolation in a scientific word, but thrust into the living pulse of knowledge to assume their true meaning, where words light up words, ideas glow with each others density and become fused into the single unity of poetry.

II

Organic vs. Analytic Approach

True knowledge comes after scientific knowledge just as scientific language is a later development of poetic language.

This method of propagation of ideas, which I shall call the organic, has also been my practice with poetry criticism. The poems have been published and allowed to have their say. No criticism which we make of them can be final because poetry is always new and changing, a perpetual revaluation of values. Besides, this is not our task but

that of the next generation. But whenever I felt that a note might help the personal meaning of a poem I have not hesitated to make it.

Criticism should be at the most real level. The most real would be in the choice of poems one liked best. Writing about them has been either scientific and analytical, or appreciative and interpretive—which is more real and limited only by categories of personality: broad, narrow, flat, round, dull and sharp.

It is a fallacy that there are two critical approaches to the spoken and written word, the intellectual and emotional. The intellectual concerns itself primarily with the thought expressed, and the emotional with the so-called secondary aspects of language, rhythm, sound and 'colour,' which is the indefinite set of associations each word bears.

Surely it is readily apparent that the true approach to language is the total approach of intellectual-emotional? The total approach occurs in poetry which uses all the resources of words in combination. For scientific purposes we may use the intellectual aspect of language (as far as is possible) which is its use to convey thought. But there is nothing called 'thought' in *vacuo*, existing in the intellect, for it also exists in our emotions. Poetic language, gesture, then is the most complete act of man.

The scientific language mentioned by Wordsworth as an antithesis to poetic language is not an antithesis but a secondary use proceeding from the first. Poetic language is in most real terms emotive-scientific.

Poetry is the primary and most basic language of man—his first reaction to his surroundings. This he expresses variously: using stone in sculpture, sound in music, line in drawing, ideas in sociology. Religion is also man's language for his poetic apprehension of the universe—this is what I meant by 'poetry is religion' in my first letter. It sounds unscientific to our minds dosed with mediæval logic, but is truer in my view than the opinion that 'poetry' is the reportage in scientific words of the external world of landscapes, objects and

events. Croce writing on the philosophy of Giambattista Vico says the same things but commits the error of using scientific language to describe poetry. He makes some factual mistakes such as 'The judgments of poetry are composed of sense and emotion, those of philosophy are composed of reflection, which if introduced into poetry make it frigid and unreal.' The charge of unreality is disproved by Mr. T. S. Eliot's last three poems. And to the people who know poetry these are *not* frigid because poetry does not only state perceptions of the sense and emotion. Croce goes on to say 'poets and philosophers may be called the senses and intellect of mankind.' This geometrical way of thinking is wrong because senses and intellect always work together in the poet.

The social function of poetry (manifest in the poster poetry of Whitman and D. H. Lawrence) and Mr. Eliot's later poems go to show that sense and intellect, poet and philosopher must fuse before the best poetry is written. Croce saves himself with the afterthought that 'without sense, we cannot have intellect; without poetry we cannot have philosophy, nor indeed any civilization,' which concedes our point that philosophy is, in its final analysis, a development of poetic sense.

Another statement of Croce's I want to discuss is the one that poetry is the primary form of the mind, prior to intellect and free from reflection and reasoning. Now this geometric mode of thought falsifies the meaning of poetry because, as good poets know it, poetry shows much reflection and reasoning both in literature and in their own work. The form of verse smaller in scope, like the lyric (which is the easiest to do well), preserves the marks of its origins most faithfully, but the higher form of lyric and poetry are those that show hierarchies of reflection and reasoning. The lyric might, of course, possess these orders, when it will succeed more as a poem strictly in the measure and appearance of its components.

The most scientific way of using the word lyric (i.e. to conform to reality) would be to connote that the experience is in the primary,

in the pure, in its elements. It is then a symbol to describe poetry in its elemental state. But poetry in its higher allotropisms exhibits the qualities of reflection and reasoning, which is an observation of the so-called Metaphysicals of the 17th and 20th Centuries.

The lyric is the round perception of particular states which add up to the whole of poetry. It is also the material for other forms of art. Augustus John, we say, is a lyrical draughtsman. His moments add up to his complete statement and since he is an artist expressing himself in lines and not words, this is the task of his critics and biographer.

We publish lyrics, mostly, because they are the most successful form used by young poets. If we had a *Dry Salvages* we would prefer it. But we don't like poets who use mediæval logic and imagine that since they have written a successful lyric they can also write a verse drama or an epic. These must come by exercise, control, and experience.

Finally, Wordsworth's 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' is also a geometric thought that is wrong. It may be true for particular poems but not true about poetry. There are poems that show the very non-tranquillity of the moment when ideas grow, and of the triumph when all the implications of the subject are seen in a flash and welded into a whole as telling as any tranquil poem about the way a skylark flies, which, perhaps tells nothing at all.

The poetry does not lie in the rhythm or rhyme but in the way of thinking and feeling. For its expression, rhythm and metre help, because they are welding instruments that help towards erecting wholes.

III

On Poetry, Labels, Movements

Poetry is a way of thinking and feeling, when the two are inextricably one, and it is with this premise that the seemingly prose poems in this number are published. The form also is important, so that poetry is eventually thought-feeling-form.

But forms are unending to the perceptive poet, every poem creating its own new form, so we can never say: 'Look—this is form! The poetic sense is always the constant, and form the variable, since the subject may often be put in another way.

Therefore in judging poetry we would judge the texture of the thought and feeling (which would be poetic or non-poetic) and whether the form is adequate to the needs of the thing expressed.

Using these criteria it seems to us that the two prose pieces we are offering in this number are poems. We shall print more in future numbers.

At the moment only the poetry counts. Let it happen, let it happen. To the publishers criticism is only valuable now in so far as it should enable him to select the most interesting material from the widest sources possible.

And let us be independent, keeping to our convictions, renouncing the dictatorial attitude to life that springs from the archaic repressive force, the super-ego, and bands us into schools warring and destroying each other.

Poetry is a communal act in the sense that each man's poetry is a shape that builds up the round and bigger shape which is poetry. It is the act of man, the people, the priest—so let it happen.

Poetry is created by the people and we create poetry between us. But the poetry does not matter, because it is our lives that matter and they should contain all the possible poetry.

Yes, we do believe in the individualist function of poetry and a man only knows himself. But the measure in which man senses others is the measure of the man.

The pre-war poetry world was built up on snobbery and pride. One little boy thought he was the King of Siam and slung mud at another little boy.

We all matter. Give him his voice, give me my voice. Above all, those of you in fortunate positions!

Don't force your ego-centred obsessions about your house-colours on all humanity,

for it is not the colour of everybody's house. It only breeds a bad atmosphere, bastions the resistance of old against young, young against old.

The feverishness of this age and civilization! Don't fix an idea in a dead word, a label, but let it grow! We should accept our ignorance, and wait for years to receive the label that will lay us in a museum case and the grave.

Imagism, Objective Reporting, etc. Dead words, and what a discontinuous, frayed and patchy picture! It is the poets who should stand out like points of fire in our brains and not the period names which at present are bigger than the poetry itself. That the label should be the important thing is typical of a decaying culture—the bad man dragging a coffin by his coat-tails. Those who believe in movements would make themselves immortal before their time.

POETRY IS ACTIVE and cannot be crystallised in labels. That it can be is the pathetic fallacy of the man in the Museum.

A label, however, sticks to the drawing-room and tittle-tattle columns and of course one becomes famous over-night.

There are no phases in literature. Literature is a train that never stops. Historians might write pompously on barren periods but those very barren periods contributed towards the fertile ones. Shakespeare borrowed liberally from now unknown names. He was not Shakespeare but Spenser, the *Baghavat Gita*, Francis Bacon, Picasso. He was poetry. Historians might write that 1920–1942 was the phase when Mr. T. S. Eliot and the young poets who proceeded from him constituted a movement. But let the historians decide that, T. S. ELIOT IS A POET AND THERE IS ONLY ONE KIND OF POETRY.

It is a rationalist conceit to speak of Classical and Romantic. The ideas are dead words and tower in the mind above the FUNCTION. Here and there some flowers might sport spotted petals, but that does not mean all flowers of the tree are maculate.

The words may be useful for describing the texture of a period in the past, but it is untrue to use it for a function happening now.

Because we, poets, must live not only Now but the Past and the Future, and we are distorting our function if we have to live our poetry under a label.

Some of us use 'Classical' to denote perfect balance but that is what poets are always seeking. It all depends on where one starts from.

Therefore there is no Romantic Movement now. But now, as in Shelley's time, in Wordsworth's time, in Donne and Webster's time, in Valmiki and Homer's time, in Our Time a perpetual movement towards a more complete view of poetry AND WE ARE ALWAYS LEARNING.

We are the Cavalier poets, the Metaphysicals, the vorticist-imagist-surrealist and cabbage movement, we are anarchist, communist and social-credited AND WE ARE ALWAYS LEARNING.

When a man thinks he has learnt enough we may be sure that he has died.

Historians label periods for convenience especially in textbooks, for children, who thereby and forthwith lose their capacity to think. Time does not stand still for the perceptive historian, but it is a never ending reeled ribbon, of the same width, origins and material winding out eternally, but varying in texture according to the topography and climate. The surface texture does not matter, but the whole substance.

The label is the salient point but it does not describe the whole, it does not replace the object. The label is stone dead in school text-books.

You can't call a tree either Romantic or Classical. Poetry is a tree. Functions are! These are the broad principles we have laid down for POETRY (London.) It is an organic approach to poetry and we have made the poetry we publish the basis on which to generalize. The theory will grow from the poems we have published or shall publish, and we shall seek the co-operation of the best critics, whom we think are the poets themselves.

We should beware of leaders and movements. Mr. T. S. Eliot is a movement but he did not start it. His work started it.

The historical view of poetry is the dead way of looking at it and is not poetry. You have missed the point.

Histories of poetry are scientific documents for the acquiring of knowledge about a contemporary situation. Only 'Now' matters. It is therefore pointless to attempt to create historical periods of literature. Literature does not stand still in a year, or ten years, or a hundred years, to be stamped into a period.

IV

On Poetry Publishing

The reputations of poets are, in a way, commercial accidents. Accidents also of time, place and environment. Therefore there is nothing to be conceited about in one's poetry. It exists apart from ourselves and originates there.

This is why a poet who wants to be a leader misses the whole point of poetry; and the poet who defends himself from the 'young' (who are six months younger than himself) by dismissing them grandly in a few words of damning praise (actually it would have been better to preserve complete silence) refuses to see their real significance through false pride, and denies himself the greatness that might be his otherwise.

We should learn not only from the old but the young, also from the past as well as present and future.

'Young poets' means nothing because some of our contemporary poets who are older in years are actually younger than some of the younger poets; also many contemporary younger poets are no longer young.

Poets should help each other. There are commercial limits to the poetry list a publisher can carry. I therefore trust the poet who would print the verse of some of his

friends on a hand-press or would collect them in book or magazine form.

A man of perception at a publishing house prints a few poets. He allows an interval of time after the publication of each book so that the poetry will have a chance of finding an audience. He also publishes subsequent volumes of the poets. This is the right thing to do by them and he is consistent in his first appreciation of the poets' work.

These poets may achieve exclusive history which would be natural if the standard of the publisher's list is very high. However, the justice of his choice is only completed when they in their turn help the young and unknown who spare no efforts to attract their attention. They should refuse to rest bluntly on an ego-centric importance. They owe this to the publisher who in the particular case I have in mind is an important poet who is now unable, owing to commercial limits, (and his just behaviour towards them in accepting subsequent books) to encourage new poets from the beginning, but must wait to publish their *Selected Poems*, so to speak, in the future. The younger poets (which may only mean poets who have not sought publication before) are as interesting as the first poets in the publisher's list. But he is now unable owing to commercial limitations to do the ideal thing, which is to publish their books as they 'arrive.'

I may of course be wrong in this. This poet-publisher has in fact the most interesting poetry list in England. But in theory at least it is seen that there are commercial limitations to poetry publishing. This is why poetry publishers applaud others who carry poetry lists.

Poetry publishing is a communal expression. There should be wide sympathy, co-operation and extensive improvements.

We believe in the poet who would print his friend's poems on a hand-press.

EDWIN ALLAN

The Last Night

IN OPPOSITE WAYS, LOVE,
TO-MORROW OUR TRAINS DEPART
AND MINE WILL TAKE MY BODY,
YOURS WILL TAKE MY HEART.

The dance is over, darling. We approach
the precipice-edge of midnight:
beginning of tomorrow's end.
Time's almost on our heels now
who all the week was waterbogged
or limped behind on blistered feet.
He strides (His chariot's wings we thought
were clipped, but Time, of course, is up to date,
Time flies—and Cupid with machineguns shoots)
strides on centipedal feet in sevenleague boots!

Love, my metaphors are mixed, but Time
the snake who, tail to gullet,
minute after minute swallows in,
like something turning ever
inside out but never
completely outside in,
the place where turning spirals go, Time
has a thousand guises and surprises
and nobody knows what there is to know—
only Time's disguises.

Listen! on your eardrum
his footstep, descending, can you hear
hollow on the spiral staircase of your ear?

IN OPPOSITE WAYS, LOVE,
TO-MORROW OUR TRAINS DEPART
TO THE TWANGING SOUND OF
HEARTSTRINGS IN A BREAKING HEART.

Can you see his deeper shadow
in the shadow of the wall,
and the shadow of the shadow,
Time's henchman Age, the hunchback?
Look! Time bears down in tanks!

What chance has Love, the butterfly,
beneath those blitzkreig wheels?
that scorch the leaves to rust,
burn the painted fields, and
wither the roses of kissing lips.
Love, the metaphors are mixed
but, in love, when time is short
we say what we don't mean, and mean
things we don't say.

O, if Time
were Atalanta, nor apples scarce
we could hope that Time would stop!
Camouflaged in moonandleaflight let us lie
and maybe, love, Time will pass us by:
that falling leaf will never fall,
and love will never die, and Luna,
gooseberry moon, will ever on us spy—
a tarn of light in moors of sky—
and nevermore the sun will counterspy!

IN OPPOSITE WAYS, LOVE,
TO-MORROW OUR TRAINS DEPART
SAYING IN BROKEN RHYTHM: What
Must Finish Shouldn't Start.

O maybe at a minute to the clock
will freeze, the midnight hour never strike,
the eyes still shine the last goodbye:
and Always always be tonight.
Let us say to ourselves a second:
This is always! This is all!
and for a second, love,
Time's footstep will not fall.

IN OPPOSITE WAYS, LOVE,
TO-MORROW OUR TRAINS DEPART
BUT TONIGHT: YOUR LIPS ON MINE
AND, BEATING ON MINE, YOUR HEART.

A Dream

FEATURING MRS. TREAM

Top hat and walking stick, a millionaire,
drifting in my old familiar dream,
on boneless legs I saunter
at busy noon down Piccadilly on air,
thinking how I'd *die* for Mrs. Tream—
just so that I could haunt her.

My teeth start aching so I tache
them out and bed them in my pocket;
then run and 'phone my dental surgeon.
It's Tream! She's drunk. Icecream: TOOTHACHE
She moos: Use toothpock pick my locket.
Her frozen mind can't mentalburgeon.

In city the sight is of eagle rare
but mincing towards me's an actual eagle,
an eagle of upperclass culture.
Aw, just Mrs. Tream with her regal air!
(She'd not, if she knew she's all bare, be so regal)
That eagle was plainly a vulture.

She whispers: A kiss? Play ball?
—I've no teeth. But I'd just like to bat you!
—B. puritan! Come, before I get gorier,
to bed,—Out here?—Not at all;
over there, in the shade of that statue.
—Not *that* one! I say. *Not* Queen Victoria!*

—A smoke?—I'm teetotal—I smoke, I'm a fire,
she confides. You be my lighter!
I'm a sleeper! Won't you be my train—I mean, rouser?
(A thief, I decide, she is and a liar.
If she picks in my pocket I'll bite her!)
On one leg I stork off, with disdain but no trouser.

* The MANCHESTER Piccadilly.

GEORGE BARKER

Cycle of five Love Poems

(translated from the Montenegrans)

I

This morning take a holiday from unhappiness because
This is the greatest day there ever was
When he stepped down out of the nuptial arch
With the cross in his face and he shall search
Forever for the wreath and not until death
Really regret this day that gave him birth.

O History be kind and Time be short to him
Where he is anonymous, and let him come to no harm
From the hammer of the diurnal, or the drum
The sweatbox, and the wheel where the dog's dream
Turns and is interminable. O be near always
You who from far I shall not the less praise.

Let the gentle solstice, like the Fierral Bay
Where the Eleven Thousand Virgins keep
The fishes quiet in their arms, keep him also asleep
All his life long in a long summer day,
With the empty hourglass, the four-leaf clover,
The harp on the horror's horns, and much love.

II

Here at my hand here at my heart lie still.
Will then the prince of index finger, your caduceus,
Alight on my lip like a dove on a window sill
Delivering in its claw the symbolic oleaster?

Here at my heart here at my hand lie still
Till the dog rose springs off its beds of bush
To run in circles leaping at your heel;
And nature, happy, curls up at your kiss.

Lie still, lie still, here at my heart lie still
Sleeping like thunderheads. Be over me dominant
So I shall sleep, as the river sleeps under the hill
Kissing the foot and giving back the element.

Here at my hand lie still; lie still at my heart.
Sesame is on his tongue and the unicorn rages
Round the abdominal amphitheatre. I hear
His double engines drumming up the passages.

O till his cumulus, over the angry bed,
Arching, is rainbows. Volplane my bomber
Shuttling silver through the night I bride;
He spins his disc of kisses in my slumber.

And O I lie still in hand and heart lie still,
All the colours of welcome flaunting in my marrow
And flares I lift my arms are, because he will
Come down descending on my bed like a meadow.

Then here at my heart of hearts he lies as still as Asia
Where India is two rubies; so in my arms I hold
The murderer who, Samsoning up my five pillars,
Lies quiet now, for here at my heart I fold him.

III

The kiss is maypole where my seven
St. John sins truss me to the rod:
Its lightning cracks my face of heaven
When he leans down, when he leans down like a diver,
Out of his breast's cloud.

The flammenwerfer and the fish
And also I acknowledge him creator.
His horizon of arms measures my wish,
My mirage of marriage that, one moment later,
Comes true in a flash.

O at your work you patient hundred thousand
With the hammer, the hour and the pen,
His harder labour is love. He has emblazoned
Everything—overnight everything's blossomed
With it again.

IV

Then like the ship at rest in the bay
I drop my sails and come home
To harbour in his arms and stay
Forever harboured from harm.

On his foot's beach my combers ride
The vaulted corals where he stands,
And spray against his rock of side
Showers that fill his hands.

O whirlwind catching up the sea
And folding islands in its shawls,
Give him to me, give him to me,
And I will wrap him in my shallows.

O the Red Sea parted long ago
When the dove went whistling through:
My seas rise up in pride also
To let his chariots through.

The masculine cliff face gazes out
At the smile of the horizon,
And disregards the sea that flaunts
Her beauties by the dozen.

So he looks out over my subjugation
Where the combers coil at his feet,
And sees, the far side of adulation,

My Hesperides rise singing, one moment, from the ocean,
And the next, sinking, weep.

But from the altitude of his domination
O sometimes, like waterfalls,
His hand comes down through a gravity of anticipation
And a constellation of nuptials.

Nightly to his archipelagoes where
Apples adorn the pillar,
My kiss of fishes moves in schools and bears
The body to him on a silver platter.

The syzygies, over our Balkan bed,
Shed silver on the peninsula,
Against whose shores my waters beat their head
Like rain on a red star.

The narwhal with a spike in its brow
Spins thrashing through the wave;
His love is mine, who lashes now
In the seas of sweat I gave.

Then morning, like a monument,
Glittering in the tree,
Reminds me of a former moment
When the first star was immanent
And the mountain, dominant,
Leaned down and kissed me.

V

My joy, my jockey, my Gabriel,
Who bares his horns above my sleep,
Is sleeping now. And I shall keep him
In valley and on pinnacle
And marvellous in my tabernacle.

My peace is where his shoulder holds
My clouds among his skies of face;
His plenty is my peace, my peace:
And like a serpent by a boulder
His shade I rest in glory coiled.

Time will divide us, and the sea
Wring its sad hands all day between;
The autumn bring a change of scene.
But always and O for ever he
At night will sleep and keep by me.

JOHN BAYLISS

Sonnet

You cannot paint this dead discoloured bone
as you could paint your lips in warmer days,
nor can the glass you stare at quite alone
console you for the lack of human praise;
for now your beauty fades before your eyes
and earth obscures your mirror like a cloud,
and heaven will not take the virgin prize
so carefully preserved to grace a shroud:

now is it time for our two loves to meet
and consummate desire in brittle bliss;
we have attendants, have a winding sheet
in which to dance and compliment and kiss,
and we shall find our passion most complete,—
if missing lips can make a synthesis.

LAURENCE CLARK

On 48 Hours Leave

I hardly believe that I am back again.
Before I can touch this scene, time will dissolve it,
Will push me down the corridors of trains
Whence I must see it bright, small, remote,
Through the wrong end of the telescope.

Kent in July: July in spaced-out Kent:
Chalk-hills blue in distance, cornfields green
Or flooded with amber in them; trees
Massed into blue-green contours, against
A sunlit crystalline morning floating in mist:
The tunes of birds in shrubs, poultry in yards.

The people in this setting move entranced
Unconscious of the character it gives them:
An accuracy, kindness, perspicuous truth
Which is, perhaps, in Heaven, the longed-for-fruit
Of these towns, orchards and acres.

May God allow, that never traitorous
I shall behold this homeland: never without
Such ambience as glosses sky and cherry,
The warm night-breezes of friendship and love,
And a hoarded sense of duty.

Nightfall by the Sea

I lay down out of the wind. My leaden thoughts
Through immense weariness found wings of dream
Which bore me off at last on rhythm of wings
To lands all seek, but no one ever finds,
Where wisdom ample is and natural,
Where truth in clarity shines, and voices sound
More close to us and more unfaltering
Than any memories of human life.
Some birds were singing out of the wind to help me
And in dry hedges the last blackberries shone.

Meanwhile there was a mobilisation of cloud
Above this promontory in the Atlantic:
And rain was flung over it, in impatient gusts,
As the last handfuls of seed are flung
From the sower's basket. I awoke to find
The garland broken, that alone I stood
In the rig of fate against a wind that was mounting,
While winter rode in over darkening water,
Complexion of gun-metal shutting up the sky.

A Sociologist's Song

Others wrote up their positive ideals
And launched descriptions of their Paradise.
Their books were long, and much read
By those who live on substitutes for life.

My method is opposite. I merely denote
Diseases, impediments of tissues and minds:
Expose plague, the results of error,
And put on the map the complex contours of sin.

That done, that exorcised, I give the cue
To each to seek his own vocation in notes
More numerous than any but God knows,
Whose flute is in every soul.

You see, I do not wish to chain our world
To my music, but to set your music free
To play over it, without the threats
Of war, poverty, cold, and the other fears.

The Enemy

Upright with my men I am right, right enough.
I walk the plank straight, gruff, bland, without bluff.
Like them I believe in me. Daylight hours
Can yet show my undiminished powers.
The fog clears off me, as direct I feel
As a furbished instrument of stainless steel.

That was me, achieved! That was me! But extremes
Meet always and, opposing me, dreams
Rise up in me, struggle to inundate
That upright, wish-bone symbol. Then let fate
Prove its validity: let all have war.
There's proof I am real, yes, real to the core.
I am not so easy to auto-asphyxiate.
My game is going, I keep my state.
(But if I wait I'll be too late.)

'Achtung. But the opposites come again,
Insidious they come, nostalgic, like rain.
They lift like a gentle music the burden
Of all this rank business at Berchtesgaden.
I find I am something else in gist,
Remote, misunderstood, a delicate elf,
And now meet everywhere on undamaged mist
This alternative image of my anti-self!

July 13th

The warm wind lives, the autumn is undreamt of.
The tall foxgloves stand in their summer garnish,
The young corn is thick in walled meadows,
And in cottage gardens, among the roses,
Are marigolds, thyme, champions, parsley,
With sweet peas and warm sweet williams.

The warm wind fans up from a middle distance
Where the ebon sea is ruffled and rocks
The oars against worn rowlocks
Of boats from which fishermen are paying out
Their pots and nets in the first darkness.

This is the time when voracious spring passes
Into the early, light maturity
Of summer, the life both careless and confident;

It is the summit where death should find us
Should come like a moth on the warm night wind.

Parting by Water

The sad enunciations of real fate,
Like rustle of angels in the evening shadow,
These children hear behind them, playing with cans
Or fishing tackle in the varnished water.

Such are among the rocks on this spring day
When we, a small cluster of fate's impulsion,
Are brought to a rivershore for parting,
With eyes at last purged of mutual judgment.

Yes, in the sunlit hour of recognition
I board the boat and oars spread space between us,
And faces, grave with fate in sunlight vanish
Under the ripple of reflected water.

ALEX COMFORT

Out of what Calms

I

Out of what calms and pools the cool shell grows
dumb teeth out of clear waters, where no currents
fracture the coral's porous horn

grows up the mind's stone tree, the honeycomb,
the plump brain-coral, breaking the pool's mirror,
the ebony antler, the cold sugared fan.

all these strange trees lean upward through the water:
the mind's grey candied points tend to the surface—
the greater part is out of sight below.

But when on the island's whaleback spring green blades
new land over water wavers, birds bring seeds
and tides plant slender trunks by the lagoon

I see the image of the mind's two trees, cast downward—
one tilting leaves to catch the sun's bright pennies,
one dark as water, its root among the bones.

II

I who am nothing and this tissue
steer, find in my servant still my maker—
rule and obey as flame to candle mated.

Whom bone has conjured, Banquo shall the Bard
command, the marble rule Pygmalion.
Did this tower build me then who am its garrison?

Strange that in me the shadow
moving the substance speaks—strange that such air
pulls the gray sinew—whom the blood maintains,

whom the heart's coming slight defection
shall spill, speaks now and holds
time like a permanent stone, its cold weight judging.

August 1941.

KEITH DOUGLAS

Pas de Trois

Three dancers under music's orders stand
held by the hand of silence for a moment
posing. Now somewhere the flutes' sound
lifts the enchantment. Easily unbound,
they begin to move like plants and nod slowly
their three heads like blooms: their tendril hands
describe the shapes of air. Behold their feet
on points of strength such as grass has,
gently to divide the strength of stone.
make them like gods miraculously borne:
Sonia, Tania, Katia, strange deities
who sign to us and whom we may not greet.

Theirs is a craft of quiet,
they are shades of an old time
when you could hear, no riot
intervening, intricate and frail rhyme
and music; men had leisure
to ornament, only for pure pleasure,
their utensils and their life;
to live an hour or make a knife
intent on every jewelled space.
Today when smartness does for grace,
this is why they interlace
their precious hands and dance their pace
of three before your ordinary face.

Stars

FOR ANTOINETTE

The stars, still marching in extended order,
Move out of nowhere into nowhere. Look, they are halted
On a vast field to-night, true no man's land.
Far down the sky with sword and belt must stand
Orion. For commissariat of this exalted
War-company, the Wain. No fabulous border

Could swallow all this bravery. No band
Will ever face them: nothing but discipline
Has mobilized and still maintains them. Thus
Time and his ancestors have seen them. Thus
Always to fight disorder is their business,
And victory continues in their hand.

From under the old hills to overhead
And down there marching on the hills again
Their camp extends. There go the messengers,
Comets, with greetings of ethereal officers
From tent to tent. Yes, we look up with pain
At distant comrades and plains we cannot tread.

LAWRENCE DURRELL

Epidaurus

The islands which whisper to the ambitious,
Washed all winter by the surviving stars
Are here hardly remembered: or only as
Stone choirs for the sea-bird,
Stone chairs for the statues of fishermen.
This civilised valley was dedicated
To the culture of circles, the contemplation
And corruption of human maladies
Which the repeating flesh has bred in us
By continuous childhood like the worm in meat.

Here we can carry our own small deaths
With the resignation of place and identity:
The temple set severely like a dice
At the vale's end; and apparently once
Ruled from the whitest light of the summer:
A formula for marble when the clouds
Troubled the architect, and the hill spoke
Volumes of thunder, the sibyllic god wept.
Here we are safe from everything but ourselves,
The dying leaves and the reports of love.

The only disorder is in what we bring.
Cars falling like leaves into the valleys,
The penetration of clocks striking in Geneva,
The composure of the doll and the fanatic;
Financed migrations to the oldest sources,
Theatres where repentance was enacted,
Complicated by fear, the stones heavy with dew.
The olive signs the hill signifying revival:
The swallow's cot built in the ruins seems now
So small yet defiant an exaggeration of love.

Northward the gunners have buckled their belts.
The lion is out on his walks. The spring
Threatens a rain of brides by the Latin sea.
We have no right, surely, walking upon
Grass dedicated to myth, to renounce our own
The somnambulists with the long black rifles.
Sex and hunger, the old partners, on the march,
Together again, paced by the stylistic drums.
The detonations of clocks in the memory,
The detonation of each grain in the hour-glass.

We, like the winter, are only visitors,
To prosper here from the breathing grass,
Encouraging petals on a terrace, disturbing
Nothing, enduring the sun like girls
In a town window. The earth's fine flower
Blows here original with every spring,
Grows with the shining of man's age
Into grave texts and precedents for time,
Everything here feels the ancestral order,
The old captains smiling in their tombs.

Then smile, my dear, above the holy wands,
Make a last poignant and inadequate
Gesture of the hands unlocking here
A world that is not our world.
The rest is metaphor: who shall persuade
The awkward swan to death before her time?
Her will to sleep moves in a naked singing
Across the unsleeping house of history.
So small is all we have to give: a gift of breath,
All causes ending in the great Because.

GAVIN EWART

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Aircrews have had it and the war goes on
And I have had it if I die tomorrow,
Not needing the marvellous concerts of Donne
Or any word of fear or sound of sorrow.
Love I have had, the climax of all lives,
Traditionally the enemy of death,
That like an Old Testament prophet power-dives
And takes away the hard-drawn, precious breath.
Yeats read much in old poets all his life
And prophecies and dreams of golden sages,
Condensed past wisdom into a few pages,
But in his passionate intellectual strife
Had not the art new generations praise,
To cram a lifetime into seven days.

June 6th 1942.

JAMES FORSYTH

Poem

If I should never see
the things I let my mind remember grow
and nothing take that memory nowhere,
and I should live the death-after-the-fact;
remember, someone dear, what is dear now
when I see you anticipate my act.

If I should never see
the puppet, twitching, talk into the lights
and adored words I made to rocket love
not move nor move the convert in the stalls
to tears I crystallised, remember all

the love I had to give. Intone at nights,
'He has not died whom others' fear has killed
who willed to rear a beauty I had tried.'

If I should die—
clumsy, unfinished thing,
the animal-angel only half-way there—
remember though you hold a broken ring
completion was potential in my care.

April 1941.

W. S. GRAHAM

Fourth Sonnet

Sometimes the whisky-balanced miner sings
On Saturday's bustop swinging in the night
Brings through his pit-hoarse voice his lea-rig heart
And lifts from slag his fierce young poet's head.
Sometimes a tear starts from the evervoid
Threading from soul to time through time to soul.
And this love-kernel tear of Burns has forked
Out from the star-soul-splintering fields of time
And found this pit-shift guarded centre prince.
Crumble the coal bent hours. The heart is here
Breaking in trees of song between the slags
Rearing through spectrum voids in grains of time.
Sometimes the whisky balanced miner sings
And brings through his dark voice his lea-rig heart.

November 1940.

The Third Journey

Later through a million fells the tempest in my spine
Lays a strath-serpent engraved on the roseate earth
From my wakened head's young verdict of the year
To seasons sluiced in a paradise of pinions
In carillioned regions hung with a vow of stars.
Were you in this land with the clutch of a poet's sleeve
With the venturing rill of my scarlet spraying marvel
Crossing more luminous margins than April.
For I am a genius of rivers. My muse is a ship
Exalted and rigged on the spray that your worlds present
To my hazards of spate like a nebulae-misted child
Lonely of lullabys pelted on aerial plains
And sailing on deltas endeared in the wizard's head.

My mast in pearly latitudes of ploughmen's skies
Dredges the rooks from under simpler keels
Than score their dusk-ended wakes in divers' ears.
I build an iliad in a limpet dome.
I lay my tributary words in lovers' lakes
Tangled and tied in a knot of eels
Melodiously patterned in a pitch-black shell
That whorls my ruddering heaven in grammars of tide.
Charted on leaves the crucified river in veins
Harks with a bridebell speaking on far canals
To the drunken bow of a foreign sailor's knell
That swims on the foam of your whale in a gland of blood.

I am a scholar of seas. My alphabet steers
The mull of a kettledrummed villagers' land of choirs
And swings from the elbow of friends at a fair of peaks
To the untillered islandless reasons of tide
That spill in a seanight's cave behind the eyes.
Still I pass fathom-voyaged in a volted thread
Rigged with a stay of justice devised in fables
Differently learning an avalanche of kin.
Here at this leapfrog place learning laws
Building an infant's alchemy of mermaid wests
My craft with leopards at the lonely bow
Swings a long shadowed jib of proud alarms
And wakens villages and larks in scalloped cells.

O Gentle Queen

O gentle queen of the afternoon
Wave the last orient of tears.
No daylight comet ever breaks
On so sweet an archipelago
As love on love.

The fundamental negress built
In a cloudy descant of the stars
Surveys no sorrow, invents no limits
Till laughter the watcher of accident
Sways off to God.
O gentle queen of the afternoon
The dawn is rescued dead and risen.
Promise, O bush of blushing joy,
No daylight comet ever breaks
On so sweet an archipelago
As love on love.

Soon to be Distances

Soon to be distances locked sound
In the day of travel my passing knows
The place across which I slowly move
With ease and the lonely stumble
Feeds day with dark and fastens me
Meaning no hurt or comfort
To parallels barbed in the brake and bramble.

What I learn turns barrier to voice.
Sea nurses rock. Down dwindles land.
The curving thorn swims through the grass
Goes through each water-broke sentinel.
The river main talks word and world
Sea-marching with no man
Talks with no man's device to shingle.

All that I hold to water breaks
With that in me my foam holds rigid
Bound salt in sand and roped in roots.
Held better before the time of burial
Soon grapples in mornings more calm my day,
My weight on sea and sand
Prints my own screeve in the oblong wood.

And through the lochan of my eye
The horning fish bound between stems
See the sand ballet-pit on summits.
I see the man I made for land
From where the fake pitch unrolls levels
High over green parades,
Drown in the sudden sounding trees.

O father, let him lie now like a saint.
O mother, into this solitude he went
Long ago as a child and never came
Back to your human voice calling his name
All night. O world, he lies
Blinded. Close up his eyes.

Hours Like Tears

Hours have passed like tears—for hours are
Bitter and brief as tears—since I went down
A laughable glad lad into the town
To spend my substance there. Lights in the square,

Brilliant memories no bomb puts out,
Dazzled my eyes, girls took my breath away,
And after the poverty and price of day
I squandered a fortune of stars about.

Then suddenly a man stopped in his dance
Stepping aside to say that five years thence
I should be paying for my father's error
In blood. I called him MAD,
But rushed out to the fields in burning terror
To ask the birds what angry news they had.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Mozart

Mozart walking in the garden,
Tormented beside cool waters,
Remembered the empty-headed girl,
And the surly porters.

The singing-bird in the snuff-box,
And the clown's comic nose;
And scattered the thin, blue petals
Of a steel rose.

SEÁN JENNETT

March

How after winter ice the bland sun rises
on the frost-sheeted fields, and touches
the sawbone trees to green, and the wild roses
buds in the wood where the shaft engages.

About the soft circumference of skin
I feel the sharp light enter feeling rays
through reeling blood and tightening muscle, on
the thin bone that supports my hours and days.

I feel the sun's hands feel each separate hair,
I feel them excavate the stony skull,
and I am captured by that yellow stare
that all the icy winter could not kill.

Raid

How can they understand, the crouchers
under the earth, the sleepers in the tubes,
the pale woman with the baby at her breast,
the questioning child, the silent wise old man?

How can they understand? Do they feel
the force, the urgency, the necessity of war,
the valour and the glory? Let them lie
in their dim caves under the sleeping sky.

Do *they* understand, the pilots of the air,
those cronies of the stars, destructive gods,
are they heart-whole, mind-whole, who drop
the shrieking bomb upon the unknown target?

But those return who are not destroyed,
salute, report to their superiors, and rest
for the next time. Out of the holes in the ground
the weary people carry their bales at dawn.

Aran

On this bare rock rude hands have built the earth:
where no tree rears the fingers' force has bred
the green sheath and the flower and the yellow wheat;
and the suckling breast in the shallow grave
and the aged man have fertilised the soil
with their days' thought and frail frames' fortune;

have built their houses on this arch of rock
with muscles' labour and the dream of sleep;
have scoured the crevice and the wild sea's edge,
cliff faces and the dangerous scree
for precious earth to wrap the living seed
and give to life a root-hold and a base;

have ventured the green iron of the sea
and weed-strewn gardens of the underwater
dragged; and paid the sinews' lust for life:
yet in the bony chamber of the skull
where dream grows from the hand's laboured skill
imagination leans to the window of the eyes.

And on this rock the hero's deed remains,
mumbled in the shapeless mouth of age
before the winter's fire and gathered friends,
or acted by the children in their play:
while from the hollow sea and caverned cliff
new myths put on the pinions of years.

Live not to honour but the gallant man
or praise the peaceful woman for her beauty,
but look across the peril of rough seas,
and look across the flat and fissured rock
and praise the woman with her creel of weed
for grace, and the digging man for strength.

Sonnet

Fighting in naked deserts, he thought of home,
the soldier swallowed by the drouth of war,
of fields and heavy trees and quiet rivers,
and the apple-hearted hollow forests where
the girders of the blackthorn blossomed over
in early spring; and thrushes loved to sing
through all the cool green shadows of the summer
their bell-dropping, water-falling song.

Here earth's bones lie bleached below the sun
and the barrenness of death fills up the eye
all day; and there is never any shelter
from the anger of the sky; nor any sign
of gentleness: grain grinding grain, the dry
sands drag across the days their burning shutter.

FRANCIS KING

On the Body of a Soldier

NOW shuttered from the cries, the mimic cheers,
I lean above this stone of all regret,
This marble ruin, marked with lust and woe,
This face whose contours are a thousand fears,
Whose contours, like a statue's, still are wet
With tears, with cold and unremembered tears.

What cricket stirs beneath this rock for heart,
Filling your sullen chamber with its plaint?
You lie, a heap of rubble in my hands,
A city from whose walls no sounds depart,
No pilgrim thought, no sense however faint,
A river-bed from which no waters start.

Though constant as the features of a hill,
Though dumb, though bloodless, yet these lips beseech
Some mercy from the universal cloud,
Some rain upon the dryness of the will;
Their hungry granite trembles into speech
And pleads an absence which no hand can fill.

Now with the clamour of those frozen palms
You seem to grasp a mirage of your bliss,
A glitter on the unrelenting stone
Which serves to comfort you with dreams and charms;
You seem to charge me with my cowardice,
To wrest my happiness with nerveless arms.

What can I pour upon your desert places
Beyond my tears, the tears which you forbid,
My tears upon your stony attitude,
Upon the memory of many faces,
All, all the faces of the grief you hid,
All shapeless and all plundered of their graces?

If I could mine this granite with my sighs,
Infuse my breath, your body re-create,
And drain my blood into your hollow wounds,
Then you might break your stone, then you might rise.
But now lie still. Twin worlds of love and hate
Weigh, always weigh their pennies on your eyes.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

Epilogue to War

For shame the waters of my sorrow quicken,
My grief hides from discovery.
I am a land of fallen cities, towers
Betrayed to ruin and the thief of time.
And I am dumb of all my voices
Singing the tragic wish away,
And I am blind to all my glory
The crumbled riches of the past proclaim.
For like a trumpeter turned to an echo
The gallant shadow of my youth turns pale,
Leaving a handful of words like brittle leaves,
The hollow memory of praise.

For shame the melody of love is hushed,
Blood beating the passionate request,
I crush my power and desire
Into a casual phrase, destroy my potency
With passive and resentful living.

For shame my yesterdays grow sour,
Scanning the dust and spittle for a sign
Or symptom of the malady,
Finding only tattered souvenirs of loss
To torment the raw and patient heart.

But underneath the waters of my soul
The drowned and final image of disaster
Recedes to sea and sand, dissolves away,
And all the world's shame dwindles.

June 1942.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Five Rivers

Southward from Whitehaven, where cliffs of coal
Slant like shale to the low black mole,
The railway canters along the curving shore
Over five rivers, which slowly pour
On the steps of the shingle where the grey gulls bask
EHEN and CALDER, IRT and MITE and Esk.

The EHEN twists and flicks its fin
Red as rhubarb beneath the grey skin,
For its veins are stained with the blood of the ore
Of the mines of Egremont and Cleator Moor.
Here drill and navvy break the stone
And hack the living earth to the bone;
Blood spurts like water from the stricken rock
Seeps into drain and gully and trickles to the beck.
Green herringbones of watercresses ride
On the tilt and tug of the red tide;
Bladderwrack, thrift and salty turf
Crust over cobbles at the edge of the pink surf.

Continued on page 33.



GROUP OF FIGURES IN UNDERGROUND SHELTER, 1941. *Drawing* by Henry Moore (Possession Contemporary Art Society).

ANNE RIDLER

Poem

Strange eyes for a baby
And disconcerting. They ought not yet to express
Any perplexity, we think: still less
A flash of fear in trust.
Hard to bear such a tremulous look. Did
You just detect that a parent is not a god?

Any glance could tell
The whole truth, for here the body still
Speaks for the soul and has no separate will.
Kindled in joy, cursive in form like those
Baroque babies that float in Venetian skies,
You express a plain fact in an elaborate pose.

Wildness of gesture, the round
Calm shape of a cloud, precision of a kitten, are found
In one fat baby, with much that can never be learned
From any painted boy:
The riches in a chuckle, the rays of joy,
The changing moons of light in a living eye.

Two figures sharing same green blanket



Yet much is already hidden:

Secret stir of the brain, secret ways

To turn my will, and test my strength of purpose.

And then, what possible relation

Exists between the darling of one moment

And the crimson barbarous brat of another instant?

Relation is seen in the whole.

The rage that from the first corrodes the soul
Even for a tiny child is pain to feel.

Aware but unreflective,

It dreads in me the force of its future anger,

Trusts in love, and will know it to be the stronger.

The introspective CALDER hums to the pebbles
A memory of plainsong and choirboys' trebles,
Of collect and introit, creed and antiphon,
Of cistercians in the abbey of blood-red stone,
Where now tarpaulins and sheet lead shield
Groined roof and cloister and stoup from the wild
Weather of time, and the wall ferns spread
Where once the praying lamp hung before the holy bread.

The IRT comes from Wastdale, the land of the screes,
Of bracken up to your waist and ham-and-egg teas,
Of men who remember Will Ritson, the biggest liar
That ever lived, who sit by the fire
And laugh their inherited laughs at the talk
Of hounds with wings of eagles sniffing the lake.

The MITE, the tyke, lollops along
Like a blue-haired collie with a dribbling tongue,
The children's plaything as they ride the toy train
That runs beneath the rocks in a hawthorn lane,
Where dog-daisy, dog-rose and stiff dog-grass
Bark at the wheels as the whistling truckloads pass.
But the Esk comes from the narrowest dale
Where statesmen meet at the Woolpack for a glass of ale
And a crack about Herdwicks or a cure for the tick
And how some fool has broken his neck on the rock.
The Esk knows the stonechat and the parsley fern
And breaks like a bottle at every turn,
And bursts on the boulders and froths like beer,
Runs solid as glass and green and clear,
Till it mixes with MITE and IRT in the marsh,
Where roman cement and arches teach
Of the galleys that came to Ravenglass
Bearing the invaders with helmets of brass.
Where the plover creaks and the curlew whines,
The rivers ferret among the dunes,
Till the channels burst through a gap in the sand
Like a three-pronged pitchfork jabbed in the flank of the land.

Brown clouds are blown against the bright fells
Like Celtic psalms from drowned western isles.
The slow rain falls like memory
And floods the becks and flows to the sea,
And there on the coast of Cumberland mingle
The fresh and the salt, the cinders and the shingle.

KATHLEEN R A I N E

Love-Poem

Yours is the face that the earth turns to me—
Continuous beyond its human features, lie
The mountain forms that rest against the sky.
With your eyes, the reflecting rainbow, the sun's light
Sees me; forest and flowers, bird and beast
Know and hold me for ever in the world's thought,
Creation's deep, untroubled restrospect.

When your hand touches mine, it is the earth
That takes me—the deep grass,
And rocks and rivers, the green graves,
And children still unborn, and ancestors,
In love passed down from hand to hand, from God.
Your touch comes from the creation of the world,
From those paternal fingers, streaming through the clouds
That break with light the surface of the sea.

Here, where I trace your body with my hand
Love's presence has no end;
For these, your arms that hold me, are the world's.
In us, the continents, clouds and oceans, meet
Our arbitrary selves, extensive with the night,
Lost, in the heart's worship, and the body's sleep.

7th June 1942.

Chrysalis

The curtains of the senses tear
Like nets in the ground-swell of air—
The iron wind and pace of earth
Drags at the heart, leaded with death.

Spun in the womb's cradle, veins
And nerves that weave the skein of thought
Behind new eyes unborn, in dreams
Float into senses delicate,

And open, slowly to unfold
In gentle flower, sheltering wings
That brood above the painful world,
And screen the open doors of space.

To A. M.

Your perfect kiss, my rose,
and wisdom of desire
to my momentary form
imparts its deathless flower.

Bless with your life the dream
that man has, to remain
in the sweet bed of time,
the cradle of a star.

19th July, 1941.

A Strange Evening

A little rain falls out of an amethyst sky,
If there were a rainbow, it would be on the ground.
If I were here, that single swallow would be I,
If these green trees are heavy, their weight is in my hand.

If trees and fields are green, their veins run blood;
If there is a poem, it moves across the leaves—
If there is love, of trees and sky our bed;
Since there is such a sky, I cover it with peace,
With blue unbounded of the living eye,
The ox-eye pasture of the marguerite.

July 7th 1941.

KEIDRYCH RHYS

Sheep: Gwynfe

Slack falls, the vital heat, the healthy cheviots
Bought at Miller's draft sale—great gangs wedged in there
Look for rising smoke lifetime's curly blacking,
Wiping their feet on ferns; astride, after rugger collaring—
Leg well gripped in, then, only them lifted on haunches.
How the parings flew away from my penknife!
I had to get down on one knee for the front lot.

And flame on water; fingertips shrunken; nails blue. Mankind's
Shriek at crusted Stockholm backs at maggot cheats.
Long tails sheared; highland blood easy in red paint pools.
The butting dog linked in the barn, old veteran; a bantam pecks
At the big morning fowls' corn leavings; the yard's a little
Smear'd with fluid; last scalloped ear, near mad, the mottled face
Stood up on vetted feet; purse-up, the fist eyed mating ram
A neighbour's lamb as well, the red marking brick
Had crumbled away. I counted fifty-eight into the field.

ANNE RIDLER

Epithalamion

After a thousand possible perils—
A course kept, but at what cost of exhaustion,
What heartache, between frivolity and despair
(Those clashing rocks, oppositions joined for destruction)
Calmly to steer;
Moreover, to carry joy like a hurricane lamp,
All the way blazing delight on the dull and the doubtful—
After this, to come into lakes of peace,
Bright walks among oleanders by the waterside,
And mountains that do not creep unexpectedly close
Peering over one's shoulder, but hang translucent, distant.

That journey we know—all honour to you
Who made in the steep seas a passage through;
But the calm lake we must question a little.
No one now, ending a novel—
As they still end—at the steps of the altar,
Dares to assume it. 'Happily ever after'
Is not our cant: ours is different,
And *he flatters this age* whose bent
Is to call the *marmoset* an *ape*, the *swan* a *goose*,
All marriages unhappy, for this is our disease.
At a wedding, however, there are still bells,
Smiles, confetti, joy taken for granted.
Is this a superstition, decayed but undaunted?
Of this I am certain: there will be joy
For you, of the kind that no sorrow can destroy.
And yet by many it is not seen as such:
Not because they expect too much

(For in love we grasp more than we thought to reach,
By God's grace), but because they subject it
To the wrong tests, and lose while they dissect it;
Expecting, too, to be perpetually aware
Of happiness, when the full consciousness is rare:
For it is our common and strange condition
Not to know what we are, nor when we are in heaven.
Marriage may take us thither; but if we look either
For complete union with the being of another,
Or for the separate fulfilment of the self,
We see neither: the texture of love
Is of both, indivisible; something is made
By lovers which neither singly could.
A complex result, and as hard to define
(Though with singular ecstasy known)
And to the eye as little apparent
As the effect of an electrical current.
The inert metal is active, changed
By a borrowed force, and the two are merged;
Yet the life is its own, with which it is charged.
And then, so they say, nothing ought to look the same.
As to that, I remember from my childhood a game,
Half fear, half delight. We shut our eyes,
Then, opening them, found the identical place,
The identical grown-ups, drowsy in their chairs,
But we had travelled far, and were strangers.
If we spoke to them, they did not understand,
The familiar drawing-room was in a foreign land
And we had never met. I could not decide
How much truth there might be in what they said,
And was half disappointed, half relieved when
The game was over and they knew us again.

Thus I think that even though
Things look as usual, you will know
A difference, hardly to be taken for peace,
That will be so, none the less.
This at times both body and soul
Feel, and find themselves made whole
Before they knew it, or knew their need.
O, if the joy were not so deep
Who would bear children, or have faith
So to prefer life before death?

But you, dear and delightful, known
And loved so long, possess your own
Perfection, with a gaiety,
A brilliance which I have quite passed by
In this long tortuous meditation
Meant for your marriage. Jubilation

Flames upon your forehead still
And warms me, as when we emerged from school,
With bursting hearts, inquisitive eyes,
Perplexed at evil, dazzled with joys,
To travel wrapped in our own concerns,
And see great cities on our own terms.
Our growing-pains compressed within
The marvellous walls of a violin.

Our past should stay in the past: I name it
Only to invoke a blessing from it.
By the round castle and the roofs of Rome;
By the stuffy cardboard music-room;
By the Scotchmen red and black
At dawn in distant farms; Will's Neck
And burning moor; St. Francis' hill;
By the pillars of the ruined concert-hall
I bless you; by the incalculable powers
Of music, the many and hard hours
Of work that make one excellence—
In a single act of benevolence
I would join these, as best I may,
For both, and for your wedding day.
Still I have said but a small part.
I wish you heaven with all my heart.

LYNETTE ROBERTS

The New World

Memory widens our senses, folds them open:
Ancient seas slip back like iguanas and reveal
Plains of space, free, sky-free, lifting a green tree
on to a great plain.

Heard legend whistling through the waiting jabirú,
Knew the two-fold saying spinning before their eyes
Breaking life like superstition, they too
might become half-crazed.

Staring, sitting under the shade of ombú tree,
Living from the dust: kettles simmer on sticks,

Matè strengthens their day's work like green dew
on hot dry grass.

So the people baking too close fulfilled time:
Bricks became mud walls and the legend flared high
Shadows broke, flames frowned and bent the sky proclaiming
Indian omens.

Roofs fell clattering in on man and child,
Black framed their faces, from fire not from sun;
While before them land divided announcing
peg stakers proud claim.

Death ate their hearts like locusts over a croaking plain,
Fell tears red as fire-flies on the rising dust:
Barbed-wire fenced them in or fenced them out, these
out-casts of the land.

So the people fled unwanted further on unto the land,
Onto the Plain of White Ashes where thorns spread
Like the wreath of Christ: Further out onto the
ancient sea of Rhea.

Ombú turned hollow as it stood alone—
Spiders lifted the lid of their homes and slammed them back;
Sorrow set the plovers screaming at the running
hoofs and feet.

Cinchas bound their hearts; leather sealed their lips;
Ponchos warmed their pumpkin pride; as insects floated and windmills grew.
Ventevéo! Ventevéo! and further they strove the harder
not to be seen.

Lost now. No sound or care can revive their ways,
La Plata gambols on their courage, spends too flippantly;
Mocks beauty from the shading tree, mounts corrugated roof
over their cultured hut.

River Plate

The pampas are for ever returning
The orange river pounding the sea,
From high dry plain with tint of tea
La Plata spreads, and churns drowning
The dust from the charcas murmuring
At the bare roots of the ombú tree:
'The pampas are for ever returning
Bright green birds into piranha sea.'

Over spare-dust and barbed-wire, slowly
Cattle die from thirst-wounds, returning
Like matè ships shivering, bringing
No sound but white bones back to me.
The pampas are for ever returning
Bad bones and dust into an angry sea.

ALAN ROOK

Lager

I want to effect the retreat of the snail
to drown myself in the sea's sad silence;
I want to effect the mastery of fishes
who travel without star or compass.

I want to forget that the dead are lonely
that the meatless skull has demands on the soil,
has a habit of asking water
with an eye to the growing clover on the chin.

I want to achieve the retreat to the desert
to the vast warmth of illimitable spaces;
I want before morning to make a momentary
reconciliation with silence.

Tomorrow the guns will renew their rumour
tomorrow the captains will speak with arrows
tomorrow the duty of battledress blouses
to foster the faces nailed down by death.

But now I want the lament of ocean
which will rest its elbows on upholstered shores
and in secret whisper sadly to the mountains
personal tales of the power of storm.

Now to achieve the retreat of crocus
laying its head in winter's woollen lap,
which gathers strength for tomorrow's flowering
tomorrow lifts, grows, splits the earth.

TOM SCOTT

Poem for George Barker

Worlds come and go; but is now on the wing
Soul's fire, moist with beauty and tears; the grave,
Amaranth yields your swoop, then sun-soaring
Cloud underneath is seen; the miles-deep wave
Receives love (that iron years send exiled
From simpler homes) in Truth's too-drowned one, and cry
Of Adam in Samson ruins of Eve's child
With three fires burns your heart where countries die;
To nucleus turn, the soul's bow whose shaft
Strikes from bone fires that down the soul-sky flow;
Winds through lattice whirl, over brow follow
Endless path; may at your brow always waft,
Adonais' child, Adonais' bride's mood-winds; swallow
Shelter in your eaves, the worlds come and go.

May 1941.

JULIAN SYMONS

The Intellectuals

The clock on the mantelpiece is eating time.
The nervous sit in the dark thinking of money,
The greedy of love, the rich of death. Slowly the lime
Drips from the sky and covers them, and for any
Who try to avoid this death there is a voice
That murmurs *Guilt is the consequence of weakness.*
To avoid the stupid was the ridiculous choice
Displayed by the smiling mirror in your sleekness.

Marching past slagheaps they came to a belt of green
And were amazed: 'Surely this is not real,
The grass?' they cried. And were affected so
That they dispersed, and slept, and woke to see the lean
And killing figures at work, and thought they came to steal
Their ancient rights, that were dust long ago.

July 1941.

HENRY TREECE

Ballad

Oh, come my joy, my soldier boy,
With your golden buttons, your scarlet coat,
Oh let me play with your twinkling sword
And sail away in your wonderful boat!

The soldier came and took the boy.
Together they marched the dusty roads.
Instead of war, they sang at Fairs,
And mended old chairs with river reeds.

The boy put on a little black patch
And learned to sing on a tearful note;
The soldier sold his twinkling sword
To buy a crutch and a jet-black flute.

And when the summer sun rode high
They laughed the length of the shining day;
But when the robin stood in the hedge
The little lad's courage drained away.

Oh soldier, my soldier, take me home
To the nut-brown cottage under the hill.
My mother is waiting, I'm certain sure;
She's far too old to draw at the well!

As snowflakes fell the boy spoke so,
For twenty years, ah twenty years;
But a look in the soldier's eyes said no,
And the roads of England were wet with tears.

One morning, waking on the moors,
The lad laughed loud at the corpse at his side.
He buried the soldier under a stone,
But kept the flute to soothe his pride.

The days dragged on and he came to a town,
Where he got a red jacket for chopping wood;
And meeting a madman by the way,
He bartered the flute for a twinkling sword.

And so he walked the width of the land
With a warlike air and a jaunty word,
Looking out for a likely lad
With the head of a fool and the heart of a bard.

Walking at Night

Thus I would walk abroad when gentle night
Puts on her friend's cool cloak and bids me come,
Walk among beds of lightly sleeping flowers,
Budded in silver dreams of friendliness.

And I would lie among the dainty herbs,
Like catmint, parsley or exquisite thyme,
To watch the late bird, twittering, hurry home
Across the moon's great watchful eye, to love. . . .

These things, like dreams of princesses and pearls,
Come to me more as iron days grate on;
The brush of blood paints not a ruined world,
But thyme and parsley underneath the moon.

PETER WELLS

Poem in Time of Famine

(FOR ELIZABETH)

Grief broken like a cracked crown, shattered are you
where no tempest roars but smooth pennies spurn your cheek:
you, with eye shifted, wind slanting between wrist and breast,
and your meek cry for 'bread, bread' coming softly to me on the waters:
you are, yes brittle-virgin, tumbling where hunger howls from the dictator's heel;
and you, O you, with roses sprouting from a fist of thorns!

You now with a green nettle nestling in your hair,
wandering with shallow, hollow feet over stones I cannot comb:
in your eye light like steeples striking gaunt with the hunger of your bell's chiming:
and the wolf roars famine where the war's axle twists in the mire
and the spas of oil heap on your starred, seven-compassed eye.

O you, my love, lie softly where no deadly hand can ignite your heat
nor candle snuff in dim churches your snow roses.
Remember the dawn, and the coffin that came with the gnomes of our embrace
chattering down centuries to me, now alone, where the day sparks
on thistles and steel, the worthy monuments of tanks.

Escape Varsovie now my dear, my darling,
and all such cities in which the knell sounds for the dog whining along the gutter after its crust:
escape burning, the fickle incendiary, and the arson of teeming hordes tending your white
fingers.

Lift only the delicate bones, hallowed and bleached with your suffering,
as crucifix against the sordid armies binding our isolation
with mocking guns and feet fretting like weeds over frontiers,
trampling upon all arbitrary proclamations, and we, only, in unison.
For know, since the stars have shot like a sonnet
and trail like a destiny over the Ides of March
(when witches with butter and cats roast their hopping songs in wild marshes)—
know, now and forever my dearest,
that this taut and tenuous thread of steel in our blood,
a butcher's knife cutting our futures and flesh of our fathers in tatters,
crashes, O a monstrous catharsis of all our hopes and holidays
the Christmas tree, and the cherries in summer we might have tasted,
to a slick conclusion and a confusion of destinies.

But cosmic like grace are the apples of peace in our hands:
and, shining like tails of a comet, the feathers of hope in your heart
flutter above the batter of battle, the dictators' foaming doom,
to where your skirt rustles softly at evening across our silent room.

DAVID WRIGHT

Libra

I

Devouring Time blunt thou the Lyons pawes:
out of this winter country into spring
advance the jubilant mountains. Cloud and rain
swell the black root, and bring
the green lance of the alder and gold flowers;
and the blind bird remembers Proserpine
in whose cool womb the iron fruit remain
that wait the sequence of the sliding hours;
and the blind bird remembers with her song.

'Who is this pretty Lady who advances
riding the turning wave, the turning year,
succedant to this welcome harbinger,
west winds and cadence of their amber showers?
Who with her sandal on the brilliant waters,
bound with the western Hyades, and blind
with sunrise and the white Atlantic surge,
who Primavera called and Proserpine,
(this warm mouth wet with dew)
remembers amaranth and daffodil
on these green mountains only?'

She whom I hold
(devouring Time blunt thou the Lyons pawes)
under the shadowing myrtle, under rain,
in spite of cormorant devouring Time.

II

The eagles and the standards, and the lances,
the chattering kettledrums, and stiff brocade,
bronze generals, the helmet and the sword,
perish in the sour wind that walks between
the broken concrete and the happy soldier.
There's one that marches with a Roman face
by the breached bastions of a citadel.
Put up your bright swords, or the dew will rust them.
Remember the dark root, and crying shower,
soldier, and the blind bird. There's one that marches.
And leave behind the fallen capital.

The summer step of the helmed conqueror
echoes in fallen cities. And the wind
rustles the poisonous laurel and the bay.

The cities of the mind are still untaken,
no bombardment appals their denizens.
Not for the proud material citadel
but for that other country of the mind,
soldier, the lean mouths of your hungry guns
curse the gold dawn. Though broken armies
reel from the burst barriers of your city,
think of that other whose unshaken walls
front the defeated captains.

Not the dead
but your implicit sons these roofs inherit.

Soldier, remember the blind voices singing
in the dark wind, and springing
from the defeated gourd, the bitter root.
This is the coloquintida which breaks
heart, binds
agony of the tongue, the mind's
acceptance of the calamitous drought,
bringing the west wind and the falling showers,
the lady of the ocean, and gold flowers,
shakes
the smooth nave of the unintended years,
the rolling wheel, the guarded universe.

Soldier, this is the iron tooth which fastens
in the devouring flesh, the steadfast mind.
And this the pain persuades
bright irrecoverable temples of the wind.
There are no granite voices in the brain,
only the blind bird, her forgotten song,
weeps in the distant spring, and with her tears
scorches the cavernous ulcer of lost pain.

With autumn foot the beaten armies waver
and legions broken by the angry guns
slip the destroying lances. One that marches.
So there is no surrender, no defeat.
And death no refutation. In these ruins
build the secure foundations. And these fragments
lapse in the silent temples.

Who will build
impossible cities of the darkening wind
on these green plains, or find
phantasmagora of the mind

grown on these mountains? Killed
beneath the hungry turf these bones lie under
who the fat maggots foster will not wonder
at the black earth, or listen
the living blackbird christen
advancing spring and the arriving year:
and the keen song of the blind bird no longer
pierce clouded brain and impercipient ear:
or the green corn's increase
survive this broken peace.

The cities are not built, the citadels
stand only in the shadow of the mind.
Neither is death victorious. These the fallen
fell undefeated. Soldier, your defeat
lies in material victory: dishonour
in the fat lap of peace. Nor battle only
with guns the gilt conquerors, but with sword
the dark invading legions of the brain.

But aching hand, the agony of bone,
terror and the unprofitable grave,
and the whore's finger of the waning moon,
the blind suck of the black returning wave,
these limbs dishonour with the sodden weed
and lank spray of the branching ocean fern.
This broken plinth
feeds the cracked gourd, the splintered colocynth;
and the dark voices of the rain recede
or the green spring return.

But spring returns
and wakes the fever in the vine, and leaping
lance of the crocus in the broken skull.
You lover, O you soldier, wake again
from your cold grave and hear my decent song
burn the green hills, and the swart brooks rejoice.
The lady of the sunlight and the spring
borne on the waft of winds and clouded showers
hears a new voice begin
her matin from the roofs of broken towers;
and the blind circle turns
once more the navel of the rolling years
in the wrecked groove of the wide universe,
warped westwards on the beating of bright wings.

III

Imagination of the shattered years
and horror of the disappointed spring
whose acrid blood has bitten the black root

and blasted the green promise of my verse,
has halted the blind voice, and brought no balm,
or weeping descant of the April rain.
Wherefore you lovers under the cold snow
forget the flowering jawbone: bitter wind
chuckles the standing ribs, with bony fingers
strums ironic Aeolian melodies.
And you soldier
sentry with frozen rifle the false dawn.

Since the raped girl and wounded conqueror
are all remembered in the breaking song
of this false spring, in this forgotten war,
and those imaginary citadels;
devouring Time, that blunts the Lyons paw;
delusive visions of the blinded bird
that haunts these thickets with lunatic tongue,
and dense imperial phantoms of the wind:
soldier of bright arms and the burning spear
watch the oiled balance in the darkness swing
sloped on the axle of the turning year,
scaled with dry winter and the weeping spring.

In the dull trample of helmed conquerors
integral vision of the single mind
among these fallen vain liberators.

Poem for H

There is another country to remember
with sandals (yellow as your falling hair)
bound blossoming with ocean, in whose grave
unsecret colour lies
the shallow mirror of these shelving eyes.
And no profound
recession of deep tides or swirling shingle,
no trade wind in the hair,
only the sibilant murmur of the maiden
from dank caves of dry land.

TIME WAS

by Lynette Roberts

Time was when Peru 'The 4 Quarters Of The World' was more cultured than we realise. Few legends of their origin exist and those that do vary with each interpreter. I have therefore read several versions of these stories and used my discretion as to which I should select, adapt, and simplify, remembering the light humour of the Indians and introducing, when possible, the authentic sayings of their race. An example of their humour is their delight in the mouse. It gives them great pleasure to imagine a long-eared mouse sitting manfully in a rush-bottomed boat; or as one of the myths (in Transition, Fall 1937, No. 26) tells us: The mouse instead of squealing to wisk back the disappearing soul of a child ran to the 4 corners of the room and left a small mess: this making the Witch of Darkness who had given him these instructions 'lose out.' Of the sayings although I know quite a few and have actually been in contact with some of the old Peruvian Indians it is not easy to place them here: some, Tampu-tocco the 'House of Windows.' Paccari-tampu the 'House of Dawn' I have used: likewise 'the eyebrow of the mountain' and 'Huaca,' both terms still introduced in the South American language of to-day though somewhat modified in meaning. The legend of the golden wedge is theirs also; the old Inca names and the literal translations of these have inspired for the continuity of the story, i.e., the fact that Cachi, Uchu, and Auca, represent salt, pepper and pleasure falls in well with the geographical fauna of Peru which did have salt plains, pepper and cocaine trees, tough Igunas, talking-birds and pears. The dance too is very old. It was originally danced by a length of human beings forming a chain 'each taking hold of the hand of the man beyond his immediate neighbour and the whole body moving backwards and forwards 3 steps at a time as they approached the throne.' Later the same theme developed, Prescott tells us: 'One

of the Incas introduced a massive gold chain for the nobles to hold in their hands as they performed the National dance. The chain was 700 feet in length, and the links nearly round as a man's wrist!'

The ORACLE caged as a bird SAID. MANCO CAPAC take your three brothers and disappear. Take CACHI UCHU and AUCA and where the lemon rod sinks in the soil THERE lies 'the navel' for your tribe. MANCO CAPAC went. The ORACLE bird swinging from his right finger. The golden rod clenched in his fist. They came to—A STIFF WHITE PLAIN. The ORACLE caged as a bird SAID. MANCO CAPAC tell CACHI to fetch the SITTING GODS forgotten in the cave: The mouse-shawl for my poor powdered back.

CACHI went but did not return.

And the golden rod failed to sink.

Then came they to—THE PEPPER GROVES. Upon a shadow-statue worked by Eastermen. The ORACLE caged as a bird SAID. MANCO CAPAC tell UCHU to leaf this stone with gold.

UCHU stole, was himself turned to stone.

And the golden rod failed to sink.

Then came they to—THE MOUNTAIN OF ILLAPA. The ORACLE caged as a bird SAID. MANCO CAPAC tell AUCA to fly to the eyebrow of this mountain and find a site for my GOD.

AUCA flew but did not return.

And the golden rod failed to sink.

Then came they to—THE COCAINE AVENUES. TO THE RIBBON-SKY OF BIRDS. TO THE SEA-MAIZE AND VANILLA VINES. TO THE CHICHA VALLEY AND HARD BLUE RAIN. TO THE SNOW LLAMAS ALLIGATORS AND BEARS.

MANCO CAPAC stood still.

AND THE GOLDEN ROD SANK AT HIS FEET.

DANCE OF THE GOLD UMBELICAL CORD.

Sung in wailing tones with an elementary movement swaying to and fro. Each member of the tribe places one hand on the cord, for this is a religious rite, in celebration of their land. CUZCO 'the navel' of PERU.

woah woah ah
woah woah ah
woah woah ah

tunderi oo pah
tunderi oo pah

woah woah ah
woah woah ah
woah woah ah

tunderi oo pah
tunderi oo pah

woah woah ah
woah woah ah
woah woah ah

banga-banga-bom

banga-banga-bom

woah woah ah
woah woah ah
woah woah ah

tunderi oo pah
tunderi oo pah

woah woah ah
woah woah ah
woah woah ah

As the tribe sway and gently moan their tribal leader speaks with closed eyes:

I, MANCO CAPAC with the gold tears wept by the sun claim this valley for my tribe. I, MANCO CAPAC proclaim YOU free on the land. YOU shall build SUN-CAVES to YOUR GODS and a COLUMN for their Light. You shall weave mountains out of Iguana dust And dragons from the River of Reeds. You shall make metal harder than steel, and cement stronger than glue. You shall build macadamised roads, walls and small pollen-birds. NOBLE TRIBE OF CUZCO YOU sprang from the HOUSE OF WINDOWS, now build YOUR HOUSE OF DAWN. May the GREAT ALL POWERFUL GODS protect YOU for I, MANCO CAPAC, must leave.

THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

by Francis Scarfe

There was once an old man who lived in a cave by the sea-shore. He was so old that he had forgotten all about even death, and death seemed to have forgotten all about him, and he counted a year for every hair in his thick white beard. At times, however, he spent hours thinking about his long past, and as he sat down on the rocks to bathe his feet and watch the weak waves dying rapidly under his withered toes, he would remember how soundly he slept seventy years ago with the strong smooth arms of

his last wife around him. And then he would feel lonely and stretch himself on the sand in his cave and try to sleep. He would talk all day with crabs and starfishes, the wire-worm and the limpet were his friends, he stroked them many a time until they clung deliciously to his bony fingers and looked, at first furtively, but later with admiration, into the blue crevices of his eyes. Or, swimming more like a fish than a man, he visited the hollow caves under the sea, where lie the bones of our ancestors and the sharp

teeth of monsters in rows waiting for the tide of life to turn. It was one day when he was doing this, probing the blue caverns with his blue eyes, gazing with rapture into the gaping old wombs of the earth, and wishing, as only a very old man could wish, that he might be born again so that he could always live there watching the fins and the keels passing overhead, it was on one of those days when he felt eternally young and eternally old that the accident took place. Advancing slowly into the depths of a new cave, he was suddenly bitten by an ancient crab that lived there, that had lived there for three centuries, guarding its home even against the hungry seal and the adventurous porpoise. When he reached the surface he found that five of his toes were missing, all from the left foot, and only the frayed bones and wiry nerve-ends were left hanging from the sole. On the next day he again entered the sea, and was about to swim into the cave when his leg became entangled in a growth of seaweed which had leaves like open knives. When he returned to the beach and lay there exhausted, he saw that the whole of his left leg had been cut away, leaving a ragged stump at the knee. It did not bleed and he felt no pain, and on closer inspection he found that his whole thigh had the appearance of soft stone or dry clay. It was from that day that the old man found a new meaning in life, for he had discovered how to die.

He bought himself a saw, and spent most of his days cutting off pieces of his left thigh until none of it remained. When he had finished he began sawing his right leg, beginning at the foot, and by careful calculation managed to make the whole limb last

three years before it was entirely reduced to powder, leaving him with his trunk, his arms and his head. It was not many years before the trunk itself had completely disappeared, the old man cutting it into logs and crushing the pieces carefully between two stones, after which he scattered the dust among the sand of the beach. It was a strange sight to see the old man's venerable head crawling about, with nothing under it save a neck and two arms. It took him a long time to get used to it, and at first he found it a tedious way of moving about, but sometimes he would laugh to think what his family, long since dead, would think if they saw him now, and that idea gave him a little comfort. He was not content, however, until he had also disposed of his left arm in the same way, and at last he succeeded, after great difficulties, in severing his right arm by rubbing it against a sharp rock. That was a great day of rejoicing for him, and he rolled over on the moss weeping tears of delight.

So now, if you walk silently by night along the beach, you will see an old man's head, sometimes with eyes closed, dreaming peacefully of the mysteries that only an old man can understand, or frenziedly rolling over the pebbles in a vain attempt to escape from the nightmare of creation, when he feels a terrible pain in some little atom of his heart which, by now, has drifted to the far ends of the sea, for sometimes his heart would like to beat again, and the pain of it spreads all over the earth in search of the lost pieces. But most often, his head lies very still, the red lips parted in a smile and the long beard growing white along the sand, and the great blue eyes wide open, staring up into the stars.

SEVENTH LETTER

DEAR TAMBI,

After many attempts at writing this letter I have at last decided to present only, with all the platitudes implied, some view of my present outlook on poetry, in the hope that you and your readers will correct and complete it.

I

The present situation. Asking ourselves why Byron and Shelley are better understood on the continent than here, the answer is that the continent has better understood the nature of Romanticism as a whole. The Romantic Movement is not yet over, and in spite of ourselves we are a part of it. Graves with his dragons, Laura Riding with her introspection, Eliot with his picture of social disintegration and isolation of the individual, Auden with his myths and slang, his revolt in both language and politics, the Sitwells with their making of music and fantasy, we are all in it up to the neck.

Coinciding with the French Revolution, Napoleon, the Industrial Revolution and a new conception of man, the Romantic Movement was the logical outcome of a breakdown in a social and intellectual structure. Since then, no new synthesis has been achieved. The conditions under which Wordsworth and Shelley wrote are still with us. Romanticism did not die with the revolution because its revolutionary fervour was at once turned against the injustices of the machine age. It identified itself alternatively with the new socialism, or Anglo-Catholicism, or with the new æstheticism, branches of the same tree. I do not intend to develop this idea any more, beyond saying

- (a) That philosophy via Hegel, Bergson, Croce and Gentile has followed a line of romantic idealism.

- (b) That the same applies to the modern individualist psychology of Freud and others.
- (c) The society which has been split by idealism and materialism is politically and culturally incapable of producing a synthesis.

II

The poet at the present time is, therefore, in a difficult position. In literature alone, never mind society, he is faced by impossible alternatives: on the one side the Reporting and materialist conception of Grigson and his group; on another, the cultural synthesis recommended by Eliot and Pound; on another, he cannot open his mouth without being Right or Left (and automatically wrong for half the community); he has the alternative of the mumbo-jumbo of Surrealism (the prophetic Blake on a monstrous scale), or he is invited to be a little Dryden.

The air must be cleared; the only way at the present time is for the poet to realise his position and be himself. What is himself? Keats had the answer, which has been sadly mistranslated ever since he wrote it. He spoke of the poet 'having no character,' 'negative capability.' By this he means that the poet must have every character: the character of the poet is the power of immense human sympathy. In as far as the poet realises himself, he realises all men: this is my answer to Mr. Little and Miss Mair in your recent number. It is useless to condemn poets one does not understand: what has happened is that either the poet has not understood himself, or Miss Mair has not understood the poet. In all cases the reader (whom no one obliges to read the poem) must in fairness give the poet the benefit of the doubt. Has Miss Mair read Shakespeare's *Venus and the Turtle*? Has she read all the

interpretations of *Hamlet*, or has she also one to offer?

The 'self' of the poet at the present time is in a sense bound to be limited. The 'Universal Man,' which was the ideal of the Renaissance, no longer seems possible. No Leonardo could digest and reinterpret all the vast body of knowledge, all the thousand movements in society and art, which we have to-day. In any case he addressed himself to a limited public which he knew and, 'universal' though in a sense he is, Leonardo was a great draughtsman and painter, and a minor poet.

The 'Universal Man' of our time would not, I think, be a poet. But supposing 'he' were: I think he would be rather a body of poets. Our poets, at present divided in hostile groups, are killing each other and writing one a wing, one a leg, one a beak, one an eye of the bird of poetry. They must get together. One of the ways they can get together is in the verse-drama. I think that after the present war the verse-drama will be the medium through which some new synthesis in poetry might be achieved.

The poet at the present time is drawn between two seemingly irreconcilable conceptions of the universe: materialism and idealism. It should be realised that these conceptions are only man-made and can be overthrown. They are each a half-truth. Asked whether the universe is just matter, or whether it is just meaning, I reply that as far as I am aware it is both. This is the only answer to the materialists and the spiritual mystics. In common terms: there must be effected a synthesis between psychology and sociology. Auden tried to do it, in a rather too narrow way.

The poet must be of his age. As this age has been muddled, unpleasant, depressing, dishonest, so a great deal of poetry has had the same characteristics. But the fact that it has not all been so is a reply to those who regard poetry as an automatic secretion and reflection of the time. There has also been much honesty, much effort towards order. But the poet must be of his age, however bad the age may appear. If he is not 'modern' when he lives, if he is never contemporary

when he is alive, he never will be contemporary nor alive. He will be stillborn. That is why we don't want people to write Keatsian Odes, Shelleyan fables, Drydenian skits or Shakespearean tragedies of blood. We want these odes, fables, skits and tragedies to emerge from our present habits of thought and ways of living. All living poetry is contemporary, Shakespeare alongside of Eliot, Shelley alongside of Spender. If Spender modelled himself on Shelley he would not exist.

The poet must use the language of his contemporaries, or one a little in advance of theirs. It is the only one he and they understand. It might be a useful exercise to write in the language of Chaucer: it would be more useful, however, to realise that Chaucer was using a language which in his own time was bright and new, not derivative and old. It is cheek to use foreign words when a good English equivalent exists. Look at Barker's early pseudo-Miltonic diction, Auden's pseudo-French in the 'New Year Letter.' I prefer a poet, like Dylan Thomas, to invent a word rather than borrow one. The same applies to imagery: perhaps there is something to be said for Scurfield's 'expensive bun' rather than the 'heavenly orbs' of the Hassall school. Have Wordsworth and Byron lived in vain? As for Keats, whom people throw at the modern poets, some of his worst poetry is a stew of cheap poetic diction, and his best poems are often good in spite of it. A writer like Bridges could digest a heavy poetic diction by amalgamating it with contemporary speech, of which he was a master. Let us finish with this snobbery of language: the word 'bun' is as fit for poetry as 'orb'; fitter, perhaps, since 'orb' is also one of those words which has become slightly funny. And the same with all the hollow words, the 'beauteous' and the 'wondrous,' and what not.

III

All poetry is political and social, as are all men. But the social interpretation of poetry is only one of many, only one part of the critical act. Any criticism neglecting

the social roots and radiation of poetry is incomplete. But the same applies to psychology, philosophy, aesthetics, religion, ethics, philology. Poetry reflects all human activities, and can be measured by them all.

Poetry is more than opinion. A Fascist and a Communist can both write a good poem about the present war. Human dignity must be observed.

There is no real difference between poetry and science. Science measures and discovers quantity; poetry measures and discovers quality. But as there is no quality without quantity, the poet must understand the scientist, poetry and science complete each other. Mankind will be delivered from ignorance and misery by the co-operation of the scientist with the artist.

Man is the measure of all things ; poetry is the measure of man.

A poet is just a man who writes poetry. That is where the nineteenth century went wrong, in thinking he was something more than a man. We cannot accept Freud's idea of the poet as a freak. It is just as peculiar to make poems as it is to make tables or chemicals. Perhaps all men are freaks in a sense. But such a conclusion, which is highly questionable, would not differentiate the poet. We are all sensitive to different things and have all appropriate means of expression.

IV

Real criticism of poetry must be done by poets. But all men with special knowledge of human life can contribute to the tools of criticism. Parody, translation, imitation, satire, are the most direct forms of criticism. Criticism is choice. On its largest plane, criticism is thus the right living. Criticism of poetry is learning to live with poetry.

Every poem is an integral, indivisible, infinite whole, like a person. Analyse a painting, and it is still there when you have done with it, only your knowledge of it is increased. Criticism increases knowledge. Analysing poetry does not destroy poetry.

Because in a sense one cannot analyse poetry: one can analyse only one's knowledge and understanding of it.

But every poem belongs to a greater unity, Poetry, as every man belongs to his species. All poetry co-exists. No mind which has not absorbed, felt and understood a wide range of poetry, can with impunity pass judgment on a new poem. That is why it is harder to grasp Dylan Thomas than Homer: not merely because of their own natures, but because the preparatory critical work has not been done.

Poetry can answer all man's needs, from uplift to amusement or even degradation. From the Epic, the moral treatise, to the smutty limerick. The hierarchy exists, not of size and intention, but of language and feeling.

V

All poetry is 'subjective.' There is a difference between a cat and a poem 'about' a cat. However objective a poet thinks himself, he can only present *more* or *less* than can be seen from looking at a cat. That which presents less is not art, though it might be journalism. That which presents more might be poetry or criticism, or just an auctioneer's catalogue. None the less we must love and cherish the Objective Reporters: they kept our feet on the ground. Let us love also the poets of the Apocalypse if they are any good: they might help us to keep our head in the air.

Art is not entirely conscious or un- or sub-conscious. It is them all. We are all surrealists sometimes. Nobody is a surrealist all the time. Nobody is fully conscious all the time. Surrealism, like reporting, is a method of finding. After that it has to be purified. Surrealism has yet to be integrated into literature.

This brings us to Imagination. Imagination is an intuitive sense of reality. Imagery (and poetry itself) is the poet's expression *simultaneously* in language, and in the most direct possible manner, of reality and his reaction to it. These two things must not be

separate, as they sometimes are in defective poetry. Imagination can sometimes play the poet false, because every image, and every 'form' has an arbitrary element. What is inexact in the imagination can help us in other ways: that is why the surrealists, though they do not always provoke pleasure, are sometimes able to throw light on our lives.

Imagination, like poetry, is neither transcendental nor miraculous. The scope of a man's imagination depends on his own life and experience. Imagination plays the same part in poetry as in dreams. Dreams are not whispered into our ears by little fairies.

Poetry is a complete human gesture. Psychologists, etc., disagree only about the origins of gestural expression (language). Language is simplified gesture, and poetry is simplified language. The gesture itself was originally the expression of a feeling. Thus we have the steps feeling-gesture-language-poetry. All the arts express life through a symbolic co-ordination of bodily functions. Poetry is a sort of dancing with the voice.

As in dancing, so in poetry: the most economical gesture is the most expressive. But flamboyant language will correspond with wild feeling, restrained language and rhythm with controlled feeling. We can judge a poet's sincerity only by such simple tests: if the language is prim, while he talks about his heart breaking, then he is a bad poet because he had not understood the appropriate gesture. Rhythm gives a lot away. The rhythm of a man's poetry should be both physical and psychic. Physically, it expresses the beat of his heart: psychically it expresses the integration of his personality. Some rhythms we all know of, through which nothing but trivialities could be implied. But as for economy: economy in poetry is proportionate to the scale of the poet's nature. Blake and Hugo, Shakespeare,

achieve their huge form of economy. The meanness of the economy of Pope and Gray reflects the small scale of their emotional lives. The poetic dwarf, and the other, who had a 'white melancholy, a leucocholia,' a negative feeling.

The greatest dishonesty is to express shapeless feeling in an artificially shaped way. I distrust a man whose heart breaks in faultless terza-rima. This is what is meant by 'academic' writing.

In writing all this I am in a sense betraying my belief that poetry should be treated empirically. Generalisations should spring only from the contemplation and analysis of individual poems. It is that method which, in criticism, I have adopted. It is a strange thing that we have had so many 'aestheticians' in this country who generalise glibly about poetry but have never proved that they could write anything worth reading about a poem. I always remember some words of Eliot's which impressed me years ago: 'Everyone talks about poetry, but no one offers us a poem.' But I think that any critic, who has spent a life in writing and criticising poetry, would be able to contribute something to aesthetics, the theory of art (as I understand it, not 'the science of beauty' as some say). And the greatest task and privilege of the critic should be to sympathise. I agree with Dryden: 'They wholly mistake the nature of criticism who think its business principally to find fault.' I hope Mr. Little and Miss Mair will write to *POETRY* and explain why they *like* any poem: it would be of far greater use than any of their condemnations. Or you might have a special number in which your readers explain why they like any modern poem.

FRANCIS SCARFE.

(This letter originally written for P.L. has now appeared in 'Auden and After' and is reprinted with acknowledgments to Messrs. George Routledge, the publishers.)

POINTS OF VIEW

T. S. ELIOT

by George Orwell

Burnt Norton, by T. S. ELIOT
(Faber & Faber, 1/-)

East Coker, by T. S. ELIOT
(Faber & Faber, 1/-)

The Dry Salvages, by T. S. ELIOT
(Faber & Faber, 1/-)

There is very little in Eliot's later work that makes any deep impression on me. That is a confession of something lacking in myself, but it is not, as it may appear at first sight, a reason for simply shutting up and saying no more, since the change in my own reaction probably points to some external change which is worth investigating.

I know a respectable quantity of Eliot's earlier work by heart. I did not sit down and learn it, it simply stuck in my mind as any passage of verse is liable to do when it has really rung the bell. Sometimes after only one reading it is possible to remember the whole of a poem of, say, twenty or thirty lines, the act of memory being partly an act of reconstruction. But as for these three latest poems, I suppose I have read each of them two or three times since they were published, and how much do I verbally remember? 'Time and the bell have buried the day,' 'At the still point of the turning world,' 'The vast waters of the petrel and the porpoise,' and bits of the passage beginning 'O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark.' (I don't count 'In my end is my beginning,' which is a quotation). That is about all that sticks in my head of its own accord. Now one cannot take this as proving that *Burnt Norton* and the rest are worse than the more memorable early poems, and one might even take it as proving the contrary, since it is arguable that that which lodges itself most easily in the mind is the obvious and even the vulgar. But it is clear

that something has departed, some kind of current has been switched off, the later verse does not *contain* the earlier, even if it is claimed as an improvement upon it. I think one is justified in explaining this by a deterioration in Mr. Eliot's subject-matter. Before going any further, here are a couple of extracts, just near enough to one another in meaning to be comparable. The first is the concluding passage of *The Dry Salvages*:

And right action is freedom
From past and future also.
For most of us this is the aim
Never here to be realised;
Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;
We, content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil.

Here is an extract from a much earlier poem:

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Stared from the sockets of his eyes!
He knew how thought clings round
dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and luxuries;

He knew the anguish of the marrow,
The ache of the skeleton:
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

The two passages will bear comparison since they both deal with the same subject, namely death. The first of them follows upon a longer passage in which it is explained, first of all, that scientific research is all nonsense, a childish superstition on the same level as fortune-telling, and then that the

only people ever likely to reach an understanding of the universe are saints, the rest of us being reduced to 'hints and guesses.' The keynote of the closing passage is 'resignation.' There is a 'meaning' in life and also in death; unfortunately we don't know what it is, but the fact that it exists should be a comfort to us as we push up the crocuses, or whatever it is that grows under the yew trees in country churchyards. But now look at the other two stanzas I have quoted. Though fathered on to somebody else, they probably express what Mr. Eliot himself felt about death at that time, at least in certain moods. They are not voicing resignation. On the contrary, they are voicing the pagan attitude towards death, the belief in the next world as a shadowy place full of thin, squeaking ghosts, envious of the living, the belief that however bad life may be, death is worse. This conception of death seems to have been general in antiquity, and in a sense it is general now. 'The anguish of the marrow, the ague of the skeleton,' Horace's famous ode *Eheu fugaces*, and Bloom's unuttered thoughts during Paddy Dignam's funeral, are all very much of a muchness. So long as man regards himself as an individual, his attitude towards death must be one of simple resentment. And however unsatisfactory this may be, if it is intensely felt it is more likely to produce good literature than a religious faith which is not really *felt* at all, but merely accepted against the emotional grain. So far as they can be compared, the two passages I have quoted seem to me to bear this out. I do not think it is questionable that the second of them is superior as verse, and also more intense in feeling, in spite of a tinge of burlesque.

What are these three poems, *Burnt Norton* and the rest, 'about'? It is not so easy to say what they are about, but what they appear on the surface to be about is certain localities in England and America with which Mr. Eliot has ancestral connections. Mixed up with this is a rather gloomy musing upon the nature and purpose of life, with the rather indefinite conclusion I have mentioned

above. Life has a 'meaning,' but it is not a meaning one feels inclined to grow lyrical about; there is faith, but not much hope, and certainly no enthusiasm. Now the subject-matter of Mr. Eliot's early poems was very different from this. They were not hopeful, but neither were they depressed or depressing. If one wants to deal in antitheses, one might say that the later poems express a melancholy faith and the earlier ones a glowing despair. They were based on the dilemma of modern man, who despairs of life and does not want to be dead, and on top of this they expressed the horror of an over-civilised intellectual confronted with the ugliness and spiritual emptiness of the machine age. Instead of 'not too far from the yew-tree' the keynote was 'weeping, weeping multitudes', or perhaps 'the broken fingernails of dirty hands.' Naturally these poems were denounced as 'decadent' when they first appeared, the attacks only being called off when it was perceived that Eliot's political and social tendencies were reactionary. There was, however, a sense in which the charge of 'decadence' could be justified. Clearly these poems were an end-product, the last gasp of a cultural tradition, poems which spoke only for the cultivated third-generation rentier, for people able to feel and criticise but no longer able to act. E. M. Forster praised *Prufrock* on its first appearance because 'it sang of people who were ineffectual and weak' and because it was 'innocent of public spirit' (this was during the other war, when public spirit was a good deal more rampant than it is now). The qualities by which any society which is to last longer than a generation actually has to be sustained—industry, courage, patriotism, frugality, philoprogenitiveness—obviously could not find any place in Eliot's early poems. There was only room for rentier values, the values of people too civilised to work, fight or even reproduce themselves. But that was the price that had to be paid, at any rate at that time, for writing a poem worth reading. The mood of lassitude, irony, disbelief, disgust, and not the sort of beefy enthusiasm demanded by

the Squires and Herberts, was what sensitive people actually felt. It is fashionable to say that in verse only the words count and the 'meaning' is irrelevant, but in fact every poem contains a prose-meaning, and when the poem is any good it is a meaning which the poet urgently wishes to express. All art is to some extent propaganda. *Prufrack* is an expression of futility, but it is also a poem of wonderful vitality and power, culminating in a sort of rocket-burst in the closing stanzas:

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
 Combing the white hair of the waves blown
 back
 When the wind blows the water white and
 black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
 By sea girls wreathed with seaweed red and
 brown,
 Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

There is nothing like that in the later poems, although the rentier despair on which these lines are founded has been consciously dropped.

But the trouble is that conscious futility is something only for the young. One cannot go on 'despairing of life' into a ripe old age. One cannot go on and on being 'decadent,' since decadence means falling and one can only be said to be falling if one is going to reach the bottom reasonably soon. Sooner or later one is obliged to adopt a positive attitude towards life and society. It would be putting it too crudely to say that every poet in our time must either die young, enter the Catholic Church, or join the Communist Party, but in fact the escape from the consciousness of futility is along those general lines. There are other deaths besides physical death, and there are other sects and creeds besides the Catholic Church and the Communist Party, but it remains true that after a certain age one must either stop writing or dedicate oneself to some purpose not wholly æsthetic. Such a dedication necessarily means a break with the past:

Every attempt
 Is a wholly new start, and a different kind
 of failure
 Because one has only learnt to get the better
 of words
 For the thing one no longer has to say, or
 the way in which
 One is no longer disposed to say it. And so
 each venture
 Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
 With shabby equipment always deteriorating
 In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
 Undisciplined squads of emotion.

Eliot's escape from individualism was into the Church, the Anglican Church as it happened. One ought not to assume that the gloomy Pétainism to which he now appears to have given himself over was the unavoidable result of his conversion. The Anglo-Catholic movement does not impose any political 'line' on its followers, and a reactionary or austro-fascist tendency had always been apparent in his work, especially his prose writings. In theory it is still possible to be an orthodox religious believer without being intellectually crippled in the process; but it is far from easy, and in practice books by orthodox believers usually show the same cramped, blinkered outlook as books by orthodox Stalinists or others who are mentally unfree. The reason is that the Christian churches still demand assent to doctrines which no one seriously believes in. The most obvious case is the immortality of the soul. The various 'proofs' of personal immortality which can be advanced by Christian apologists are psychologically of no importance; what matters, psychologically, is that hardly anyone nowadays *feels* himself to be immortal. The next world may be in some sense 'believed in' but it has not anywhere near the same actuality in people's minds as it had a few centuries ago. Compare for instance the gloomy mumblings of these three poems with *Jerusalem my happy home*; the comparison is not altogether pointless. In the second case you have a man to whom the next world is as real as this one. It is true that his vision of it is incredibly vulgar—

a choir practice in a jeweller's shop—but he believes in what he is saying and his belief gives vitality to his words. In the other case you have a man who does not really *feel* his faith, but merely assents to it for complex reasons. It does not in itself give him any fresh literary impulse. At a certain stage he feels the need for a 'purpose,' and he wants a 'purpose' which is reactionary and not progressive; the immediately available refuge is the Church, which demands intellectual absurdities of its members; so his work becomes a continuous nibbling round those absurdities, an attempt to make them acceptable to himself. The Church has not now any living imagery, any new vocabulary to offer:

The rest

Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

Perhaps what we need is prayer, observance, etc., but you do not make a line of poetry by stringing those words together. Mr. Eliot speaks also of

the intolerable wrestle

With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter.

I do not know, but I should imagine that the struggle with meanings would have loomed smaller, and the poetry would have seemed to matter more, if he could have found his way to some creed which did not start off by forcing one to believe the incredible.

There is no saying whether Mr. Eliot's

development could have been much other than it has been. All writers who are any good develop throughout life, and the general direction of their development is determined. It is absurd to attack Eliot, as some left-wing critics have done, for being a 'reactionary' and to imagine that he might have used his gifts in the cause of democracy and Socialism. Obviously a scepticism about democracy and a disbelief in 'progress' are an integral part of him; without them he could not have written a line of his works. But it is arguable that he would have done better to go much further in the direction implied in his famous 'Anglo-Catholic and Royalist' declaration. He could not have developed into a Socialist, but he might have developed into the last apologist of aristocracy.

Neither feudalism nor indeed Fascism is not necessarily deadly to poets, though both are to prose-writers. The thing that is really deadly to both is Conservatism of the half-hearted modern kind.

It is at least imaginable that if Eliot had followed wholeheartedly the anti-democratic, anti-perfectionist strain in himself he might have struck a new vein comparable to his earlier one. But the negative, Pétainism which turns its eyes to the past, accepts defeat, writes off earthly happiness as impossible, mumbles about prayer and repentance and thinks it a spiritual advance to see life as 'a pattern of living worms in the guts of the women of Canterbury'—that, surely, is the least hopeful road a poet could take.

ANOTHER READING

by Kathleen Raine

I have been asked to write on Mr. Eliot's three latest poems, because my point of view at once differs from that of Mr. Orwell, and expresses the point of view of many of my generation. I admire Mr. Orwell's article in certain limited respects. He avoids the

more obvious pitfalls, in applying political, rational, non-poetic standards, to poetry. Mr. Orwell does not fall into the error that Communists usually make in such cases, of failing to see that a problem exists that is not stated in terms of dialectical materialism.

My point is, that Mr. Orwell has fallen into the error of which he accuses Mr. Eliot—that of pursuing a line of thought that has become a dead end; of accepting certain statements about the universe as final that are, like all knowledge, provisional.

Mr. Orwell does not misrepresent Mr. Eliot when he quotes him as saying that 'the only people ever likely to reach an understanding of the universe are saints, the rest of us being reduced to "hints and guesses".' Nor is he wrong when he says that 'so long as man regards himself as an individual, his attitude to death must be one of simple resentment.' But one cannot accept Mr. Orwell's conclusions. Who, then, does understand the universe? About the individual resenting death, St. Paul himself could not have stated more concisely the point of the Christian attack on the self-loving ego. But man does not necessarily, as Mr. Orwell implies, think of himself first and foremost as an individual. Freud, in his concept of the *id* the death-instincts, and indeed, the unconscious mind altogether suggests that many doors open out of that individual entity. James Joyce has drawn a picture of the mind of man, that has little of the individual contour about it. A world inside us presents a landscape as impersonal, vast, and beyond our reach and knowledge, as does that which opens on the other, the outer side, of our senses. Picasso, too, has stripped the contours from the object and the individual, and presented us with an image of man liberated from himself, that gives life a scope that explodes like a balloon the individual pigmy, and his squeaking ghost.

Those two artists—and Mr. Eliot is a third—have been quicker in the uptake of the new sciences than those who, like Mr. Orwell, stand firmly by the values that were solid before Einstein; before biochemistry; before modern physics, genetics, psychology; Joyce, Picasso and the cubists, tore down the old limits drawn, not by nature but by habits of thought and language, and put up others that have made the world look very different. We live not only at the end of a

decadent materialist age; but at the beginning of a new period—one in which the concern of humanity will be with values more than with facts. For the circumnavigation of the material sciences has been completed. There are no more Eldorados of science. In essence, we know what is in the material universe, as we know the continents and the islands of the earth. Science has long held, for our imagination, that world of fantastic promise that wishful thinking will always substitute for true values. Some health and wealth science may indeed give, as South America yielded gold and potatoes. But it will not teach us values; and those must come, now as at any other period of civilisation, from the human spirit.

Like Mr. Orwell, my point of view is limited. Perhaps I am overlooking more than I know in omitting to consider deeply Mr. Eliot's political importance—the sources and the implications of the Anglo-Catholic-Royalist position, without which, Mr. Orwell perhaps rightly says, Mr. Eliot could not have written a line of his work. But whatever point I may be missing, Mr. Orwell misses another—that Mr. Eliot is a poet not a political pamphleteer. If poets are 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world' it is by virtue of their poetry, and not of their legislation. Who now cares whether Dante was a Guelf or a Ghibelline? Or even whether Milton was a Royalist or a Cromwellian? Mr. Eliot has been a movement, as well as a poet, and Mr. Orwell has seen the movement and missed the poetry—but it is not the movement that remains, but the poetry. Whoever wins the class or any other war will inherit Mr. Eliot's poetry, when his politics concern only the historian. Poetry is an approach to the world, as science and religion is, and a poet is something more than the total of his poems. A poem is not written in a day but in a lifetime. Mr. Orwell has stood still in the Waste Land, and he expects to find that Mr. Eliot is also still there. But the poet is saying something more, 'mumbling about prayer and repentance' Mr. Orwell calls it. But what if Mr. Eliot is

in advance of his juniors? Never, so far as I know, has the work of a poet been more clearly stated than in *East Coker*. Indeed it is one of the main themes of the poem.

‘That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory;
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
With words and meanings: the poetry does not matter.’

and again

‘So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l’entre deux guerres*—
Trying to learn the use of words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate.’

Let every poet lay these words to heart. ‘A raid on the inarticulate’ is the work of all poetry, and that work carries poets into strange places.

‘You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know.
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.’

The raid on the inarticulate means, of course, much more than the problem of language. Mr. Eliot’s three new poems are concerned with the greatest issue of all—

man’s place in eternity. His discovery, or re-discovery will be an influence, during the next poetic generation, as potent as was that of the Waste Land on the last.

II

East Coker is a stern and dark, but not a tragic poem. Its darkness is the darkness of Dante’s hell, or purgatory, that implies the light and the love of paradise. An implicit acceptance of the inherent rightness of the laws that decree also death, darkness, and change, sustains the poem. It is written by a poet who believes that man is a spiritual being. No-one who does not see what this means can see that assertions like these are positive:

‘The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.’

or

‘I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope of the wrong thing;
wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing;
there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are
all in the waiting.’

There is Mr. Orwell’s pagan hell of squeaking ghosts, too:

‘O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark.
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant
into the vacant,
The captains, merchant bankers, eminent
men of letters’—

but for Mr. Eliot, that is a part of the divine plan, not the whole. Mr. Eliot is trying to rediscover that divine plan, ‘under conditions that seem unpropitious.’ For those poets who follow him, the conditions are less unpropitious—for they include Mr. Eliot’s work.

Burnt Norton, the second of the three, is a less sombre poem. Its theme is time. The poem is full of moving and beautiful images of the temporal world—the rose-garden, the pool, the leaves, children, birds, laughter.

‘Shall we follow?

Quick, said the bird, find them, find them
Round the corner, through the first gate,
Into our first world shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first
world.’

This world is the lovely illusion woven by
time—

‘Go, go, go said the bird. Human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.’
That ever-present end is love.

‘Love is itself unmoving
Only the cause and end of movement
Timeless and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation.’

Of that love, *Burnt Norton* contains one of the most profound and wonderful descriptions ever written, beginning with the already often quoted lines:

‘At the still point of the turning world.
Neither flesh nor fleshless
Neither from nor towards; at the still point,
there the dance is.’

The theme of *The Dry Salvages* is the greater part of life, that is not ourselves. For ‘The river is within us, the sea is all about us.’ The sea and its rhythm measures ‘time not our time’ and on that sea we are travellers.

‘Man’s curiosity searches past and future,
And clings to that dimension. But to
apprehend

The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation of the saint—
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime’s death in love.’

Mr. Eliot is not a saint nor a theologian, but a poet. Yet a poet at his best, is a saint of his own medium, and performs a miracle in his work. These poems are revolutionary in a sense that transcends the mere use of words. They are a re-assessment of life. Mr. Orwell’s evaluation reminds me of the comment that Coleridge made of some critics of Wordsworth who belittled him—I quote, as seems to be the general war-time habit, from memory—that the poet strode so far ahead of his critics, that he was diminished in their eyes, by the distance between them.

Perhaps I have given the impression that Mr. Eliot is concerned with spiritual values that refer to another life, and not to this one. But he writes of what is most human. I can speak only for myself, but I find that what Mr. Eliot writes about love is nearer the heart’s mark than anything that Stephen Spender—to name one of the better poets who speak the language of my generation—has written on that theme. Yet no one, I think, regards Mr. Eliot as a poet of love primarily. My point is that Mr. Eliot is a passionate and human man, and speaks the language of humanity, and that language is not a simple one. But is it less human to be great, wise, and many-sided; than to be immature, ignorant, and falsely simplified? Is the worst more human than the best? The Christian believes that the best is accessible to the worst, and the highest to the humblest human soul. Mr. Eliot’s consistent adherence to the highest values of Christianity, and the inheritance of civilisation, shows a deeper respect for the ordinary man than any facile simplification that Mr. Orwell, the B.B.C., or the Mass Observers offer to a public that they at heart despise.

ABOUT CONTRIBUTORS

EDWIN ALLAN: First publication. Favours light and comic verse which he thinks will find a larger audience than the metaphysical Empson-Madge-G. S. Fraser school of modern poets.

GEORGE BARKER: *Thirty Preliminary Poems* (Parton Press), 1933; *Alanna Autumnal*, prose journal (Wishart), 1934; *Poems* (Faber), April 1935; *Calamiterror*, 1937 (Faber); *Lament and Triumph*, 1940 (Faber) and *Janus*, September 1935, poetic prose (Faber). Taught at Sindai University, Tokyo, in the first year of the war. Now lives in New York.

JOHN BAYLISS: Has contributed to one or two war-time anthologies; works on the land.

LAURENCE CLARK: Had a poem in No. 1 and since then he has had no poems published. We came across those in this issue by pure coincidence, when we discovered a collection he had given to a friend for private printing before he embarked for the Far East. These six poems are from a group written in the army.

ALEX COMFORT: Author of two novels and an anthologist of verse by young hands. Writes verse plays and criticism of war poetry and painting. Messrs. Routledge are shortly publishing a pamphlet collection of his verse.

KEITH DOUGLAS: Oxford poet of promise, is out East serving in the R.A.F. He has previously appeared in Oxford publications only.

LAWRENCE DURRELL: Author of *The Black Book* and one of our regular contributors. Belonged to group of writers (Henry Miller, Anais Nin, and Alfred Perlés) who lived in Paris and edited the explosive magazine *Delta*. Made his home in Corfu from which place he was driven by the war to Greece and finally to Cairo, where he now teaches. Messrs. Faber & Faber have announced his first book of poems for forthcoming publication.

GAVIN EWART: An officer in the Royal

Artillery, writes occasional verse; was a regular contributor to *New Verse* since its inception in 1933. First book *Poems and Songs* was published in 1939.

JAMES FORSYTH: Is the author of several plays in prose and verse whose production was aborted by war and conscription. We think of the piece of verse in this number as 'Poem on an Unfinished Play.'

W. S. GRAHAM: Sends us this short note about himself: 'Born in 1918, Greenock, was educated there. I have never had a single poem appearing anywhere before. A small book of my poems called *Cage Without Grievance* will be coming out in the autumn.'

JOHN HALL: Contributed poems to Nos. 3, 4 and 6. Edited *Fords and Bridges*, Oxford-Cambridge magazine, and has recently made a collection for Staples Books of three poets who have not previously appeared in book form.

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

SEÁN JENNETT: Of Irish extraction, is a typographer in London. Messrs. Faber are issuing his first book of verse in the autumn.

FRANCIS KING: Contributed to *Poetry in Wartime* (Faber). At present an undergraduate at Oxford.

EMMANUEL LITVINOFF: A new poet who has contributed to *New Writing* and some war-time anthologies. Messrs. Routledge are issuing a booklet of his poems called *The Untried Soldier* in the autumn.

NORMAN NICHOLSON: Contributed to POETRY (London) No. 6. Edited *An Anthology of Religious Verse* for Penguin Books. Messrs. Staples are including his selected poems in an interesting three-poets Anthology with John Hall and Keith Douglas.

KATHLEEN RAINE: Has contributed to *The Criterion*, *Spectator*, *New Verse*, *Horizon* and *London Bulletin* among other periodicals. No

first book of poems although she has appeared in magazines and anthologies for the last eight years.

KEIDRYCH RHYS: Edited *Poems from the Forces*, a best seller. Before the war he ran *Wales*, a periodical devoted to the work of new Welsh writers. He is now in the Royal Artillery and still edits contemporary verse.

ANNE RIDLER: *Poems* (Oxford University Press); *A Dream Observed*, a pamphlet collection, POETRY (London); edited *A Little Book of Modern Verse* (Faber), and the second volume of *Shakespeare Criticism* for World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

LYNETTE ROBERTS: Comes from the Argentine. Married to a poet and editor. Contributes to *Life & Letters To-day*, *La Naçion* (Buenos Aires) and POETRY (London)

ALAN ROOK: Army Captain, was stationed in France and Belgium before Dunkirk. His two poems *The Retreat* and *Dunkirk Pier*, which first appeared in this magazine, have attracted the attention of critics in search for war poems. *Soldiers*, *This Iron*

Solitude, a pamphlet of his poems, was issued in August by Messrs. Routledge.

TOM SCOTT: One of our regular contributors, is stationed in West Africa and likes the place. Pre-war occupation, stone-masonry. Writes much verse in barrack room and army canteen, some of which will appear in future numbers.

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

HENRY TREECE: 38 *Poems* (Fortune Press); *Towards a Personal Armageddon* (James A. Decker Press); *Invitation and Warning* (Faber); co-edited *The White Horseman*, an anthology of new poets (Routledge).

PETER WELLS: Contributed a poem to No. 6. War-time farm labourer who prints his own poetry magazine, *Poetry Folios*, on a hand press.

DAVID WRIGHT: Has never before published poems and we know nothing about him except that he is a student at Oxford.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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None of the poems in this issue have appeared previously in print except in the case of Keith Douglas, who is difficult to contact, and whose two poems are reprinted from Augury by permission of Messrs. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

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