

1

The stars salve light across a sky
Carved by the moon's circuit,
Pierced by streetlamps,
Flayed by headlights,
Dripping brightness from every wound.

As the night faints away and dawn bubbles,
Red above the horizon,
I shut tight my eyes and seek
My own, safe darkness.

2

OLD WELL-REMEMBERED

It does not matter that outside a storm is blowing.
I well remember your wet nose by the fire,
Head on paws,
Eyes turned up above the firelight
To ask me - is it time to be going?

I never saw that corner of the mat before.
It seems so threadbare empty,
Unlike the cupboard
Filled by mementos of a lifetime
Out of sight, but nothing more.

Worn collar gathering cobwebs; rusty chain;
Chewed playthings; moth-balled blanket.
Old well-remembered
It was for the best,
Now I'm the one to feel the pain.

3

Go read the old poems, dear
See how they say
Blue sky, green sward, cool rain.

Not any more:
We tore open the sky
And killed the clouds
And massacred the trees.

Read the old poems, dear
Then you will see
What this old world
Must once have been.

4

QUESTIONS

So it's tomorrow then?
And maybe this time, of all times,
We will have cause to think on the words.
For what would he have said?
"Come away lads
He can't hear you now.....
Come away and set them up on me."

Strange.
Did he really care?
Did we?
We came away readily enough then -
Now who will lead us?
He poses formless questions
(Can he still hear us?)
Questions he would have laughed away with ease.

Autumn leaves brown-fluttering
And the sun watching misty-eyed,
The best time of year
- He would have joked -
For planting.
And now..... at least I think -
Will he see next year's flowers grow?

5

To any place,
To any place, a history, past
And to any time, a place.

Yet so close do barriers meet,
So close,
That,
 perhaps only for an instant.....

the swirling aside of tenuous vapours
and two worlds no longer apart
but one
and in that meeting comes the strangeness of a different time
and another's sky
and the breath of another, ghostly air.
But therein is no permanence,
rather,
the flicker of a candle on a dusty curtain
or the one moment
now
and the sun no longer shines.

But the distant stars
Forever are our past.

6

ALLEGORY

During his search for reality
Johann tripped over a tree-root
And cursed fluently.
Immediately, he fell to his knees,
Looked up past the gnarled tree,
Past the waving branches above him,
Up to the blue sky,
And prayed for forgiveness.
Tremulously, he prayed,
And looked at the sky, and prayed,
All unknowing that the tree was toppling,
Falling,

 falling,
 falling.....

On top of him.
Maybe he should have prayed to the tree instead.

7

The signs put forth their bright electric glare
To vaguely show through choked and fuming air
Litter on the ground along the street,
An evening, crowd-filled thoroughfare.

Pass, to a place where peace and quiet hide,
Where still unsullied beauties tremblingly abide -
I hurry past to fields and shrouded woods,
To wild and untouched countryside.

A long way on, half-bathed in darkness, stands
Some idle, lifeless machinery of man,
Waiting above trench-latticed muddy ground,
Waiting to advance into more wooded land.

Still further on: a streetlamp, throwing light
Onto low mist which, eddying and white,
Extends the length of empty silent streets,
Damp with soft rain beneath the stars this night.

But deep inside the large and growing town
There is a park with grass and trees and flowers,
Where I may pass some quiet untroubled hours,
 Beneath just the light of sun or stars,
 And only fragile leaves lie on the ground.

8

I feel for you beneath imaginary sheets -
Transition from commiserating day
To pressing darkness all around.
From one pair of eyes
No reason is forthcoming.

I am drawn by oblong city lights -
The painful call of something lost;
No-one, no place, no way to understand.
They are lidded shut
Sightless in eternal vaults,
Closed to moon and stars.

Lidded shut, thank God at peace.

Where does the future lie
But in the night, rooted in night,
Hidden in seas of endless night?

I will not be alone.

9

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFTS

'Tis Christmas Eve and twelve-o'-clock.
The blinds are drawn, the doors are locked;
The children's prayers, they have been said:
All wait for Christmas Day.

Then suddenly, where naught has been,
A pair of booted feet are seen.
Down the chimney comes a man
Carrying a sack.

His robes are red, his beard is white -
This is his long-awaited night,
And as he moves about the room
His sack begins to fill.

He leaves, and where presents have been
There are none left which can be seen.
A message, pinned upon the door, says:
"Thank-you for your gifts".

10

I struggle painfully along the slippery edge -
Precipitate fall on the threatening side,
Hastened by driving rain
And magnified by indeterminate gloom,
Lengthening shadows,
Together with blackness of beckoning space.

The dark cliffs rear tall
And I like a fly on a church spire,
Dizzy and exhausted in the howling wind,
Propelled to my fate with sickening certainty.

Smooth oily stones suddenly evade my feet
Sky reels and the disappearing edge,
Crumbled by my clutching fingers,
Swoops to the long grey vision of steep cliffside.
Shrieks mocking wind in commanding position
And summons the turmoil of sharp surf,
Far below,
But soon - oh! so soon
Approaches and inky blackness to follow.

11

AFTERMATH

Street is empty but for the weary wind
And leaves barely fluttering,
And a dated newspaper
Proclaiming that the end is come.
No drained bottles, sweetpapers,
No scraped cartons;
No newsvendors, people hurrying to work,
Lounging on street corners, on the beat,
Leaning out of windows.....
No people.
The once busy thoroughfare is still,
Dry and dusty in the morning sun.

The town is quiet throughout,
Cleanly dirty,
Sterile dust clogging up each crack,
Wearing smooth the unmarked stones.
Leaves drift into corners, stick in drains
Pile up by walls:
Leaves are everywhere, dead leaves dispersed
In wind-stirred dust.

The wind sweeps out beyond the town,
The unnatural wind, that unfelt sigh
Of violence, aftermath replete.
It moved once into living country,
Emerged from a dead land.
It roars on past the boiling seas,
Engulfing, growing under the bloated sun,
Spreading in a deserted world -
And all the while moves in remembrance
The yellow newspaper
That proclaims the end has come.

12

Dead.

My God! He's dead.

Couldn't.....

couldn't do anything about it.

I -

Lying there so crumpled looks so
Lifeless.

There was nothing I could do.

But why me?

Why me?

Why does it have to be me? It
isn't fair I should bear this.

I -

It just isn't.....

(I wonder who he was?)

..... isn't fair.

He just ran straight

simply ran straight out

And now -

But why me?

Why did you choose me?

I do the suffering, you

die.

Dead.

God it looks awful and the

car just cleaned.

13

I watch clouds streaming, white on grey
And through the dusk a single star
Whose light has fallen long and far
Glinting low as night claims day.

But I am dreaming of distant skies
Already cloaked in sparkling night.
I dream I hold you close and tight
And see the starlight in your eyes.

I watch the clouds drag night behind
But I am dreaming of distant lands
I see us smiling, holding hands
I hear your laughter in my mind.

In age-old starshine from above
I share millennia past with you.
You know that, lit by fires of love,
I would share our futures too.

14

MOST OF US

We come in
Free of sin.

We go out
Full of doubt

In between
We mark our slate
And try, too late
To wipe it clean

15

If you can find
The words between these lines;
Instinct, insight created
As we twine

If you can hold
Me from the jaws of time;
Your arms enfold me; know
Within the walls of mine

All I have not told,
Whispered, written, stated:
I will be content.
It must be so.

16

While you are gone
My heart will beat softly and slow.
My thoughts will fly the miles
My eyes will see nothing,
Only
The spaces where you were

While you are gone,
The days will seem long
The nights will be cruel.
All the times of my life will be frozen
Waiting
For you to bring back the dream.

While you are gone,
I will see a clock on every wall
In every window,
The arms gathering time so slowly
So slowly
Gathering time and drawing you back
To me.

While you are gone, my dear,
I will miss you.