

**poems**

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A Representative Modern Agony.

I.

He was of sanguine disposition,  
Unbowed, unbloodied.  
He desired much to help those of his generation  
Who were willing to desire help.  
Of sanguine disposition.

Unbloodied.

II.

People laughing in groups  
Deny stigmata.  
Their faces fix themselves  
In revelation.

III.

It seems, then, that I can write nothing  
(O glorious range of possibilities!)  
Nothing I shall write  
Nothing.  
And two doves fly each other out of the window  
Unperplexed.

EXCUSE THE SMILE PLEASE.

When my well-being depends  
On the starvation of five  
It is well for me  
Hermetically to fashion my world  
So that I do not see.

Even hermits take up now  
Valuable living room for their  
Beds of nails.

This age cannot forget  
The flavour of gas and corruption  
That stains the soil,  
While it is fed on, still,  
The fertilizer from the factories of death.

But I see that you are in no joking mood.  
Excuse me for a moment  
While I correct  
My bitter smile.

QUESTION ON NOTICE.

The barrier of flesh on forehead

Barriers billion thoughts

In a teeming world

Binds in teeming thoughts

That seek in mind escape

Escape

Since mind cannot grasp

Nor tongue express

Escape

Since tongue cannot grasp

Only prey lusting on life

Such life as by mouth-portal passes.

What warm-metalled gun muzzling against me

Will shoot me into the world?

Where will I find again womb-warmth

In cold or fear or famine? Or how seek

Ointment of words for balm?

NOTES UPON A CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY.

'Infinitely loyal,  
Filled with profound class feelings,  
Cherishing a boundless love for Chairman Mao'

Your aging work-tanned toil-lined face  
Presents itself smiling  
In a thousand carefully posed photographs,

So that the nations may see and observe,  
And recognize,  
The astonishing fruits of your fond labour;  
So that they may recognize  
The goodness too of your unsmiling leader

Who, if the saying is true  
That the greatest teachers are those who teach  
The greatest platitudes, tirelessly,  
Is most certainly a great and tireless teacher;

Meanwhile for every smile lines  
Like a recalcitrant schoolboy line  
Your face and forehead,  
The result doubtless (despite your smile)  
Of your single-handedly pushing  
Peasant responsibilities into the Twentieth Century.

## Three Illuminations.

### I.

That holy night was angel-torn,  
Carol-tormented, though Mary  
did not notice -  
the central angels being  
for her the more quiet.

### II.

Rough Flanders men kneel round  
And angels too (from different climes) -  
That cow is quite amazed  
At the translation..

### III.

Mary may sleep the worse on her field of gold..  
Which yet represents for those in vigil  
An appeasement..  
and therefore, she does sleep.

IMAGE.

Riding home trainwards from Sydney  
Passing houses, night-rivers, factories,  
Synthetic cumulative noises around me.

A large man, bronzed in the dirty light,  
Apparently strong, through his grey window  
Beats unseen metal with perceivable force.

He is gone, or rather, I am gone.

Yet in a sense he is not gone

But remains

Visionary, striking that iron with his iron;

That tradesman's blow working on

(he is probably sleeping)

In daylight hours.

SECOND CLASS, RETURN.

Shall I compare thee to a microcosm?  
O train, O travelled train, to which I am tied  
By one half of a return ticket.

Peopled with unknown faces, voices unknown  
In the noise

O train!

Interrupted by bridge under-ribs

Raising eyes from pages

Momentary train!

Binding your passengers

In unity of train and destination.

Though they are allowed the option

Of mediate disembarkation.

You, train, have no option.

Bound by tyrannous lines of shining steel

You snort and shudder..

Yet I feel you have also no desire;

So I shall disembark,

Comparing thee...



Melbourne Street by Night.

Taken from the architect's drawing-board  
And added to it yet a third dimension  
There is no more, and so it stands.

Vivaldi ought to be piped from the  
Stobie poles  
And Mr. Jolley to appear  
Smiling from behind the grapes  
(Hung carefully on the vines by his assistants).

In a strange delicatessen, selling  
Onions, oranges and sausage,  
A plain woman in a long old dress  
Talks to another plain woman and then  
(after the other has left)  
Puts out the light.

Rushing water after rain  
Indiscriminate flood washing down  
Froth and floating logs  
Debris of the storm.  
Storm noise rises over  
Noise of sleeping voices.

Home too heard at flood tide,  
Wave meets rock and noises  
News of sudden meeting,  
Sudden resolution.  
Storm and sea subside  
To consummation after climax.

NATURE ONLY.

Nature only rains  
Sends gloom to cover sun  
Clouds barriers:  
                  though sun  
Is not despondent  
But conquers after time again.  
Then can I say nothing.

MOBILE IN MIRROR.

Fish swim languidly upwards:  
Nosing noiselessly,  
Slowly contented,  
Their threads taut and straight:  
As if for all their content  
Seeking escape.

ROOM.

In the half-darkened room  
As I enter,  
The chairs sit round primly;  
Quiet, as though for a moment  
They have paused their teacup conversation  
To assess my entry.

PASSERS-BY.

The paths  
Of an old man, black-baggy trousered,  
Long brown coated, despite-himself fashioned,  
And a black shiny-trousered  
Striding shaven priest  
Cross. I pause for thought.

### The Inspectors.

They come not here to read;

Shuffling inspections.

Cases and books demonstrated;

Important portfolios openes and closed...

He who shows points with his umbrella,

He who is shown

Looks along the line of the umbrella and sees,

And shuffles away.

I suspect a yawn.

They shall grow not more learned as we that are left.

Grow old.

### Another Vision.

Behold. A congregation of potplants

Has gathered together

In the windy gallery of the Public Library.

Together they stand,

Growing mournfully:

but some

On their sides, asleep.

COMMUNION WITH MRS. COLLINS.

I respond towards the uneven candlesticks,  
The fragments of the altar: the congregation respond  
(Of which they say I am part)  
Murmuring indistinctly.

Then at the rail  
( 'Betwixt the stirrup and this holy ground' )  
The Host cleaves to my gums,  
And Mrs. Collins, my neighbour, mouths God,  
Louder than in response, more ambitiously.

I am drawn by that ineffective action -  
All those ineffective actions;  
By the cumulative imperfection of practice.

(I see out of the corner of my eye, Mrs. Collins  
Reflecting uncertainly out of the passing cup.)

If True Humanity is perfect,  
I am glad of inhumanity sometimes.

REVERIE.

The candle burns down  
Flickering in the radiation of some  
Ancient Choral Requiem -  
In a mass-silver candlestick burns down,  
Sadly but certainly,  
As not hesitant nor hurrying.  
The clock ticks our life away too.  
Remnants of wax curl, or melt, or fall.  
The strain dies away, is no more heard.  
The clock too ticks our life away.

Looking deep down in that translucent cup  
Only a strange blue flickering flame  
Can be seen.

AN EVENING IN...

Poem for Two Voices.

Agnes Day puts on her face  
In the dark dirty, still secluded place  
She calls her home;  
Then waits for him to come who  
Who comes each evening punctually at eight  
And who is seldom late.

Seen through those new-created eyes  
Under the influence of moon or water  
He seems to her strange,  
Like a separate extension of her being;  
And she is not sure  
But only knows she loves,  
And so gives herself  
Punctually, each evening, at eight.

The room is dully lit  
The candles dim as though ashamed of it.  
Out of the crowded evening air  
Two or three couples gathered there.  
She enters, joins and enters - somehow the thing  
Transiently is beauty, in the candles flickering.

Eyes half closed, made dull by wine or talk,  
See the excited gesticulations of the candle,  
Its jerking along predetermined lines.. Then  
Eyes open at the newcomers, are  
Or are not stirred, yet feel perhaps  
Some mutual feeling at their entry.

MOSES TO ISRAEL.

He waits the consummation of your eyes;  
You bore him children, answered love's command,  
Together traversed wide the promised land -  
But now that fruit has snatched what was his prize  
He bears it yet, for men were born to part.  
Instinctively he knew where love would stand  
After he stood alone upon your strand  
So now he gives to your own all his heart.  
The mountain that he groans upon uplifts  
Its clouded sadness to the parting sky  
While you and your forever children go.  
Between you two your progress brings new rifts  
Never to be healed. Soon he will die  
Return to the just God who used him so.

St. Ann's Aldinga, South Australia.

In a manner old generations before they were old  
On either altar-side they lie  
Dead within few years, sanctuary-separated,  
Unknown by any than the unknowing marble  
Carefully inscribed.  
Thus they lie.



IMAGE.

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