

YOU'RE LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER

'After war service, the author lived and taught for some years in London's suburbia; later in adult education and eventually at Sir Roger Manwood's School in Sandwich, Kent. He has an arts degree and has travelled extensively in pursuit of interests in history, archaeology and architecture.'



YOU'RE LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER

Rex Franklin

FOR MADELEINE

YOU'RE LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER

Illustrated and published by the author

ISBN 0 9521248 0 7

COPYRIGHT R. FRANKLIN 1993

(No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system without permission of the author)

R.J. FRANKLIN

20, WINDMILL CLOSE,

BRIDGE,

CANTERBURY.

KENT. CT4 5LY

CONTENTS CONT.,

| | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Nearer To God In A Garden? | 36 - 37 |
| Wind Of Mercury | 37 - 38 |
| Ascension Day Service | 38 |
| Hiatus 4. | 38 - 39 |
| Love | 40 |
| April's Fool | 41 |
| Song Of Summer | 41 - 42 |
| Daughter Of Janus | 42 |
| Autumn | 43 |
| Four-way Conversation Piece | 44 - 45 |
| All-Elizabethan: | 45 |
| The World's Fairings | 45 |
| False Heart, I Sigh! | 46 |
| Fair Eye, False Heart | 47 |
| The New Elizabethan Swain | 47 |
| A Quintet of Cinquains | 47 - 48 |
| Fiat Lux | 48 - 49 |
| Where Blows The Wind? | 50 |
| Everesters All | 50 - 52 |
| Hiatus 5. | 52 - 53 |
| Twilight | 53 |
| Salute Et Vale | 54 - 55 |
| Brother John Has Just Passed On | 55 - 57 |
| Nonentity - Individuality | 57 - 58 |
| Laudator Temporis Acti | 58 - 59 |
| Prologue - Saga - Epilogue | 59 - 62 |
| Nocturne | 63 |

P R E F A C E

I am an inveterate looker-over of shoulders. When I'm out walking, if I see an artist at work, I can't resist peering over the shoulder and asking questions.

This book is something which may be read at shorter or longer intervals, to suit time, place, or mood: in surgeries, whilst waiting for train or plane, or on a bench in the park.

It's a mélange of both serious and light-hearted pieces which may encourage a relaxed mood but, paradoxically, might also be thought-provoking.

Some attempt has been made to collate material of like kind but, apart from that, there is no intentional continuity.

If you are of the inquisitive kind, I invite you to look over my shoulder.

REQUIEM FOR RELUCTANT WARRIORS

(Remembering a scene during the Allied advance through Normandy during the Second World War).

I've no more tears to shed
So weep for me:
When prayers cannot be said,
And Bibles can't be read
Because the Dead are dead,
Then weep for me.

There is a surfeit here I see
On this green Norman dew-decked lea,
Where fifty times ten tons of tanks
In metal-twisted broken ranks,
Like meteors when their course is run,
Lie smoking in the morning sun.

Whose son was this, whose severed leg
Grotesquely hangs like coat on peg?
Whose soul-mate that, whose splintered head
Once lay beside her on her bed?

These were the sons of Canada:
Last night, as we passed by
The screening boscage where they try
To hide 'surprise attack',
Their voices had a lustre-lack
Far different from a few days back
When, boisterously, they beat the foe
In tavern bar. How could they know
That Generals play roulette with lives,
And 'need' is 'must' when Devil drives?

They came with youth-bright in their eyes
And bawd-song on their lips,
From Commonwealth, and Fatherland,
And Motherland, and State,
Persuaded by their elders
This was their rightful fate:

That war was right,
And God was Right,
And God was on their side:
And this, oh List'ner in the mist,
Is how They, nameless, died.

SPITFIRE

I chase cloud shadows with the gods
Upon my lumined wings,
And skim the skies with spear-sharp eyes,
While birdlike, my heart sings.

A shark-sharp skin enmodules me,
A predator supreme;
My prey, a life-like entity,
A sable cross its theme.

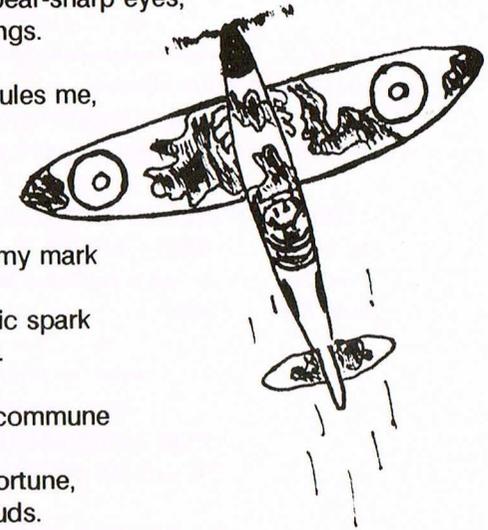
And when I sear towards my mark
And sing my song of fire,
It's then that Merlin's magic spark
Consumes me with desire.

When I and brothers few commune
In consort in the clouds,
Fortune and Fate will importune,
And some are left in shrouds.

My name was with 'The Few', they said;
I see you from afar;
I came this way when I was dead,
Per ardua ad astra.

B. 17's *

We are, in kind, the sister Fates, all three,
Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos we be,
But we have extra powers, to them denied,
As dragon's teeth we multiply, and ride
The ether's wide horizon side by side.



Girded around with spiteful tongues,
 And powered by four celestial lungs,
 Ambassadors of that impartial king
 Who regulates the life of everything,
 We seek our place, with fire and steel to ring,
 And dutifully to our mission bring
 Our Nemesis, and shed a scattering.

* The Boeing B. 17's or 'Flying Fortresses'.

CONVOY P.Q. 17

Convoy P.Q. 17 was made up of 35 vessels (22 American, 8 British, 2 Russian, 2 Panamanian and 1 Dutch) and sailed from Reykjavik on 27th. June, 1942, bound for Archangel, with an escort of 6 destroyers, 4 corvettes, 4 armed trawlers, 3 minesweepers, 2 submarines and 2 anti-aircraft vessels.

In addition, Rear-Admiral Hamilton provided 4 heavy cruisers (2 American) and 3 destroyers, to which Admiral Sir John Tovey, in command of the Home Fleet, added the battleships 'Duke of York', 'Washington' (U.S.A.), the cruisers 'Nigeria' and 'Cumberland' and 14 destroyers.

With hands on hips and feet astride,
 Old Henry Eight would smirk with pride
 Could he but see these steel giants ride
 The granite-grey Atlantic tide.

But far removed from wooden walls,
 Once more the country's war-horn calls,
 And salt-stained men sail out again
 To test their courage on the main.

In Fourteen hundred ninety-two
 Columbus sailed the ocean blue;
 In Nineteen hundred forty-two
 Was time for Seventeen P.Q.

From Reykjavik to Archangel.
 With tanks and planes and precious fuel,
 Thirty-five sea-scarred merchantmen
 Pulsed on towards the Great Bear's den.

The 'Washington' and 'Duke of York',
 'Victorious' and other sort
 Of cruisers, trawlers, sweeper-teams,
 Destroyers, corvettes, submarines
 Were guardians of these 'in-betweens'.

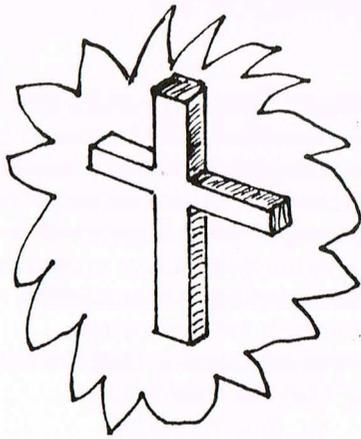
The Norway-Greenland seaway span,
 The hazard which the convoy ran,
 Was scourged by U-boats, Luftflotte Five,
 Torpedoes from the Heinkel's dive.

The First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound,
 Had turned the convoy's guard around
 When he had heard that 'Tirpitz', 'Scheer'
 And 'Hipper' were expected there.

An order, 'Most Immediate'
 Was also sent, which sealed the fate
 Of carriers dispersed and lost,
 And presently they count the cost:

Of thirty-five good ships and true
 Eleven only will get through:
 Of men, perhaps we'll never know,
 But never will more courage show.





THE LAST EASTER

This was written some little time after the burial of a lone German soldier beside the road from Honfleur to Rouen, on the 31st. August, 1944.

A cross stands now where once a hemlock ruled;
A narrow mound broods o'er the dust
Through which - but lately cooled -
Scorched lesser dust.

"Seven thin ears, and seven lean years!"
But seer's lone voice is drowned
Ere the first echo of the Swart Herald's cry,
"This night thy soul shall be required of thee!"

Must I yet stay, and deck myself again
In colours drab, and steel my heart
And nerve - direct my feet
To tread once more the crimson way?

And legion feet beat down on dusty road
That torts and twines from Genesis
Through Babylon and Rome.
The cloud obscures and, legion gone,
Resettles on a million mounds.

With fallen Babel's bricks are built
A hundred tottering towers,
Whose tops the legion feet shall sway,
And dust once more shall seal the stone.

A million crosses rise, and in their midst
One, rugged, and with fire inscribed
Makes shadows of the sunbeam shafts:
A broken reed bleeds rifted side,
And from a shattered foot there falls
Into the dust a ruby red.

The grey-robed vein leads on and on
And from the sidestreams ebb and flow
The life-blood. Silently upon
The scene more shadows grow
And lengthen, cruciform and cold:
Now is a stillness. Fainter the last footprint.
Silence, impregnable, stands.

'PER MARE PER TERRAM'

22-9-89

Without the slightest sign or warning
They died one unexpected morning.
They left behind their music; many a friend,
But this is not how such lives end:
Their music gave us beauty, smiles, and pleasure;
In this, each gained his life's true measure.

HIATUS 1.

You, who are reading this, have almost certainly had one of those moments - a hiatus - when the pressures of everyday life have given a brief respite, and you got around to thinking, "What am I doing here, in this place of all places in the Universe, and here, at this moment in the inestimable span of Time? What is my 'raison d'etre'?"

I have thought this myself, and have been asked the question, more than once, by enquiring young minds, and I felt that I ought to have a reasoned opinion of some kind.

My first response I remember was vague; mostly a case of parrying question with question. After a lot of thought, I got down to this brevity: 'We are here to be creative, procreative, and recreative.' You will most likely have different ideas. I rationalised my answer by deciding that I gained my greatest satisfaction from living when I was following that pattern in some way. In using the word 'procreative' I am not limiting it to the sexual dimension: a sculptor, a painter, an author, a gardener perhaps, leaves part of himself in something he has made from rudimentary materials. In the recreative sense - say of a piano concerto - if a dozen or so artistes played the same piece, no two would be exactly alike in the interpreting of it. This just seems to underline our individuality within the framework of our collectivity.

Rene Descartes, French philosopher, and advocate of what he called analytical geometry (the unification of all science by means of geometry), in his 'Discourse on Method' (1637), said that to arrive at clear and simple ideas which preclude doubt, one must first school the reason by systematically doubting everything.

By this means he formulated his famous statement, "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). Will someone, at sometime in the future, arrive at the next step: "I am, because.....", or will the answer to this philosophical question remain as evasive as the Philosophers' Stone?

MISSA SOLEMNIS

You, whoever you are,
Are the only real individual
In the Universe:
Essential, entire, hyper-ecumenical,
Alone in Absolute,
Stark in Sterility:
Aware of the unreality of all
Outside this aeon of soul-element;
Co-existent with a schizoid link -
Mind to non-matter -
Within which endlessly revolves
The quisitative, "Me?"
And all the answers come back
Multi-multi-mirror-wise,
And echo.....echo.....mockingly in emptiness.



WAGONS - LITS

This was written at a time when a colleague and I, with two classes, were detached from the main school. Each day at the same time we watched the 'Golden Arrow' pass on its way to Dover.

Under a steep embankment, I
Have daily deeped a groove, and sigh,
With drooling tongue and avariced eye
To watch the Wagon-Lits go by.

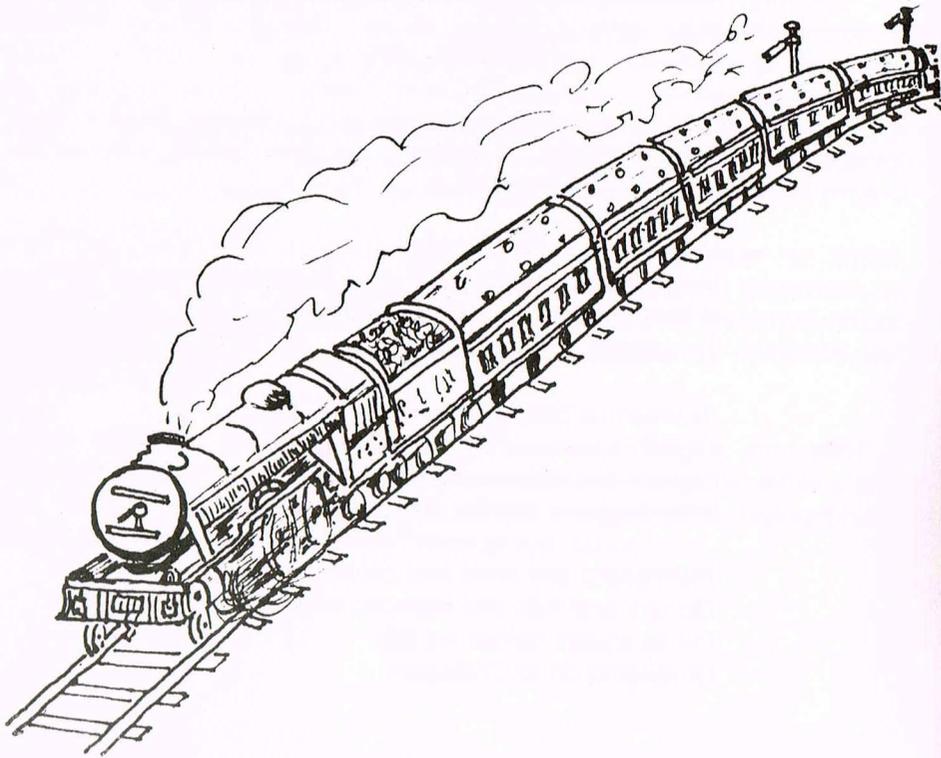
Between us bends a thousand leagues
Of twin-ironed path and soft intrigues,
Poplars and palms, and liquid leas,
With dinghies, dhows, and bum-boatees.

Blackboard and chart and coloured chalk,
Dinners and milk and frescoed walk,
Pi-r to square before we talk
Of ranging on to Chittagork.

Through woody maze of deskly den
The high-up hands are beggar men;
Six squared and four are forty, then,
As surely find my way again.

A door to close, a bell to ring
Before we end our journeying;
Disposal made of cabbage, king,
Of sealing-wax and untied string.

"Forsooth, a weary day," say we;
Tomorrow's an eternity:
And though I smile sardonically,
One unsuspecting morn will see
Myself inside a Wagon-Lits.



RATIONAL MATHEMATICS

1. Spending more money than you've got = financial wizardry.
2. One and one can make three, or four, or more.
3. The cost of bread depends on how you use your loaf.
4. A ratio of 2 to 1 means that you are outnumbered.
5. If it starts at twenty to one, it means you've got two minutes to phone your bookie before the odds shorten.
6. Five minus two means you didn't take care with the chopping knife.
7. If one tap fills a bath in 10 minutes and another takes 5, how long will it take to call a plumber?
8. The difference between 'quadratic equation' and 'quadrupedic equitation' is just plain horse sense.
9. When you discover that $\sqrt{2} = 1.4142135$ you will perhaps agree that 'surds' should be rationalised to 'absurds'!
10. An axis another name for chopper.

DISCO DAZE AND NITES

A-wern, tew, a-wern-tew-three-foah
 Dum, dum, diddle-daddle-dubble-dubble,
 Dar, dar, dee-dit-dar,
 Dum, dum, dibble-dibble-dabble-dabble,
 Dum, dum, di-dee-dit-dar:

Since yew wennaway Ah bin sahin' (2,3,4,)
 Since yew wennaway Ah bin crahin' (2,3,4,)
 Since yew wennaway Ah bin dahin' fer yew
 Oh, darlin' woncha please kerm back? (2,3,4,)
 (Repeat: Dum, dum, etc.....)

All day lahng Ah bin sahin' fer yew (dee-doo-dee)
 All naht lahng Ah bin crahin' fer yew (ee-ow-ee)
 All that Ah bin trahin' ter dew
 Is hold yew in mah arms wernce moah, (2,3,4,)
 (Repeat: Dum, dum, etc.....)

Please don' say, "Return to sendah," (2,3,4,)
 Ah jus' wanna heartbreak mendah, (2,3,4,)
 So mah lurv be sweet an' tendah, (2,3,4,)
 An' end mah miz-er-ee, (2,3,4,)

Bang, flash, a damn big crash,
 Ching, chang, a-wang-a-dang-dang,
 Dum, dum, dibble-dibble-dabble-dabble,
 Dum, dum, di-dee-dit-dar.... (Repeat last 2 lines morendo).

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WITH NELL

'Twas on a Sunday mornin'
 When I got out of bed;
 I'd been out on the previous evenin'
 And swollen me poor old head;
 And now as me legs were wobblin' about,
 The wife began to shout,
 "Oh! There you are mate, again rather late,
 An answer as true as you're born.
 What time was it, Ned,
 You were sneakin' to bed,
 At twenty to four in the morn?"

"I'll tell you no lie," I quickly reply,
 "If you'll only stand still while I'm talking',
 After pint number ten
 I was ready, an' then.....
 'Cause I missed the last bus I was walkin',
 And you, Nell, know well
 I never can tell
 Which direction the sun has gone down,
 So the way that I chose was to follow me nose,
 And I ended up back at 'The Crown'!"

"Excuses! Excuses!
 Encore the grape juices!
 I s'pose you expect me to swallow
 That pie in the sky.... that thunderin' lie...."

"But wait!" I cry out, "More's to follow!
 When I reached 'The Crown', on the step I sat down
 And tried to think where I'd gone wrong.
 I was thinkin', 'Poor Nell, She'll be worryin' as well',
 So to help things I struck up a song.

Best thing to 'ave done, 'cause at twenty-to-one
 P.C. Whatsit came by on his cycle.
 To my consternation, we went to the station
 And I shared the same room with Old Michael.
 I need tell you no more: Michael lives just next door,
 And just on this special occasion,
 With mutual support, and legal escort,
 (Old Whatsit took little persuasion),
 We valiantly strove, and soon we arrove
 At 'Chez-nous' an' flamin' 'Dunromin'."

"Now is that a fact! What a flippin' good act!
 And what was this 'special occasion'?"

"Well now, I'm pleased to say, that while you were away
 At your mother's an' others relatin',
 I thought I'd devise a little surprise:
 It's your homecomin' I'm celebratin'!"

"Oh, you are awful, Ned, and since we've been wed
 You've always been thinkin' of others!
 Now here's one from me; you're straight back on tea,
 And next time you'll go to me mother's!"

EPIMURALS

(No! Not epidurals, Fred, Epimurals - fins wots rote on
 worts!
 Oh! Gruff feety yer meen?)

William Wentworth Xavier Spode
 Never used the Green Cross Code:
 His care of traffic thus got worse,
 He was hit by a hearse in Rickmansworth.

Lady Celia Spiffin-Blore
 When golfing, heard someone shout 'Fore!'
 She though it 'infra-dig' to dive
 And was holed in one by a Nicklaus drive.

Mortimer Meagre grew so thin
 His belt no longer supported him;
 His trousers slipped, and so he tripped,
 And now he's Meagre, Mort - i' - mer.

Lucy Shaw, on a package tour,
 Took the lift to the fifteenth floor;
 Her error she should have foreseen,
 To date, they'd only built fourteen!

You, who like your food too much,
 Here be warned by gourmet Clutch;
 One who put his stomach first
 'Til eventually - it burst!

If you can but spare a minnit,
 Think how fate served Horace Linnit;
 Each new day he fasted harder,
 Then got locked in an empty iarder.

Be forewarned by what was done
 To Sybil Smith by a currant bun;
 Her bite was big, her throat was small,
 And currently, she don't eat at all!

Rinso Tomkins, famed for sculpture,
 Tried one day to sculp a vulture;
 But this vulture wasn't meek
 He carved up Rinso with his beak.

William Wallace went to the zoo
 And found himself in the elephant queue;
 He tried to ride with legs astride
 But elephants are mighty wide,
 In consequence, a body slide
 Reversed him to the underside:
 Now elephants can weigh a ton,
 And thus poor Willie was undone!

Carstairs was a nature lover;
 For months on end he watched a plover:
 From a hide which gave him cover
 Naught distracted whatsoever:
 Creepers wound their strangling arms
 And Carstairs now is warbling psalms.

Cyril's face was pale and pimply,
 And he felt that he was simply
 Not one of the human race:
 Creams and lotions were just toxin
 So instead, he took up boxin'
 Now he's got a brand new face!

Montmorency Chevely-Spanne
 Was an important nobleman;
 His blood was blue,
 But he got 'flu
 And had to have transfusion:
 They scoured the land
 For blood so grand
 Until, in some confusion,
 When Monty gave a mighty wheeze
 They pumped him full of anti-freeze.

The sewage ran into the sea
 As he ran out of luck;
 He threw himself into the tide
 And so committed 'sewerside'.

Snifter Cripps was keen on ships,
 Especially those in bottles;
 To keep his hobby in supply
 He had to drink the cellar dry.

Inch by inch he raised his head
 'Til he read the notice:
 'Half a million volts', it said,
 'P.S.: So you should be dead!'

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM LITTLE KNOWN PROPHETS

Llor Teliot Welsh author of 'The Smallest Room':
 "At each new turn I find I know less of myself."

Redart Lemac French Desert Explorer:
 "Some dunes are harder to find than others."

Liam Laylor Irish man of letters:
 "All authors need the stamp of approval."

Sten Gard Danish trawler skipper:
 "'I vunce gotta supmarin teleskop. Dot's how I gott dis glasss
 aiee."

Raj Yen Tuhc Eastern Spice Merchant:
 "You've got to know your onions too, in this business."

Xob Draobdrac Balkan freedom fighter:
 "Our success was that we learnt to contain things."

P. Murcs Devon apple-grower:
 "Ooh Aarh. ooh aarh! Eee ummm, that be!"

Abtoul Regal Stallholder in the Kontiki Bazaar:
 "If we get trouble-makers around here, I've got the
 qualifications to deal with them."

Eve N'Mada Mesopotamian environmentalist:
 "We want apples with pesticides!"

Max E. Shtam German socialist economist:
 "If we get our sums right, we won't end up in the red."

Pam Etuor Portuguese woman rally driver:
 "I might lose my way but if I've got my crash helmet I'll be
 alright."

Noal Knab Swedish financier:
 "We need more people willing to put in more than they take out."

(Of course you read some of the names backwards!)

TRUE-BLUE HUGH

No, no, all men are not the same,
 However oft you say it;
 There's Michael Jackson, Frankenstein,
 Narcissus and Hugh Prewitt.
 "Hugh Prewitt? Who the heck is he?"
 I hear the people ask it;
 Well, gather round, and I'll expound
 This jewel in the casket.

Young Hugh was born of course, in bed,
 One January morning. The doctor said,
 "By gum, he's red! He's probably an Indian!"
 In fact the cold did so persist
 The little chap was amethyst!

So he remained whilst still a child,
 A true-blue little meek-and-mild:
 But as he grew towards a man
 He met a poli-ti-ci-an.
 Said this M.P., "You could be me,
 And lord it in the Commons."

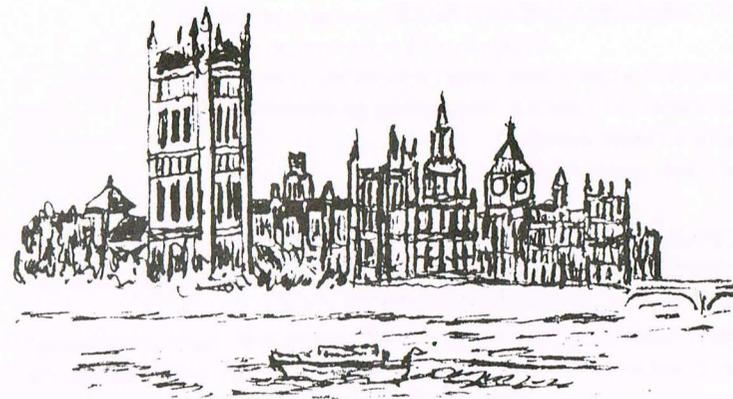
Hugh liked the sound, and so he found
 When next elections came around,
 A seat as member of, and for
 The district known as Blymiecor.

He took his seat - there was one each,
 And from it made his maiden speech.
 The message rang out loud and clear,
 So clear it reached the P.M.'s ear:
 He soon became her ardent fan
 And then her right, and left hand man.

His talent was so trans-par-ent
 That straight to Downing Street he went.
 By being extra diligent
 He made his mark in Parliament.

The honours came both thick and fast,
 Until a crisis loomed at last:
 Now Hughie wasn't 'crisis-trained'
 And neither was he 'Mensa-brained',
 In short, he quickly fell from grace
 And just as quickly lost his place.

But he is still at Number Ten,
 Although a long way from Big Ben:
 This 'Ten's' a seedy snooker den
 Much frequented by 'fallen men',
 And round a table green with baize,
 Half hidden in a smoky haze,
 Among the bent and busy heads
 Is one, expertly potting reds:
 And who's the man behind the cue?
 None other than our True-blue Hugh!



HOMAGE TO LAURA

Laura, Laura, What a snorer!
Every night the same refrain;
Rhythmic, rasping, everlasting,
Scores of decibels surpassing.

Empty vessels it's been found
Often make the loudest sound;
Laura's sonant heady hollows
Scientific practice follows.

When the hours of dark are falling
And owls nocturnal calls are calling,
Far above all Nature's voices
Laura, in her power rejoices.
"Hark," the neighbours say in wonder,
"It's either Laura, or it's thunder!"

For her there's no respite-taking,
Neighbours sagely nod their heads;
"Laura's past the stage of waking,
Better batten down our beds!"

Sucking, blowing, tremoloing,
Beats a hunting horn's 'Halloing!';
Mattress-quaking, window-shaking,
This deserves a Richter rating!

When lions roar, their quarry freezes;
Compared to Laura's snore they're sneezes:
Laura's never satisfied
Until her quarry's petrified!

When there's talk of mountains moving,
Someone's faith someone is proving:
No-one needs to doubt our Laura,
Even mountains can't ignore her!

As with all phenomena
People come from near and far
Just to hear the doh me lah
Of Laura's nightly seminar.

With all night-time hours before her,
Training occupies our Laura;
For miles around they all adore her,
Laura, National Champion Snorer.

A BREATHLESS HUSH

False is the man who ne'er has said
Of one, behind his back,
In terms decidedly alack,
"Blow you, Jack!"

Crack went the plank, and earthwards Jack,
With Jill not far posterior;
And what she said behind his back
Inferred he was inferior.

Noble all Jacks to stand such ignominy;
What's said behind their backs reduces each to ninny:
As for myself (Whose name might well be Jack),
I'll fight back!

Black-hearted dame, bereft of shame,
Where stand you at the finish?
Not where you might, for Jack is right,
Silence will you diminish!

HIATUS 2.

Perhaps, during another hiatus, you may have asked, "Can there be such a declaration as 'absolute infinity' in respect of our Universe?"

Progressively, over the years Mankind has probed ever more deeply into Outer Space. We have now a little better comprehension of what Time and Space mean in relation to our physical world.

We are told that astronomy has now advanced several thousand million light years into Space. When we look at the Milky Way we are looking at the plane of our galaxy seen from the inside - a galaxy which is 100,000 light years in diameter and, that as far as we can look into Space, clusters of other galaxies come into view!

Voyager II has given us a closer look at Saturn and Neptune and is now on its way to the outer limits of our knowledge of Space, but Infinity remains Infinity!

One dictionary definition of 'infinite' gives us: "that which is not only without determinate bounds, but which cannot possibly admit of bound or limit; the Absolute, the Infinite Being or God:" and of 'infinity', "boundlessness; an infinite quantity; an infinite distance; vastness; immensity."

Some people are atheists, others agnostics, pantheists and so on, but whatever one is, or is not, we are still left with the total conceptual inadequacy of realising our own appreciation of 'Infinity'.

We are still, in a way, on the same level as the Ancients who may have asked the question, "On what is the Titan Atlas standing whilst holding the heavens on his shoulders?"

We might ask, "What is the Force - if there is one - that governs and orders our Universe? Is there an actuality in the unexplored Universe beyond the limits of the most vivid imagination?"

There is an obstinacy with which, what I call 'the cyclic attitude' occurs. The obvious patterns: day, night; the seasons; birth, life, death; Earth spinning on its axis; the motions of the planets; the Circadian cycle; the vaporising and distillation of the Earth's water; our means of locomotion (even walking, or rowing if you come to think of 'cyclic' as being the continual repetition of a movement).

The completed circle has no beginning and no end. Is the 'red shift' (indicative of the 'Big Bang' theory about the origin of our Universe, and its expansion by reason of galaxies receding from each other) part of this 'cyclic' attitude, by means of which this expansion slows, stops, and a contraction begins? Is it possible that this has all happened before - an infinite number of times?

Is there, at the extremity of this expansion, a darkness so absolute that there is no capability of this darkness having boundaries? Think of the density of matter which comprises the so-called 'black hole'; something like a matchbox full of its substance possibly being equivalent to the weight of our entire planet!

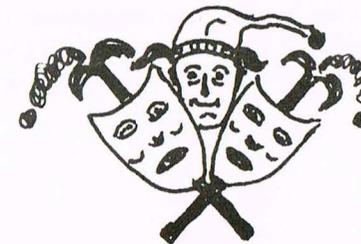
The nearest I can get to appreciating this non-capability is in a simple example. You have probably visited a cave system deep underground, or a castle dungeon, such as at Norwich, and the lights have been switched off for a few minutes. Have you felt a complete - and possibly frightening - disorientation of your senses of time, location and reality? If this were prolonged indefinitely, it would not be too difficult to think of that word 'infinity'!

We are unable to comprehend 'Infinity' and therefore don't know the right questions to ask. Perhaps there exists a spiritual dimension which may be appreciated only by the spirituality of mankind?

TO EACH HIS TIME AND PLACE

It's gold for the gods, and purple for kings,
Sackcloth and ashes for all lesser things:
The seeker, the Grail, and little respite,
Mute are the muses and still he must write;
Vapour trails sear the skies, seas are compacted;
Time is more avid thief, Space is contracted.

Yes, the whole world's the stage,
And we each read our page;
Our exit's applauded,
Or goes unrecorded.



WHY, OH WHY, WYOMIN'

At a ranch in Wyomin'
 There sat in the gloamin'
 On a wood fence without any splinters,
 A bow-legged cowhand
 Who greeted a sun-tanned
 Tall stranger who tied up two 'pinters'.

"Yo' a-talkin' ter me son?"
 He eased out a six-gun
 And spat fifty yards at a hen:
 Then with slow measured tread
 He strolled up and said,
 "Ah'm a-lookin' fer 'Hair-trigger' Ben."

The cowboy climbed down,
 On his forehead a frown,
 "I guess then you need look no further,
 Fer yesterday noon, in yonder saloon,
 He shot Dan McGrew an' his brother."

The stranger's eyes squinted,
 His gun-barrel glinted,
 He reached for a wad of 'terbakker';
 He bit off a chew
 And without more ado
 Put a slug thro' a pack of cream cracker.

Towards the saloon
 His spurs rang a toon
 And reachin' the steps, up he swaggered:
 He kicked the door wide
 An' then fell inside
 But calm to his feet he then staggered.

A hush at once fell,
 An' with ear-piercin' yell
 The stranger these words then did utter:
 "Ma name's Dick Pickwick,
 With a six-gun ah'm quick,
 An' if any man here thinks he's quicker,
 He can go fer his gun
 But before yer count 'One!'
 I'll ha' drilled a hole plumb thro' his ticker!"

Ev'ry man caught his breath
 An' froze still as death
 As the dreaded name dropped in the silence:
 It was only just then, that 'Hair-trigger' Ben
 Made his move, an' erupted in vi'lence.

With thin lips a-tightin'
 His hand moved like lightnin'
 An' before you could count even 'Half-a-one!'
 A hair-trigger's click
 Had finished off Dick
 Who was just about reachin' his gun.

They stuck him on Boot Hill
 An' if you go there you will
 See for a quick laugh poor Dick's 'epi-ta-taph'
 Which reads - if yer kin read
 'Thout makin' yer heart bleed,
 The followin' words, genuine calligraph:

"A quick click finished Dick,
 Now there's no more Pickwick;
 He thought he was quick but by Flicker,
 Ole Ben's draw was slicker,
 His click was much quicker,
 He drilled Dickie's ticker:
 Makes a change from dyin' o' licker!"



SCENE SHOT BY HAND-OPERATED CINE CAMERA

Lashed to the track, as on a rack,
 With minutes left to wait,
 Boy Jack, Girl Jill, confront their fate;
 But fortunate for them a mate
 Came by and saw their plight:
 With fingers deft, right over left,
 Left over right he juggled;
 But somehow knots were not untied
 No matter how he struggled.
 Oh yes, 'untied' could rhyme with 'died'
 But there are other ones beside
 Such as, the track was extra wide
 Or, trains don't run at Christmastide.

As it turned out the train was late,
 But more unfortunate, their mate,
 (Whose name was Jeff), was somewhat deaf,
 Or rather hard of hearing;
 The batteries in his aid were flat,
 And so was Jeff,
 And that was that!



LES NOUVEAUX PROVERBES

He that casteth himself upon a bed of nettles and covereth
 not his nether parts, shall surely sit sorely.

'Tis a sober man that knoweth the how swearin' he dwells.

A good wife is worth waiting for,
 Waiting for, waiting, for waiting.....

They that dwell in the Belt of the Stockbrokers
 Shall surely beat their neighbours into Preference Shares.

Whichsoever fisherman's arms are longest
 Catcheth the largest fish.

Whosoever abscondeth from his debts
 Shall in no wise be note-worthy.

CONFUCIUS PROBABLY NEVER SAID

Whoshoever shippesh shoup whilsht whishtling shroo falsh
 teesh shall shurely shound dishgushting.

When dragon sneezes, grandmother stops knitting winter
 woollies.

Irishman not covetous: has own paddy fields.

When tiger smiles, he has welcomed his friend inside.

In Justice we sometimes have injustice.

A drop of dew distilled at dawn
 Is like a rose without a thorn:
 Another drop, distilled at night,
 Hides its beauty out of sight.



Each year a man adds to his age
 Brings him nearer to a sage:
 Each year a woman will admit
 Makes another doubt of it.

He who puts his ear to many walls may hear many storeys.

A happy man is one who has no cares:
 A happier one, another's trouble shares.

When Cock of Heaven* has sore throat, time to put clocks
 back one hour.

* In Chinese mythology this Cock roosted on a great tree in
 the south-east. Each sunrise its crowing started off all the
 other cocks in the world.

A WOMAN'S INTUITION

There was a man in time long gone
 Who sat him down and pondered on
 The reason why, in Cave By Track,
 The two of them were night-time black.

He pondered daily, for at night
 The both of them were out of sight:
 He couldn't find the answer so,
 To wiser brains he had to go.

Cave Woman had a ready wit
 And told her man she'd mastered it:
 "I don't know why the man's like that,
 But she is - just to match her hat!"

SHORTSIGHTED SWAIN

A mantis would a-woooing go,
 A respite from his praying,
 And so, to let all females know,
 He soon began displaying.

But would you your true colours show,
 Beware of who's enfranchised!
 He thought, "Oh my, a giant ant!"
 And he was soon dismantled!

IS THE DODO REALLY DEAD?

Who would think a rocking-horse
 Could have feelings? But of course,
 It's a thing inanimate
 Like Pinocchio, but wait!
 Why is your car called Elaine?
 Why is Roger's moped Jane?

You believe they are personae,
 Make response to your repartee:
 How much more then should a child
 Know that horses, tame or wild,
 Carthorse, racehorse, Shetland pony,
 Flesh and blood, or wooden only,
 Have a magic, when they're lonely,
 To become a child's best friend,
 Rocking him from end to end.



JOURNEY FROM CATHAY

When I am sitting six miles high in 747,
 Watching the rainbow sunrise paint Arabia's night,
 A proposition spurs into my sentient mind:
 If I could hold one grain of that vast sand
 On my right palm, and Everest on the plateau of the other,
 I, like 'Jade Buddha' in his house of glass,
 Could watch the fluid flow of human sand
 Pass my omniscient, timeless gaze, and bead-draped hand.

HIATUS 3.

My God, (and I say it with reverence), what a wonderful, awesome, and confounding maze this varied and conglomerate World of ours is!

Imagine yourself standing on the summit of Everest. You are alone in a very special and detached sense: isolated from the commingling, able to be totally dispassionate and, to some extent, disembodied; with telescopic eyes and superhuman transitory powers - a Zeus, if you will.

Look northwards. What do you scan with your hypervision? There lie before you nearly a million square kilometres of high plateau which hold the heights, the valleys and the scattered lakes of secretive Tibet. Imagine a swim in the ice-cold waters of Ziling Tso on the way to another high place, nearly 1,000 kilometres distant and more than 7,600 metres high: Ulugh Mustagh, giant of the Kunlun Mountains.

In a super-stride you could be there with a panoramic view of the multi-ethnic republics which go to make up the patchwork quilt of mighty Russia, stretching away to the Arctic Ocean and the great white silence of the North Polar region.

But look around. On the eastward side vast China, Mongolia, Japan and the enormity of the Pacific Ocean.

Westward, you span the sun-drenched deserts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Nubia, Arabia, Sudan and Sahara and, in the meantime you have probably never given the slightest thought to a camping weekend in the Gobi desert, or a W.I. outing to a village in Baluchistan, or perhaps a fishing trip to Lake Ozero Balkhash in Soviet Kazakhskaya!

If you swing around, you can observe the lazy smoke rising from the burning ghats beside the Ganges, the sun-baked plains, the gleaming marble palaces and, to your right, the luminous blue-green of the Indian Ocean sweeping the east side of one-time Darkest Africa. Onward you go to the islands of the southern seas, scattered like glistening pearls on blue satin, the coral reefs, the great continent of Australasia, and so to the muted solitude of the Southern Pole.

You have traversed but a small part of this amazing planet, our home - and that but hurriedly travelled. There has been no time for you to see at work the indescribable numbers of ants, termites, fleas, plankton, polyps, the multitudinous species of the plant and animal kingdoms, the awesome fury of wind, wave and fire, and the disparate attitudes and locations of that present ruler of the planet, Mankind.

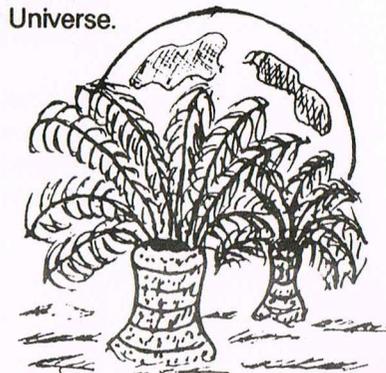
Now, stripped of your super physical powers and back amongst your peers, look at that diamond-bright star up there. You hardly exist!

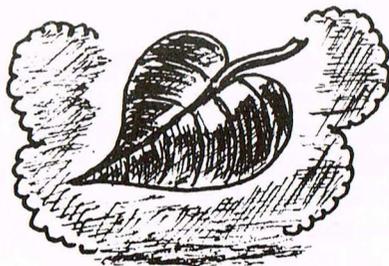
KROLL

On planet Kroll
 There are five thousand different kinds of trees;
 My word you'll have to take for this
 Because for now, your ignorance is bliss.

One day an Earthling may, by spatial probe,
 Our outer atmosphere disrobe
 And, in amazement gape
 At my tree-covered Krollandscape.

He then will know
 That things could have been worse;
 There is at least one planet still perverse
 Enough to keep birdsong in this our Universe.





MEMORY LEAF

We walked, and in the forest leaves were brown;
Mature, with stately mien, trees looked down
And watched us as we passed with rustling feet
Into the heart, where sun and shadow meet.

A softer rustle, and another leaf
Has severed from the tree a life, so brief,
That even as it falls, it seems a sigh
Goes with it to the earth to die.

Upon a slope we stopped, your hand in mine;
And as we stood, no consciousness of time
Disturbed our thoughts, or made us frown,
One heart - an idyll in a russet gown.

Sometimes a spider's web, as soft as down,
Entangled with your hair, and wove a crown
More lovely than the ancient queens had worn,
When this same forest had not yet been born.

Again we stopped - to watch a sprite at play;
Was it the same red squirrel here today
That we had seen - more than a year ago,
The day it rained - when love began to grow?

Too soon the forest's leaf-lined edge was reached,
Too soon the haloed portico was breached:
Two golden leaves we kept, and parted there,
And from that moment all the trees were bare.

That mem'ry lives, because the leaf I hold
Whispers - to match its colour - words of gold:
Again together, as the trees look down,
We'll walk, when all the forest leaves are brown.

THE FOURTH ESTATE

I was the I-Was of What-Was;
Now I'm the I-Am of What-Is:
But What-Was, once was What-Is,
And the instant that I boast of it
What-Is becomes What-Was,
A two-têtréd chameleon
Called Then-and-Now.
So seize the moment;
Wind it up; it's clockwork if you knew it:
Clockwork contorts - distorts, you are aware,
And ultimately comes to disrepair:
But Compensation's one of Nature's arts,
So now there are available, spare parts,
And that includes, of various sizes, hearts.

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

The greatest man I know
Is rather low in mental stature:
Modesty - he greets Her with a kiss,
And he aspires to naught but what he is;
There is then, not much doubt
That he will grow.

What profiteth a man
Ambitiously inclined,
Is trumpet-playing
Brazenly - the double forte kind:
This drowns the rest,
Which proves him best,
And thus it was since Time began.

A PAIR OF BROAD BEANS

Many years ago the late Gilbert Harding made a request for couplets on the brief season for enjoyment of broad beans. Here are some which were jotted down at the time.

Sometimes you're white, sometimes you're green,
But all too soon, poor Broad, you've been!

With bacon graced, ah Bean-so-Broad,
What little time for pleasure you afford!

Like worldly youth before its time,
Broad Bean, you're tough before your prime.

Broad Bean, Broad Bean, you've come, you've gone,
Bacon is here, but you've moved on!

I'M TIME

Years are but arbitrary measurers of Time.
It's shedding tears, and unknown fears,
Or when a newborn child appears,
And hands together saying prayers.

It's laughing, loving, lying, sighing,
Winking, thinking, living, dying:
Oh, History's the thing to read, my dears,
It tells us, consequentially,
That Time is in arrears.

Time marches on, a laugh, a song,
With banners bold, and crocks of gold,
And timeless stories told, retold;
While History, my dears, unfolds
What was, what is, and what's anon.
When we are all long dead and gone
Old World, you'll still be flowing on.



HAVE YOU GOT THAT DOWN, MISS SMITH?

What did the Black Prince really say
At Poitiers, in France,
Before an archer primed his bow,
And knight secured his lance?

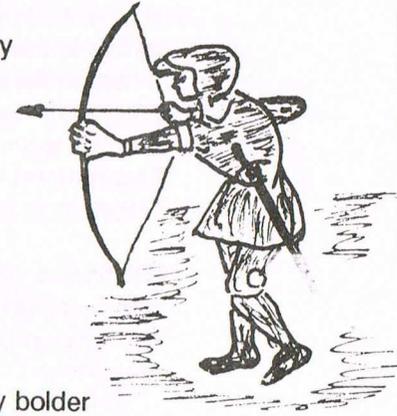
Did his feet ache?
Did his head take long to re-align
From last night's wine?

Was his wife worried?
His decisions hurried?
Did an ordinary soldier become any bolder
Because 'Young Ned' was there?

Whose hands were blistered?
Whose conscience whispered?
Whose arm was pestered
With wound that festered?

Was it raining?
And when aiming, did an untrimmed beard
Become arrow-seared?

Unfortunately, we'll never know,
But future folk can see our show
On any family video.
Wouldn't it be fun, a thousand years from now,
To hear one's voice on ancient tape
And watch the listeners' mazy gape!



I'VE GOT THE BLUES ABOUT 'GREEN'

Where is the river that flows on to Rome?
 Where is the song of the wild?
 Where are the flowers of the lone wayside shrine
 And the sight of the next village on?
 Escarpments to climb, and rivers to ford?
 Tracks thro' the shade to find jungle's striped lord?

Will Spring still be Paris,
 And Summertime, Spain?
 Will Autumn be Alpine
 And Winter..... our shame?

Byways, now highways; forests aflame;
 Fauna is falsified: game-reserve tame.
 Morning mist myst'ry once shrouded the plain,
 Only the dazzling white Poles now remain.
 Adventure, and testing time?
 Seldom again!

NEARER TO GOD IN A GARDEN?

Just over the fence is my conception
 Of an immaculate lawn;
 Cloverless, daisyless. My weedometer
 Tells me it is virgin born.
 Edged with slide-rule accuracy,
 The borders hold no flower with hanging head.
 A 'Garden of Rest' I would not say:
 No 'Heart's Ease' stands at ease,
 All shrubs, rub-a-dub-dub, are strictly at attention.
 I need not tell you that the gardener's hair is parted
 Straight down the middle!

His temper, I'll tell you, is not equable:
 Would yours be, if next-door one, just on your left,
 Was fenceless, contentious, and never got 'done',
 Was nonchalant, twisty, a wilderness fine,
 Where the Vicar's wife's knickers are gracing the line?



WIND OF MERCURY

It is the selfsame wind that blew
 Two thousand years ago,
 That clung his cloak to Socrates
 And sailed Odysseus on.
 The selfsame wind beat Moses' brow
 Beside the Red Sea strand,
 And with Sirocco, Simoon flew
 Across Sahara sand.

Like Zeus, in guises apposite,
 In transience, random-free;
 Sometimes a zephyr soft, effete,
 Sometimes a wild m el e,
 Tempest and typhoon's savage gust,
 A lion-like hurricane,
 A sinistrorsal duct of dust,
 A squalling rage of rain.



One day my Love went with the wind,
I know not where he wanders:
Oh, would the wind could take my songs
To him to whom my heart belongs!

ASCENSION DAY SERVICE

(Sir Roger Manwood's School 1978)

Bodies mull along corridors,
Through doors, plonk into seats:
All shades of hair, from black to strawstack white,
Bob left and right in tousled chitter-chat.
Members of Staff perambulate
Like well-trained sheepdogs:
Hymnsheets are rolled and pellet messengers are blown.
"Will you please stand when the Platform Party walks on!"

Outside the high Hall windows, sun and spring.
A slender-fingered silver birch
Scratches a pale blue sky:
High-pitched, precise, the Padre's voice
Delivers us from evil;
Then voices motley, in a medley,
Crown again a Head with thorns.

HIATUS 4.

We are all aware of certain influences which, although not visible in the material sense, we are conscious of in the consequences which they produce: 'Hidden Forces' shall we say.

Take electricity as an example. We might, in some instances, see the light which it produces travelling from one point to another as in lightning or neon signs, but we don't actually see the force itself. One frightening consequence of this can be seen in a news headline such as, "Two golfers killed by lightning".

The air which we breathe and which surrounds our planet can be contained and compressed to exert terrific force - but we don't see the air itself.

Magnetism, that strange force which can both attract and repel, is another instance. It is interesting to note that the magnet was known even in Classical times and got its name from the fact that lumps of lodestone - variously called 'way-stone', or 'guiding-stone', and chemically magnetite - were found in the earth near Magnes (now called Manisa), north-east of ancient Smyrna (now Izmir), in Turkey. As early as the 12th. Century, Alexander Neckham writes about the pivoted needle which was carried on ships to indicate the course. It was, however, William Gilbert in his dissertation 'On the Magnet and on that Great Magnet The Earth', published in 1600, which brought it into perspective as a modern science. As a youngster, and an ingenious would-be inventor, I used to imagine that, if I stood in a box-car made of metal and held in front a magnet, dangling from a fishing line, I could draw myself and the car forward! Giant electro-magnets have been made to perform great feats of strength but I feel that there is greater potential still in this force.

Sound is another of these 'Hidden Forces'. It has been used at frequencies that have shattered glass and melted metal. Then there is radiation from x-rays, atoms, and infra-red and ultra-violet emissions from the sun itself. It might be said that another consequence is a separate development from the primal source - a development such as 'light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation': the laser beam.

These separate developments could cause us to think about those less easily definable forces - some benign, some malignant: those about whose very existence one could be sceptical. I'm thinking about things such as telepathy, voodoo, hypnotism, spiritualism, auto-suggestion and perhaps even the power of prayer.

We can only believe - or not believe - in these arcana as, when, and in what circumstances they affect us as individuals. Therefore we respect, and indeed, are sometimes aware of these forces, only insofar as they affect us as individuals; namely, by the consequences. It is a pity that we are sometimes just as little aware of the consequences to others of our own 'Hidden Forces': hate, envy, jealousy, greed, lust, even love when there is a lack of expressing it!

LOVE

I have lived long and bear the scars of battle;
 Have sung war songs and heard the sabres rattle;
 And politics interminable heard
 And all resolved upon a single word,
 'Pax'.
 'Pax Hominibus', the priests chant;
 'Pax Romanum', the statesmen want;
 'Pax at any price' the sycophant.
 And this tired old world -
 From Age of Stone to Post Atomic hurled -
 What does she want?
 It all resolves upon a single move -
 To compass all her children round with Love.

Therefore love everyone,
 All colours under the sun,
 All prejudices gone
 'Til all your days are done.

But what is 'Love'?
 Bedtime frolic, and fleshly pleasure-bent?
 Cheaper by the dozen, and coarse in sentiment!

Hold hands: feel the warmth,
 The intertwining of like spirits.
 Feel the age-old ambience of great minds.
 Whatever you will call your 'self',
 Whatever you will call your 'god',
 There is within our being one small part
 Which answers not to 'soul' nor yet to 'heart' -
 The ultimate in essence of our 'Wherefore?' and our 'Why?'

There may be one fleet moment
 In the timelessness of thought
 When our Feelings and our Reason each confront:
 The 'momentary truth' that flies as if it never was,
 Analysis and synthesis denied.
 And therefore, Love; as evident as mortal ken of Space,
 Remains as the enigma, and Man's 'Infinity'.

APRIL'S FOOL

Impatient pall-bearer of hoary March
 And chief sponsor of lusty May,
 April had drawn her primal breath.
 A dew-drunk thrush, harboured in lilac,
 Enamoured of an echo, tentative, sang his yen.
 There was a vibrance in the night,
 Threaded and woven as by a nest of busy ants.

Shall I one day not feel this surge of Spring?
 No more respond to birdsong, blossom, and the like?
 Unheeding, pass the chestnut's warrior plumes
 And not remember chivalry and knightly deeds?

The natural cyclic wonder of the newborn Spring
 Tells April's fool that love's a fleeting thing,
 And dew will stale if not distilled,
 And echoes fail if not fulfilled.

Is April's fool then doubly fool,
 Whose season lasts through April's rule?
 A kiss, a sigh, a half-closed eye,
 A prismic tear to gratify
 The brief of time for her to die.

SONG OF SUMMER

We wandered where the wild doves coo
 And loitered in the valley;
 The subtle shade, all dapple-swayed,
 Was Summer's ghostly ballet.
 The snaking shadows of the corn,
 The straw-scent hanging heavy;
 The hedgerow striding with the sun
 And birdsong rich and ready.

We came upon a quiet glade
 Where Time itself was resting,
 And there at noon we saw a bloom
 Amid the thorns a-nesting.

This was a rose,
Its days were few,
Its beauty was but fleeting,
But oh, the scent it gave the while
Was like two lovers meeting.



DAUGHTER OF JANUS

Winter's not the cold and haughty dame some might
suppose;
Do we forget a warm heart's waiting in the Antipodose?
Pickwick, Winkle, Snodgrass, Dingley Dell,
Were all very well, but too parochielle.

Once a jumbo took you on safari;
Now it flies trans-Kalahari:
So, when painting Winter, one gets schizophrenic;
Not all is glitzy frost and photogenic:
Blueness, and coldness, and sombre close of day,
Are downside up six thousand leagues away!



AUTUMN

Clings every brown-gold leaf uncertain now,
And rouge-skinned apples bend protesting bough;
In spiders' webs persist
The sequins of the mist.

A song-thrush sings a soft belated lay;
The air thins now, and russet ferns decay,
While overhead there band
Migrants to balmier land.

The sunflower lower sags its seeded head,
Creeper on broken wall inclines to shed;
Fragments of foliage lie
Where they are soon to die.

A pumpkin bland on loamy pillow rests;
The thinning hawthorn bush shows ragged nests,
And in a thin-walled keep
The moth begins its sleep.

Beside the stack a mound of chaff is strown
Which, undisputed, sparrow squadrons own:
From rafter in the barn
The pensile bats harangue.

The mellow sunset's streaky gold has gone;
Denuded woods of all their dress undone:
Only ivy lingers
With tight-clutching fingers.



FOUR-WAY CONVERSATION PIECE

Maybe some martyrs are bigots,
Justices sometimes unjust,
But all the little people,
Big eyes lit with lust,
Heedless of their golden health
Reach to grab some worldly wealth.

"Mummy, what is 'allegorical'?"

"Oh, it's just something historical, I think. Now is that a clean pair of socks? You can't go to Sue's party looking like a tramp. Oh, hello darling. How's your day been?"

"You wouldn't believe how bloody awful! I sure could use a drink".

"Daddy, what does 'allegorical' mean?"

"Ali who?"

"Allegorical, Daddy. It says here: 'This is an allegorical representation'."

"Ah.... I think it means that something is made out to be something else, if you know what I mean. Now, where's that drink?"

"You haven't forgotten that we're going over to Jill and Andy's tonight, have you?"

"Damn it! I could do without that. When am I going to do my sales projection figures? Parties don't make for promotion you know."

"Well Andy is christening his new car tonight so he seems to have the right formula!"

"False pretences, Jean. He works harder at pretending to work than anyone I know! Oh well, if we have to go... Mind you, I haven't done so badly myself this half-year so perhaps we might manage a new car as well."

"That would be marvellous. What a clever lad you are! I must tell Jill about it. Did you find some socks, Louise? Well off you go then. Gran will be here when you get back. Have a good time, darling. See you in the morning."

"Could perhaps have managed a B.M.W. if Louise's school fees hadn't gone up. Might still manage it with a bit of manipulation."

"Gran's got her key so if you're ready....."

"Yes, let's go. Eat, drink, and be merry and all that, eh?"

So where do you rate in this jostle and jumble?
With the high and the mighty? The lowly and humble?
Are you on the horse that cavorts, whirls and twirls,
Pivots and prances, skitters and skirls,
Programmed precisely to work in a team?
Or are you just you in a wide-awake dream?

ALL-ELIZABETHAN

C.S. Lewis, one-time Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, saw in Elizabethan poetry two opposing styles which he called 'the golden and the drab'.

In the following poem I have tried to make a combination of this anthesis. I have made some use of the variable spellings in use at that time.

THE WORLD'S FAIRINGS

When the worde in me delights
And my laboures come to rights,
My Mistresse with Sparkling Eye
Spies a lover sans a sigh.
Worldly fortune turns, ywis, *
Colder than a past love's kisse;
From the same skie, summer blue,
Winter pluckes her season's due.
When the worde against me armes,
My Mistresse with the Soufull Charmes
Takes small note of worldlie knowing;
There my love hath goodlie growing:
But Fortune, Constancie, and Mayd
Are games, but brieflie, by fools play'd.

* certainly

The tone of the poem is intended to be philosophical but with a hint of bitterness.

The style, a sonnet of three quatrains and a couplet, has the first two lines in trochaic rhythm and one line in iambic; two lines catalectic and one line acatalectic.

The first three lines of each of the other quatrains are different again but this does not seem to affect the flow of the rhythm.

Alliteration is spread fairly evenly through the poem: 'when, worlde,' line 1; 'same, skie, summer,' line 7; 'goodlie, growing', line 12; and 'but, brieflie', line 14.

A 'conceit' (in Elizabethan times a witty juxtaposition of words/ideas) was intended by the words 'Eye - Spies' (lines 3-4) and with the line 'Winter pluckes her season's due'. 'Sparkling Eye' represents Fortune wearing one aspect and 'Soulfull Charmes' as Fortune with another face.

'Worldlie fortune turns.....' can be likened to the concept, at that time, of the Wheel of Fortune as a gigantic ceaselessly revolving set of circumstances in a metaphysical Universe.

Line 1, 'When the worlde in me delights' is balanced against line 9, 'When the worlde against me armes' and prepares for the apparent antithesis, but the poet is now rich in true love rather than in wordly goods. By deprecating these 'games', Fortune, Constance, and Mayd, it serves to emphasise Mutability.

The following three poems are simply in the general idiom of the first Elizabethan Age.

FALSE HEART, I SIGH!

If ever heart were made for love,
It also was for breaking:
When my True Love less true did prove,
Mischief was in the making.
"How could my love be false?" she said,
"No lust was in the taking."
"I know not why," I then reply,
"But oh, my heart is aching!"

FAIR EYE, FALSE HEART

Today I caught my True Love's eye,
'Twas not for me a-weeping;
Another swain was object of
The eye thro' curtain peeping.
And you, my foolish heart, be still
And do not go o'er-leaping,
For you would sigh, and I should die
Were you in such false keeping!

THE NEW ELIZABETHAN SWAIN

I bind my love to you so fast
That naught has power to move it:
Not just as long as life shall last,
Eternity shall prove it.
In weather fair, or weather foul,
In waking, or in sleeping,
My heart, My Love's computer-locked
Forever in your keeping.



A QUINTET OF CINQUAINS *

I woke;
Day was too young:
My eyes could not perceive
The beauty of the break of dawn
Unborn.

Go then, Where none has been:
Hope not for your return
Until the final battle's fought
And won.

Friendly
He gave his hand,
Where friends were hardly won,
And when the time of trial was o'er,
Was gone.

One day
 Came Promise fair,
 Her form and face divine;
 She looked, and turned another way,
 Not mine.

Laughter
 Is Freedom found;
 Fleeting the time it lasts;
 Smile is deceit when Liberty
 Is bound.

* A cinquain is five lines of a poetic nature, having 2,4,6,8 and 2 syllables respectively.

FIAT LUX

Out of the steaming slime
 Of foment, fire and fume,
 A Spark survives, which Time
 Shall presently presume
 To fashion into living thing.

A Being glutinous
 In substance; the faint spark
 In its breast mutinous,
 Clutching the curtain dark,
 Sensing the gleam above the gloom.

The Spark is fanned, and still
 It reaches, gropes and strives
 Through mist and time, until
 The Force possesses, drives
 Towards the unknown ultimate.

Then transient shapes unfold;
 And now the reptiles reign;
 Eyes lift above the mould
 To find the cave, to name
 The stars, and wonder at the dawn.

And from the cave there starts,
 Uncertain in its walk,
 A Shape of complex parts,
 Which now has learned to talk
 And feel, to fear, to love and hate.

An urge compels and grows,
 The Wheel relentless turns;
 The breath of Purpose blows
 The Spark, that brighter burns,
 Concealed in temporal screen.

The Sparks becomes a flame
 That is the Soul of Man:
 Shall these new eyes disclaim;
 Retrace the form and span
 To the cave again.....?



WHERE BLOWS THE WIND?

I beg your pardon, but
This is a bag of nondescript.
How else could one explain the feebleness
Of ectoplasmic mimicry?

We are ourselves but half the time,
And half the time is surely
Less than half the time we need
To find ourselves?

With avaricious flesh
And semi-dilettantic mind,
We conjure up our own kaleidoscopes,
And suck up, slave to,
Suborn, or struttingly subdue.

It is a world of scientific equity:
Steadfastness marries up with Bigotry,
And Liberty is twinned with Libertine.
In secret, we are nearer to unmasking,
But Bias has become our ambient Creed.

EVERESTERS ALL

This is dedicated to Brigadier Sir John Hunt, C.B.E. D.S.O., and the British Mount Everest Expedition Team 1953, and this was kindly acknowledged by Sir John (now Lord Hunt).

Here from out a molten womb
Belch and boom and liquid loom,
Immense in their immensity,
Congealed giants.

Here it is that aeons frown
From a near-celestial crown:
In massive stillness meditate
Time and Fate.

Here it is that titan tors
Bare and fleck their jeopard jaws;
Bleak and blast-cast blue-tint chasms
Die in spasms.

This then, was another world
Where snow curled, and ice hurled,
And the wild witchcraft of the wind
Dinned and danced.

One there is whose magnum pulse,
Measured by a glacier's gulse,
Flaunts a pennant cloud, and white palled,
Walled by Nuptse.

One who sits in high hauteur,
Liege of all her kinsmen there;
Coldly supreme, and stark aloof,
The World's Roof.

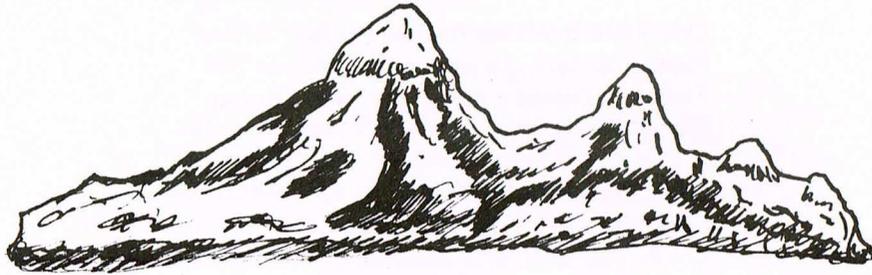
Do we sin to envy him,
Him, of mortals first to glim?
Through those taut veins the challenge surged
And urged, urged?

Here too, came the souls of men;
Came, and went, and came again,
Replying to the sceptic's stare:
"Because it's there!"

To this world, of worlds apart,
Came a band of matchless heart,
And faced here the supreme test:
Everest.

Brief among the gods they stood
On that sere and virgin hood;
Nature waived for once her laws,
For conquerors.

Few there be to journey hence,
 Hazardous the way is thence;
 They, the few that gained the height,
 That to the beacon's top set light,
 Their names shall always us enthrall.
 To them this toast I bid you call:
 "Everesters all!"



HIATUS 5.

In the 'Golden Oldie Movies' one of the cliches, which became something of a dialogue joke, was the instance of a Red Indian Chief saying, "White man speak with forked tongue."

During the 'Eighties' particularly, we became accustomed to an openness about sexual matters which would have been unthinkable even in the so-called 'Swinging Sixties'. With one voice we say. "This is a good thing: it has done away with hypocrisy which used to accompany such discussions and has produced an atmosphere in which dialogue can take place between parents and children without the embarrassment of former times. The wide dissemination of so-called 'sexually explicit' or 'soft porn' literature from sex shops, book clubs and some newsagents, and the screening in cinema and on T.V., of sex as an integral part of what we might call 'the everyday life of ordinary people', has served only to make it 'commonplace', 'everyday' and 'hardly-worth-a-second-glance' reading or viewing matter. Individuals must have freedom of choice".

The other voice of the forked tongue, however, argues that: "It is this kind of public prominence of sexual display, and the readily available pornographic literature, which stimulates the debased mind to commit acts of rape, child abuse, and to indulge a sexual appetite with no thought for the consequences."

As in so many other circumstances in life, the rational attitude lies somewhere in the shades of grey - between the black and white of the matter.

Weak minds, depraved minds, uneducated minds, will always operate at a low moral level - either in the open, or in secret.

Perhaps today the Red Indian Chief might say: "Wouldn't it be good medicine to educate young minds by precept and example so that when they come to the 'forked tongue' bit, they know with which voice to speak and by which means to act." And all his braves would give him a standing ovation!

TWILIGHT

Light is not yet quite bygone,
 Soft cloud cloaks the dying sun.
 Today is old but lingers on,
 Loth as yester to become.
 A stillness creeps into the air;
 Few sounds, but now acute and clear,
 And netherness, anticipating night,
 Makes shadows thought-deceiving sight.
 Birds cease to sing:
 Shy bats take wing, cleaving the air of 'in-between',
 When much is heard and little seen.

But 'twilight' by its very name, we know
 Is 'twice light', therefore, also morning glow
 When, tentative, the first bird sings,
 And sated bat again furls leathery wings;
 Day in; day out; this is the twilight's way:
 A priest with sacrament for dying day,
 And midwife to the sun's first ray.

SALUTE ET VALE

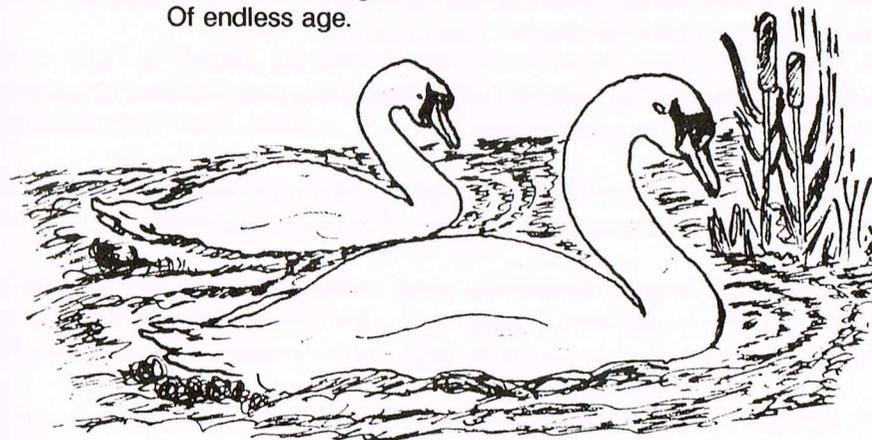
When threescore years and ten or more
 Sit with me in the sun,
 And less my legs and more my stick,
 Between the noddings of my fitful rest,
 When beard a cushion makes for chin on chest, I'll think: and
 think of you, and you,
 And where we met the first;
 My own projections make in Time and Space,
 And bid the one, or both, suspend..... or end.

The greetings and the first of wine were always sweet,
 And so the partings were
 If keyed with that expectancy which thinks
 "Just for a time....."
 And like the keenest edge of stone
 By water smoothed,
 The days between, indefinite.

The old wall greens,
 The church tower leans,
 And mottled marble tombstone gleams:
 The vicar's door, and old oak beams
 Are mellow fields where woodworm gleams.
 From adolescent blemished face
 Once youthful voice now booms a bass,
 And choice-of-voice choristers savour their cricket
 Under the long lean trees.

And quickly slipped we down the years,
 As quickly set the sun;
 And from the tightening circle slipped
 With imperceptible adieu
 Friends, one by one.

Alone, alone with hollow voice,
 And Memory's misted stage:
 A swan has sung
 As all swans sing,
 Of endless age.



BROTHER JOHN HAS JUST PASSED ON

I was just passing through but my car had broken down half-a-mile short of the village.

It was one of those villages which most travellers 'just passed through': main street, church, vicarage, manor house, secretive little side lanes and the pub - in this case a 17th. century coaching inn - where I had seen off an excellent meal and was now sitting outside, enjoying the early autumn sunshine, waiting for my car to be repaired.

Opposite me was a quaintly-dressed statue, its walnut-brown face, crowned by a battered flat-topped felt hat, the undulating brim of which indicated the innumerable times it had been doffed and donned in the heat of a working day. A dun-coloured neckerchief led the eye down to a brown chequered shirt of indefinite age, framed by a faded green waistcoat. Through the slatted wooden table top I could see a pair of brown corduroys and the shiny buckle of a wide belt.

The statue suddenly lifted its chin from a cupped hand and supportive elbow and spoke in a broad flat voice addressing no-one in particular. "I shot Brother John last night."

Somewhat taken aback by this strange statement, I looked keenly at the man - no longer statuesque but now the object of keen speculative study. "A loony?" I wondered. "Perhaps a psychopath?" Whatever it was, it now spoke again. "Had to d'yer see. He told me, in his own way, how much he were sufferin', and I couldn't let that be, now could I?"

"Of course not," I replied, almost involuntarily. "Was er.....Brother John er... living with you then?" I asked tentatively.

"Well o' course he were." The reply was not indignant but matter-of-fact, in the same broad, flat tones as he had begun his conversation.

He looked at me directly for the first time. His eyes were bright, blue as a cloudless sky and sad. This was no loony. I must choose my words carefully. "I'm sorry that he was suffering," I said for want of a better reply.

"Ah,..... we worked alongside each other for many a sowin' and many a harvest. We even knowed what each other were thinkin'. Now I'll be away to bury 'im." Having said this, he drained the last quarter of his glass and got up with it in his hand. "Well, I'll say 'Goodday' t'yer then, maister." He lifted the glass in a kind of salute, turned and walked, with the measured tread of a man who has followed the plough, to the inn door.

"What ought I to do?" I wondered. The man reappeared, turned towards the road, which ran alongside the inn, hoisted himself over a low fence and made his way across an undulating meadow.

At that moment the innkeeper came out to collect empty glasses. "I see you met old Jarvis then." he remarked. "Er.... yes," I replied. "I understand he lives with his brother John," I continued. "Yes, and now you mention it, it seems very strange that he wasn't with Jarvis just now. Always come together for a drink, they do."

The innkeeper's wife called from the doorway, "The gentleman's car is ready now!"

I made my way to the little garage less than a hundred metres from the inn. My car stood between two bits of agricultural machinery awaiting repair.

Just inside the double doors, cleaning his hands with an old rag and half filling dirty green overalls, two sizes too large, was the diminutive garage owner. He was of indefinite age, with little hair left and was known locally as 'Cabby' Burrows, simply because he owned the only taxi for miles around.

"Well, Guv," he began, "no real problem; just the coil burnt out. Lucky I had another by me. This way and I'll give you the bill." He turned and walked the few yards to a small office.

I couldn't leave with questions unanswered, so I began awkwardly: "By the way, do you know brother John?" and lapsing into the local familiar address.

"Oh yes, everyone knows Brother John. Lives at the seminary, top o' the hill. Must be gettin' on for ninety now. Been a laybrother at the seminary for nigh on sixty years."

"Old Jarvis, whom I met at the inn, said that he had shot this bloke but they lived together."

'Cabby' seem unperturbed. "Pity, that," he said briefly. Then, seeing my quizzical look, went on, "Old Jarvis was very fond of Brother John., Went rabbiting together for more than forty years. Named all his sheep dogs after Brother John, he did. Old Jarvis shot the right one, never fear!"

NONENTITY

This 'thing' that is a zero, a 'something' still unwrought,
 A negative, a not-at-all, a nothing or a nought,
 A cypher and a vacuum that vanished into void,
 A nix, less seeming than the ghost of morning mist
 That was, then was not at the time of dawn's sun-tryst.
 There, somewhere, as an unvoiced whisper, unaware,
 Without a shape, an unformed solitaire
 Waits in the darkness for identity,
 Selfless, Nonentity.

INDIVIDUALITY

You are You, and I am Me;
 He is He, and She is She;
 Never twain are just the same,
 One can never be again:
 Solely so, and called unique,
 Duplicate, you get a freak;
 Like as peas, or, chalk and cheese,
 Clones are clownish syntheses:
 Therefore You, and therefore Me,
 Love or hate, but separately,
 Wed or single, bound or free,
 Individuality.

LAUDATOR TEMPORIS ACTI *

In times long past there was an ordered way
 Of charger, amour, sword and lance,
 Of knights and squires and courtly dance,
 And villeins, serfs, and "Yes, Your Grace,"
 And scullions in their proper place.



Ladies there were, of various degrees,
 Consorts of lords, whilst others bent their knees;
 When quick dispatch was made of dangerous foe
 By means of night and stealthy dagger-blow;
 When laws were made, and broken but by kings,
 And Time sat still with silent folded wings.

The World then stirred and only fitful slept;
 Some men still warred: some women wept;
 The Tree of Knowledge golden grew
 And of its fruit Man picked a random few.
 Whilst that great Tree would greater fruit dispense,
 "Man's Master of the Universe," is his pretence.

"My chariots to planets I'll disperse;
 Ere long, who knows, I'll rule the Universe
 And like Orion, through the starlit Space
 As Lord of Heaven, I'll take my place!

I'll leave the scarred, denuded Earth,
 Which aeons ago had given me birth,
 And moving through the starlit host
 I'll see Her, a celestial ghost."

But now, I think, the circle full has turned:
 The torch that lit the way has fully burned:
 Truth, as a mirror large displayed,
 Reflects an image retrograde:
 Can I yet hope to see another time
 When war's a mystery word, along with crime?

* A eulogiser of times that are past: (Horace) e.g., old people are often such ones.

PROLOGUE — SAGA — EPILOGUE

The Pope has a cope that is bullet-proof;
 Tennis stars' tongues are insured:
 My picture - 'M.C.' is a Chagall, you'll see!
 Fiddlers aren't always found on a roof.

Adam met Eve in the Garden,
 Bonaparte met Waterloo;
 But we're told that the place where everyone meets is
 Vis-a-vis with a cage at the zoo.

Butterfly's blue, fritillary,
 Humming bird's red;
 Both flew the fields, willy-nilly,
 Both now are dead.
 No more they'll fly hill and valley,
 Beauty has fled:
 Why do we still dilly-dally?
 Earth, white, has bled.



.....

Hey! Here's a riddle:
 A man in a module,
 Another two stand on the moon:
 But where is the laugh
 If you stand in the path
 Of a multiple-headed mushroom?

.....

EPILOGUE

Oh, the noble use of thought,
 Prerogative of men,
 We drag it out for a 'Summit', then
 We put it on the shelf again
 And, when we go multi-lateral,
 We're happy as can be,
 But when we go uni-you-know-what
 We're half way up a gum tree.

.....

Squiggledy, squiggledy, my black pen
 Writes these lines just now and then;
 Some that nod and some that wink
 But, right now,
 It's out of ink.

NOCTURNE

All has been said:
 The Book closed upon its creaking hinge:
 The dry dew-dust appends its silent seal,
 And shadow slowly tentacles the day's last limb of light.

The guttering gas in its garish squarish cage
 Glimmed the sentinel-stark stairs of the tenement towers.
 And rain kissed, rain hissed in criss-cross tones
 Across the cobblestones.

Plectrum drops plucked on puddles
 Gloating with murk-mirth bubbles
 Along the lane.
 In a skerrying wheel, a solitary orange peel
 Curtsied in the sewer's foamy gape.

The high and galléd soul-less wall;
 The gaunt and ghoulish market stall
 With slimy shivering drapes a-fall;
 A far-off cat-like hunting call:
 The listening hours of night grow small.

