

**RIGHT AS RAIN**

BOBI JONES

*Poems translated from the Welsh by Joseph P. Clancy*

2013

For

Gerrie

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## PREFACE

This selection of recent poems by the foremost living Welsh-language poet, Bobi Jones, is designed to be both a supplement to my translations of his earlier *Selected Poems* in 1987 and an introduction for readers unfamiliar with his work.

Keeping up with this particular Jones is no easy task. His collected poems in 1989 added a large final section to poems from the seven volumes published between 1957 and 1976, from which my previous translations were drawn, and this was followed by a two-volume 'second collected poems' which appeared in 1994-5. Three smaller collections were published in 1998, 2003, and 2005. All this in addition, since 1989, to a novel and three collections of short stories, as well as books on Welsh mysticism, Christianity and nationalism, the idea of the nation in Welsh literature, the praise tradition in Welsh poetry, literary criticism as a genre, and the strict-verse techniques known as *cynghanedd*. In 1999, the writer having that year reached 'the promised age' of three-score-and-ten, he published an autobiography, *O'r Bedd i'r Crud: Hunangofiant Tafod* (From the Grave to the Cradle: Autobiography of a Tongue).

It must be said – as a warning, a challenge, possibly a promise – that viewed in relation to contemporary poetry in English, Bobi Jones is a seriously unfashionable poet. Not in style, perhaps. The heady blend of syntactic acrobatics, coinage and compounding of words, exuberant punning, disparate levels of diction, kaleidoscopic shifts of metaphor: this cheerfully flamboyant artifice could, I suppose, be considered 'postmodernist'. What the style expresses, however, is not self-defensive modernist irony or desperate postmodernist frivolity but divine comedy, fullness and multiplicity rather than relativism or absence of meaning in the world and in language.

The uncompromising Christianity that implicitly and explicitly informs these poems can be somewhat disconcerting even to those who like myself share the poet's

faith. In an age so often defined as post-Christian, we have come to expect poets, if they must express religious belief, to do so obliquely or tentatively, as an acknowledgement of their own difficulties with believing or at least a way of conceding that their faith is unlikely to be shared by many of their readers. Just as, indeed, we are accustomed to a poetry distrustful of strong emotions, and wary of directly expressing them. We are not much prepared for contemporary poems rooted in the conviction that, as Julian of Norwich heard, "the worst has already happened, and that has been repaired", and for the freedom this gives the poet to be appalled by the horrors of the holocaust, famine in Africa, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and yet rejoice unstintingly in the natural world and its creatures, in his neighbours and his nation and his language, in his wife and family, to have for his major theme, as he said in an interview in 1989, "rejuvenation, resurrection, or regeneration ... completely contrary to the fashionable major themes of the twentieth century." However surprising to others this may seem, as a Calvinistic Methodist Bobi Jones is surely the most joyous of contemporary poets.

Within the context of Welsh-language poetry, still fairly unfamiliar to most readers outside its native country, Bobi Jones can be seen not so much as unfashionable as unconventionally traditional. It is true that, as he writes in his autobiography, "nobody, even someone who possesses a rather vivid imagination, would accuse me of being a popular poet." But in a recent overview of "The Present Situation" for Dafydd Johnston's *A Guide to Welsh Literature c1900-1996*, Bobi Jones noted (without commenting on his own work) that

the thrust of the Welsh poetic tradition of praise has left its mark on contemporaries. The praise posture is still so pervasive that, despite regular tendencies to conform to the English – and even the European – post-imperial norm of irony and defensive scepticism, there seems to be an uniqueness about the Welsh stance that even with the younger generation

maintains itself despite inevitable pressures. It is to be detected particularly in three fields: in the bias towards praise of people, in the 'green' nationalist function (which has not only opened up themes of universal significance, but given bite to expression), and in the continuity of Christian affirmation (a bias that has maintained seriousness and defended much verse from superficiality). All three would be quite odd from the English perspective.

"Welsh praise," as he added in that essay, "can be uncomfortably positive and direct," and Bobi Jones also shares with most other Welsh-language poets what the Anglo-Welsh poet, translator, and critic Tony Conran has called the traditional "non-empirical" structure of their poems. Rather than moving from a particular experience through uncertainties to, as Robert Frost put it, "a momentary stay against confusion", Welsh poets tend now as in the past to begin from belief (not necessarily religious) and celebrate or explore its consequences. One of those consequences, especially when the poet is dealing with Welsh nationality and the Welsh language, is likely to be satire, traditionally the natural complement to a poetry of praise, and Bobi Jones has his full share of satirical poems.

Shared with other Welsh poets as well is what Bobi Jones noted as "the continuing presence of a consciousness of craft and highly developed artistry [which] has maintained respect towards language and structure." Although as far as I can tell, there is not much similarity in style to most of his Welsh-language contemporaries, for whom he may well seem too idiosyncratic to be altogether healthy as a direct influence, in this too Bobi Jones can be seen as having traditional roots, finding in the verbal daring and dexterity of Dafydd ap Gwilym and others a precedent for creating a thoroughly modern voice for, as the first poem in his first book says, "the Welsh sea of my praise that makes no effort to ebb".

I have tried in these selections to show the full range of Bobi Jones' poetry in subjects and style, and arranged them in loose thematic groups rather than in the chronological order of composition or publication. I take for granted readers' awareness of the limits of translation, particularly with languages as different in sound and syntax as English and Welsh. I must note, however, that I saw no way of replicating rhyme-schemes or, quite often, line-lengths, while still capturing something of the drive and imaginative power of the originals, and this was especially true in the case of sonnets. With reference to Frost's famous dictum, what sometimes gets lost in these translations is the verse of the originals but not, I hope, too much of the poetry.

In a brief section of Notes I have provided information where it seemed necessary or useful for non-Welsh readers, and as a convenience for readers able to consult the originals, the Welsh source for each poem.

John Emyr's monograph on Bobi Jones in the Writers of Wales series, published in 1991, is an excellent introduction for non-Welsh readers to the poet's life and work up to that time. Dafydd Johnston's collection of critical essays previously mentioned can be recommended to readers who wish to see Bobi Jones within the context of the Welsh-language literature of the past century.

Since 1986 Cyhoeddiadau Barddas have published Bobi Jones' poetry, and I am grateful to Alan Llwyd as publisher for permitting these translations. Earlier versions of some of them have appeared in *The New Welsh Review*, the special Welsh issue of *Modern Poetry in Translation* (1995), and *The Bloodaxe Book of Modern Welsh Poetry* (2003).

I must thank Bobi Jones for his encouragement and advice in dealing with a frequently frustrated translator, and above all for his patience and tact in correcting all too many blunders. As with my earlier translations of his poems, I follow his lead of dedicating his work to his wife Beti as "co-author" by dedicating this book to my own wife and co-author Gerrie.

## DURING THE CHILDREN'S PARTY

When the children went to the party, I stayed  
To look after the Silence. Not that there was  
A rumour that it could skedaddle when they went off.  
Greater its fear, by far, if the children returned.  
But I offered this practical excuse – a pragmatic  
And yes, a congenial boast. Yet, after they'd  
Gone, I soon observed that nobody could  
Look after it, but it was itself  
Guarding me, and keeping me in its lap  
Lest I raise my voice: its ribs were expanding ...  
A generous storeroom, it's like a roof in a shed  
At night, that spreads its shelter over fire-  
Wood lest it gets wet, lest there never be  
A chance for its burning gently when need arose.  
And beneath it too, since it was here like this,  
Though that wasn't its aim, the toys were kept snug,  
Warming one another, and purring  
With the evening air and a few white moths.

## A FRACTURED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In driving back along the way I've come,  
I soon come to a wall. This side today  
I can identify what's left of me with every step –  
Love, poems, work, a little worshipping.

This side, as far as memory will function  
In a world that shovels bits to the bodies' lorry,  
The driving's smooth, if swift, along the road,  
And the hedgerows on both sides are wide if wintry;

And I drive back. But I'm driving in a circle  
On this side of the wall. The far side  
Of the voice breaking, of the sham sexual maturing,  
Of the great doubt, and the awkward independence,

Not a thing. I have, of course, a partial recollection;  
But to enter the boy's feelings, and to think  
The same thoughts – no. Alien the being  
I do not know today, playing in his fields

Like an angel with bruises on knees, dirt on nose  
Head over heels amidst the rubbish there  
Behind the wall, the wire along the top of it  
Barbed. I can never clamber over it

Into that exile's head. Each of the wraiths thereafter,  
I can, somehow, project this present  
Body amongst them: but to get a grip on the child  
And persuade him to speak with me this very day,

Not a hope now. Why? I once had fields.

Every day the fields would stroll along my back  
And my thighs. The fields had a vague evolution.

They were tilled, and made lovely. The fields believed

That the paths were old, and a mole had the right

To vary them forever. They were ground up. I had  
And I had seven fields: a bulldozer came

To spread their earth and make a town, and the simple child

Didn't recognize the place. Then, this side of the wall,

Throughout the journey, there's unity from birthday  
To birthday. The people are feeding their sinews

Into the land, and the Welsh turning into Wales –

As the child was turned out of me ... Yet, unless I go as a child

Beyond the next big wall (and the barbed wire)  
One will scarcely be welcome to play over there

As an angel without bruise on knee or dirt on nose.

## THE OTHER GRANDMOTHER

There was one grandmother I knew nothing of  
    Except what Mam would relate. Dad wouldn't venture  
A syllable. She was *his* mother. According to rumour  
    She was dearer than my father's impossible  
Love believed possible. She was the one  
    Who couldn't not forgive an enemy of the hearth,  
Who'd never complain of being possessed by a drunkard husband,  
    And who thus by a negative succeeded in spreading the food  
Of her life before her children. Following the old  
    Custom of the cradle cannibals, they devoured  
Her lungs. But it was her laughter won my mother's  
    Unconditional praise, the laughter that persisted in making  
Its way through the house, after the devouring, as she sought to die,  
    Barking a brittle affirmative from her rough lips.

## TWO WOMEN AND A GIFT

Weary now, in gazing back on a life  
that hasn't really existed, one grace  
from the green ungrowth like a mountain through a telescope  
is a close distance in gazing back on a life –

two women  
who failed to pass judgement,  
who couldn't see clearly  
the false steps, and one a mother,

like two pianos  
with the vineyard playing them,  
two women  
who poured out a lifetime's tunes

as a single grace –  
their one dual wine that's beyond bountiful  
and found once on earth  
sweet and completely guilelessly given

by two  
for my throat that's very weary now, – yes, this  
(and not the flash and the flare)  
is the mountain I may fully rest on

and from it, their grace  
still a cloth on my forehead, gaze on a life  
too costly for two who trickled a while  
over me, and down to the ground,

while I forsook the winter home, making my way up  
to look for their summer, because I was drunk with Grace  
beyond women  
and that was born of a woman,

but full of blood and urine and acid and feet  
on the nape of the neck and VAT,  
though there I scarcely ever see anyone  
through Him but two,

save withered seeds of an evergreen tree on a hill  
that has taken root beneath them  
up through the earth of my weariness  
to unlock the igloo of a life and shelter the summer home.

## PORTRAIT OF AN AUNT

What she taught was waiting. She had enough energy to open a single eyelid. "How are you auntie dear?" The power failed, and the feeble thing flopped back. "Are you quite comfortable?" "Just fine," she gathered a scrap of muscle to answer, then returned to the breathless trauma and the easy art of failing to stay awake. In opening her throat, like a tadpole smoking in the deep, she was shutting down. She was made, over years, a prison, cell by cell. Echo by echo her grave of a body and its senses were peeled away till what we knew was only a link, unfamiliar in form, to someone we'd known somehow, once, once, in a different landscape.

She was dead before dying. But there was no particular day to mourn her. Without a borderline to mark the going, it finished in a mist that didn't encircle it but had its beginning in the being born. Where toeprints had been a talented dance along the Milky Way, now on a chair near the wall there was waiting, waiting for the Dancing-Partner to come, the Partner with his royal rhythms. But was it life, this sort of thing? Was it understanding life, to peer out for a brief moment every hour, every two hours, to make sure the world was still there, before collapsing back into nothingness, like a tiny hole in a balloon

at a Christmas party for the bubble of a girl she was long ago?

Bright still, despite the shattering of the flood of images,  
were the recollections flying about her in tatters,  
of fondness for us, the danceless  
mortals along the forgetful wall,  
as we waited, reminded of how  
little we've been out in the mind's full  
depths, we who landed so splendidly  
down in the nooks of that non-understanding in all understanding.

## YEARNING

I follow the bodiless smile  
from room to hidden room.  
The dividing wall has died.

I follow the fragile smile  
out into the wind and the halls of the wind  
where it's imprisoned in a vacancy of fields.

Of all the hearts that are in me  
not one can breathe  
without conversing with memory.

## THE QUARREL

She asks why the jubilation... Couldn't she recall tonight, –

No, she didn't –

A quarrel, two cross words, that you had near a cliff above Lavernock

Where blackheaded gulls

Were sobbing their terror in the wind, forty years ago?

Your imagination persists in pursuing them tonight, and on the track of the train

That wasn't caught, in an old whimsy

You'd follow further beyond, as though the anger pressing at the time

Had travelled thereafter

And totally non-return, without a chance for the tenderness to thrive,

Or the second chance to be a violin for harmonies uncomprehended,

Or the same tunes

To echo between you daily thereafter. You follow now

The impossibility of the rails

That were not followed, the empty distancing as though it hadn't been healed

There and then, and the unreturning overturning of the wheels. Now, tonight,

With your unkind embrace

Around her, her ribs are in you here and her shoulders

Cling – to a steep cliff,

Slippery, crumbling, hanging in space for a foolish minute

Of the might-have-been that wasn't gathered, and below, near the precipice, across

Thawless seaweed rocks –

The sea breaking (and she's asking why!), where blackheaded gulls

Wail their confidence

Above a sea hurling forty joyful summers below ... near at hand.

## THE TRAFFIC BETWEEN US

There should be a straight path between your song eyes  
and such eyes as are mine. I often reckon  
that my gaze has somewhat overgrazed the simple pasture  
between us. And yet, quite regularly, the lane will split,  
with no blind alleys, though it reaches the far end  
by many an underpass, motorways full of twists and turns.  
I should long have known this direct journey to the roots  
of your smiles, as a yo-yo knows its spinning back  
to a hand. I should be able to follow in my sleep to the end  
its elementary labyrinth, my turning, my hidden maze,  
my one way. But today once again I go stumble following  
a number of quite insignificant electrical railways, with many a branch  
to the precipice. It's no surprise that because of this I exhibit  
the daily unfailing talent for losing my head.

## COMMON GROUND

They didn't have a thing  
in common. The language unshared  
between them should have been  
a high tide. They should have been  
on peninsulas of quiet  
opposite each other, with the strait  
uncrossable between them.  
A conventional boat should long since have been  
a wreck for their heroes, but trusting  
was a curious boat,  
though there was no name on this  
special boat, and it had no helm.

And yet there wasn't a thing  
unspoken. There was no breakdown  
in the traffic between them.  
The foam was blessed with  
diamonds scattered amidst  
the splutters of ordinary anger,  
an unbroken chain that they  
held onto, like a quiet caress, at times.  
But at times indeed  
across the water  
and its uproar  
that let them go as they sank  
in their incomprehensible communicating,  
with the words that were not said, and the smiles  
that were not smiled hiding them,  
there wasn't a thing

in common between them,  
nothing at all  
except a single thought  
and the same dear old mouth.

## LANDSCAPE WITHOUT HAT

Brown hair bearing  
the mountain down from the peat, flimsy around rushes,  
swift across my berry cheeks,  
lingering warmly like an egg in a nest on a moor,

brown hair where I go to bathe  
without wishing to stretch my nostrils  
up through the brown nakedness,  
boatless bottomless hair

for my dizziness to whirl  
down through – a joyful fish  
through the ringlet, sunshine around its moon brows.  
How wet is the morning sun in brown hair.

And in your brown hair I gaze  
at my sickly image  
murmuring its greying waves down,  
brown hair breaking freshly against

my sharp-set mania,  
shattering its firm consensus  
on the brown rock; and now you are  
fine hair, white, white, against the sea's high tide.

How it foams, your peace today,  
contending with the estuary's outlet.

WATCHING A SMALL STORM

*(in Cardigan Bay)*

It's obvious that this storm  
has done her hair  
especially for the occasion. She hurries in,  
a bride, to take possession of  
the land. The land comes out,  
handsomely, to give the blonde his hand.

Somehow weddings  
aren't as civilised  
as they were before an explosion spread beneath the tide.  
See, in a  
cathedral of a wave,  
his flesh is her flesh, and horizons get away as fast

as feet can take them. The green  
torrent is Delilah,  
and Samson's pulling the ceiling down around her,  
a confection of confetti.  
The shells are hysterical.  
And we, the astonished congregation, how cynically

we watch them tie the knot.  
The mother of the groom,  
a lump of a pier if ever there was one,  
is trying to be  
a miserable second fiddle.  
Then, what's the organ doing? Wailing about them,

wailing like a rift.  
The organ's voicing  
its fear for the future through ocean pipes.  
Somehow waves  
aren't as civilised  
as they were before the mainland lost its oars.

The waves nipple  
as enticing as thighs,  
so blissful amidst electric blankets.  
But the white cake  
like a cliff! And the speech  
by winds! And the toasts that are foam!

I'm glad that I had  
an invitation, since  
I spy a bit of a fine spell like a redhead  
threatening the future  
from the west over there,  
whose horizon's looking for other weather.

Let's drink to this  
collision. Curious how  
we settle down in a relationship so shaky.  
Can there come, out of the wild,  
a birth of mutual respect  
by day, and nights in harmony?

## READING IN THE ROCKING CHAIR

This chair I sit in is  
recalling recalling how  
it was high amongst other  
branches, with its crest amid squirrels  
and crows' nests. And when I lounge  
in it, its memory is sinking  
sinking through my thighs,  
dozing in me until I'm  
rocking back and forth and  
back within the fancies  
about acorns – and rolling  
rolling amidst the caressing  
and passionate but not untuneful  
shoots of the sky.

Here aloft, the width of the rocking twigs, a  
peewee of a bird, I'm holding with  
my wings another tree's pages that  
warble when you read through the leaves  
well-oiled secrets and the thrill of the topmost  
parts of the tree. Tree within  
tree, and in it here, in my  
book inside a chair I may  
trace the metre of the thought  
given birth in its rockings by a breeze,  
a singing that sprouted quietly  
from my earth. Swaying in my hands,  
the tree in a tree, that has such interior  
poems, shares its snatches of stanza;

and the volume thrills my branches  
around it with their metre's leaflets  
plaited through my trunk.

See, the tree and its thought through this  
rocking I read in is  
climbing climbing in sap  
through the trunk, blood through the chair;  
and my volume's metres are echoing, giving voice  
to the metres of the rocking chair,  
and the metrical sun is plucking them,  
plucking them, a collector of tiny  
gravestones, as though reaping  
shells on a beach, before  
building them in my book, a palace  
for its bird-light. Through my ears,  
the tradition lays eggs. And their earth  
feeds me, with life through life,  
beneath its growth's hidden love's hidden throbbing,  
up from summer to summer through my tree  
that turns into a chain through book, through chair.

MORNING IS WHENEVER YOU GET UP

*(from a hospital bed)*

I didn't know that morning was  
possible. Night was  
obvious, and the apparatus  
of night. But this,  
the rubies of these worms, and the flagrant  
dew from the hill's coffer!

As fitting were the morning's kisses  
on the cheeks of the stream  
as the transience of an autumn leaf  
wearing the wind's  
silks as it rises. Why did time hide  
its gold watch

under the pillow of these pearly  
prayers? It wished to be  
a snowflake guarding the scarcity of  
its white hair  
from the spin of the steep falling:  
the stars hid their faint freezing.

The day arrived in the saddle of  
the orange lioness.  
His eye wasn't savage  
above her heart.  
The creature had been tamed  
by his whip's blade

till her skin was smooth.

Along the horizon's mane  
the way of it was that like blood gem by gem  
slipped from her mouth.

Her fear was a dance,  
a dance.

And yet, the morning was singing  
all that livelong night.

Oh darkness!  
such a song.

How fitting its pebbles on  
my window before it was opened.

It was singing of new breathing  
and the tambourines of the new aorta.

And from the sickbed in Ystwyth hospital  
bodies that knew there was  
a spirit inside them were relaxed  
and refreshed by the fitting hours.

Then a seed of a skylark came  
from behind a tickle-trailing  
many-voiced-vibrating cloud  
to plant again  
its golden tweeting within  
the mineshaft

of the highest shelf  
in a sweets  
shop. Today will be the century

of your songs. There I'll ask  
for a dollar's worth of their daffodil kind;  
and the Sunshine from behind

the grand cloudy  
counter will hand out  
a whirlwind of yellow honeycombs,  
but not too sweet.  
Their morning will drown us so fittingly  
all this livelong afternoon.

By my getting up, the morning's been created.  
It's been created to welcome the gift  
in the region that joins the gold  
of the rivers of lads  
to the copper of the maidens  
busy combing their fire.

"Thanks, shopkeeper," I ventured  
before legging away. "Here's  
a life," I said, in paying  
a cent for it, snap – like – that –  
as though I were casting  
out devils

(I'll learn dying in  
you, diamond feather of the nightdawn;  
daybreak's caterpillar is  
bomb powder  
that rainbowed as wings  
after the black night's monotonous flood);

but there is given to me  
                  in the hidden uniformity of my clay  
by the Sunshine's shapely fingers,  
                  so fittingly, million and millions  
and millions of items ...

                  I said to the shopkeeper

who extended her trade to our earth,  
                  "Thank you for filling  
my basket with candles fashioned  
                  from the lioness' mane and heart  
Oh yes, and how fitting too if I never manage  
                  to afford the proper price."

## NOVEMBER

The only responsible one is the wind.  
In the meadow's light, when the ash-trees remove their gowns  
And toss them glittering down, old actresses'  
Thin ribs are a disappointing sight;  
And above the knees creaky hips  
Sour our senses. There are sapless arms,  
Their charms repulsive to us.  
The only responsible one is the wind.  
In the field of angry music and wide-eyed rhythms  
The trees, garment by garment, bump and grind, and their bellies  
Attempt to excite the winter, without much joy.  
Then the theatre darkens; in the dust  
Lie brassieres, a pile around the ankles;  
But the ash-trees gaze eagerly towards the gloom  
Where there is no audience. There's no thrill  
From the stripping: ridiculous to pity the show.  
The only responsible one is the wind.

## FIFTY YARDS

A dangerous place, a river bank. This one plotted, on seeing a stroller  
less imaginative than usual  
who had come to loosen up. And it set aside  
fifty yards for such a fellow.

It insisted on closing around him, it shaped a web of quiet  
energies to catch him  
in its linen sheets, like the two dragonflies hooked  
near at hand by heat's rennet, for fifty yards.

And within this enclosure it was open acres,  
a place where there was room. Air  
was loosed in plenty, to be browsed by the two  
dragonflies hanging on hooks of sunshine,  
asleep on the wing, like gaps between the ticks  
on a watch. And their  
meditations were frozen snowflakes in July,  
for their evening was fifty yards of lull

along with one lack of breeze very close  
to the bank. Were that lack  
unable to congeal around me, the light itself  
would do it nicely. Since the rushes didn't raise  
their voices, the bank heard an emptiness whiter than  
a blank page. On the bank  
of this slumber, because of two dragonflies on hooks,  
only graves there would have dared to open their mouths.

Fifty yards before, the mangling of water finished,

the compressing was paralyzed,  
and the river began coming to terms with its breadth, filtered  
from the gloom. The light conjoined there, remade  
by the musing of two dragonflies – two sifters  
between the ugly and me.  
And their light was hanging through the sensual air, busily shy,  
having distilled the noise like drops of repentance.

Fifty yards isn't much. And if I hadn't  
stiffened one evening and observed  
the difference in the river's journey, it would have been too little.  
But for a while my own darkness was extinguished  
and the stairs of my body were climbed to see their light  
better. I sat close to  
my window, behind my eyes, not stirring, to have fellowship  
soundlessly, no one else there, with the two dragonflies.

A good place, these fifty yards, for summer to stop. The summer  
was ingathered to brood about  
not existing, and the power of silence to deepen.

All of the air is now  
invited to possess the brain. "Here I am," said the river,  
"come to bend  
obedient to the air over us, now a liquid too,  
prayerfully clotted to pour you into my round crock."

Before this fifty yards, the narrowness was thrusting through  
the waters, like the modernism  
that makes us primitive, the foaming reflected  
blossoms flogged along the ground,  
their arms chasteningly outstretched, like the civilization

that uncivilises  
roots, and the sun's ball of thread was unwound along  
the rushes, brown streams, nerves of blood, to enliven land.

Still, for a time, because of the two dragonflies that hung  
painted upon the evening,  
I could glorify the most no-account place within my skull,  
covetous and pensive, like an oak within  
an acorn pretending to occur. An unfanciful stroller's  
erudition was cracked open,  
and above the waiting, the thoughtful oak-tree bowed  
to utter marble sentences to the current.

Afterwards, I was imprisoned, I moved back through the wall of sunlight  
on to the necessary gloom.

I entered through another wall, but between them  
fifty yards was bestowed of joyful shining.  
There I was clothed in fifty yards of wedding  
garment, and my belly  
swaggered, immeasurably, – before I rejoined the night  
and its mutation, – and lost two dragonflies completely.

And I lost the fifty yards, I lost their light; the river  
was gripped again, in the asinine hurrying.

But inside of me had been laid like a lawn  
on the plain of memory and tame rambling  
fifty yards that no spade can uproot.

They've been neatly rolled;  
and though for swift miles the hunters with their hobnailed boots  
came to play bubbles upon it, my fifty yards will remain.

## THE SCARECROW

Scarecrow, with Your cold hands  
outspread, poverty filling Your pocket,  
You are too obviously near the thorns  
for the crows, and they flee. They go to hide

in hidden heaven, but it discloses  
Your rags. They question for the sake  
of not answering. And You, You ask  
do they exist, them? In limit

the Limitless proves itself  
on a hill. Because we never understand,  
it understands in us. Your blood  
is a Jim Crow hat within a frame

of skies. And we fly, one by  
one, descending to raise their cry,  
loud glee on the arms of the stillness,  
while Your clothes rot into the earth.

Oh! poor Scarecrow, listen to our proud  
croak in the middle of a field, and show  
black numbskulls, in wind, that sustaining birds  
is precisely the purpose of outspread arms.

## RIGHT AS RAIN

### I

Altogether daft, the shower in the midst  
of litter. In a leap year  
of bins, tins of beans, and official forms

come the heaven sparks, younger  
than perdition, sea crumbs,  
lightning bugs to the rubbish.

This sore's no exactly the spot for raining  
globules of ointment, babies  
that are thumping, the firmament's Cross eyes.

The sky holds tight to its own head,  
footless: its nose is obliged to it  
for surviving, and not without reason.

The sun is a shipwreck amid the sunken  
junk. The barefoot frigidaire  
is in mud. Is all the thanks to be washed?

An odd field for a shower. And yet,  
it's for the sake of this place it rains,  
though the trash undermines against

itself. It's surprised by the stars'  
kisses, the glasses of ants,  
lasses loosing their hair torrents,

a mess, they'll say, over nothing,  
a skyful of purity, whiteness  
being wasted on filth. Into the lack

of point the petty things stamp  
their caresses. But not wholly in vain  
do they beat, of course. Because, wait:

they are purposeful bulbs: air's plans  
are planted throughout the tip. And having found  
in the disorder the order, right as rain, they'll blossom.

## II

I became aware today of my own little field's  
existence because of it. I'd been too at ease,  
my skin without feeling. And then, the rain made me, –  
its interference. So too (my God) an infusion,  
Your being, but otherwise; because Your existence there  
Itself was the interference, presence where the stillness  
of lack of existence was a graveyard tight as a blanket  
around it, knowing You had unquenched my faith.

You were rapping on my refuse, every drop was tapping  
on my smooth forehead. There, Your existence –  
trees paddling through the puddles kicking  
the joy like children, hedgerows stomping  
in the bare mud, sneezing through their ears –  
within me, through a Being, immanent around me from the heavens,  
was a thrill on lip, on cheek, because of Your blade  
was a fields' shower, magic spell through my torpid dust,  
soft possessive to a root, trickle mutation on a town.

### III

And a river ran out from Eden,  
tossing the rubbish tip  
as though performing a ballet through a palace.  
It wagged its tail on the way  
to the seashore, like a lamb  
dancing from the lorry to the slaughter-house.  
It was roaring that it was someone.

On it went between the pasture's tents  
after tossing them to the ground. The rubbish  
tip itself was now thinking highly of itself  
in its iridescent silver frock  
on the way to the seashore,  
as the big wind will believe  
it exists until  
it encounters the little sun  
running to the beach with its shovel.

So the midden of myself has now become  
a pretence of being someone, its hair full  
of waters' explosions, resounding  
kisses, comical tears. It's no  
wonder it thinks a good deal of itself,  
because, overflowing from such a cleansing of rubbish,  
knowing that the security of ocean awaited it  
and was already within it,  
it was indeed  
– don't be, in your usual fashion, appalled –  
–a someone.



lick speaking to the ground  
always close by,  
because it cannot much forsake it yet  
to lap the silent-bordered heavens.

The land is bent on driving towards the sea.

There's not a minute  
left, we can't afford  
the luxury of disbelieving.

Just simply  
trust. Rush across it naked  
against all doubts.

Hold this morsel  
of land lightly  
because here to the sky  
is what was thought to be earth  
but that betrays the world  
by forsaking it for love.

See, it will run, it will fly  
to the mirror of the zenith,  
the headland pursuing faith.

PENNANT MELANGELL

I rushed through my birth:  
then put on speed. A World  
was after me, on a horse,  
and I went darting zig  
zag from dell to dell.  
I had no time to exist  
till I came to a certain place:

a worthless dell, its woods fairly steep,  
but its pace slow  
on a bankside. Swifter than usual  
I was there in flight,  
shy and quite fearful, a  
hare, who fled to the hem  
of this stock-still church's cloak,

as to furry tranquillity. Here  
the World pursued me  
on the back of its horse, its hand  
and its whip extended  
against the heavens. I retreated  
from the idea of its noise, beneath  
the fringe of the dress, the ancient tatters  
of Melangell. And there my ears

were a shiver elevated  
to the safe slowness ... 'Hunt it,  
after it, bloodhound, seek it ...'  
a World tongue-lashed, to the feet of this

lowly woman, the humble royal  
maiden. And the tranquil lady pressed me  
into her light's shadow. 'Hunt,  
seize the moth,' the sweat  
screamed from the whip. And I quivered.  
'Hunt!' But beneath her hem,  
close to the small parking lot,  
hares will hereafter  
find mercy. By her shadow,  
to the one who'll run, who'll give  
his life to touch the dress,  
is promised a land of forgiveness  
through the Substance of Melangell's anguish ...  
Not in vain will a hare leap  
small beneath the fringe of the dress.

## BILBAO CEMETRY

*(After the civil war an order came from Madrid to delete and remove  
the Basque names from graves in cemeteries.)*

The graves were threatening.  
You could see them especially  
On a moonlit evening.  
Their Basque names  
Would creep from their stones  
And Guernically snarl  
In Spanish ears.  
There was nothing for it  
But to set out with hammer and chisel  
And make their stillness stiller.  
Graves are bold.  
Some will insist on biting  
The hand that feeds them.

## WHAT'S LEFT OF A MOTHER IN ETHIOPIA

I have greeted her  
at my sleep's grey corners,  
come face to face  
with her when I was feebly  
skulking down my nights'  
back streets, and turned  
my eyes to look for a more  
spiritual need, and superior.

But I failed to squeeze  
past the thin figure,  
unable to come upon  
a gap within her skin;  
and though I didn't speak,  
my mind was still speaking,  
because the barefaced arms were  
reproaching me for her child.

It breathed upon the hearts  
of what onlookers were there,  
the packet of sticks that had been  
ripped from her woodland womb;  
and I was glad it was  
a dream, his hollows of sight  
that watched me fleeing from  
his mother at full trot.

What she proclaimed was my  
relationship to the empty

apathetic eyes: accused my seed  
of producing from her fleshless  
loins a son, though never  
had such plump grandeur as she  
lingered in the cosiness of my den  
and my gilded inheritance.

THE RELIEF OF CHELMNO

*(Where the final solution was begun)*

Always there was the relief of shitting  
in the winter of the camps.

It grew, close to walls, carbuncles of dung,

like the pile of bloodless cases,  
some expensive, some worthless, on the platform,  
pyramids with name-and-address tags.

And in the quiet naked cases  
mothers had packed patient baby  
food, talcum, mounds of powdered milk;

in others long-waiting clothing,  
medicine. Cases without voices,  
the backdrop monotonous rows, the shit hills.

It wasn't easy to come up with so clever  
a plan for taking off this generation  
on so amply mountainous a scale;

the executioners were experimentalists  
burrowing venturesome ground.  
Strange how full of mounds is man's

imagination: you can't imagine it.  
But shit is no experiment, and being loudly  
terrorised isn't inventive either. Every shift

there was defecating, urinating,  
before and after, in the death-rattle's  
factory, its heaped-up death five or six

rows of excrement ...

When the sick ones kept apart from  
the others would pile up in "hospital",

lest they slow down their comrades, the guard  
had to heal each one with a single humble  
little pellet in the nape of the neck ...

And Simon Srebnik, thirteen  
near the mounds years of shit,  
forced to sing a Polish

folk song through a homesick throat,  
one of the two witnesses, out of  
four hundred thousand, who came out,

one of the two corpses who  
survived, an entertainer  
who created jollity by breaking his heart.

He will hear the voices, not  
only from the cases, but from  
the barbed wire and the railway tracks

now, the voices that were lurking  
close to the shit, the Mount  
of Olives fastened

around each of their necks  
and around the neck of the shit world  
that is silent ... till the next time.

## ANTI-SEMITIC SONG

We shouldn't be this way,  
Afraid to open our mouths  
One little bit, by mentioning that Jews  
Make an occasional mistake.  
There's no reason we shouldn't be able  
To curse them from time to time.

We shouldn't be this way:  
We may chide a Welshman  
Without wincing that the free Press  
Always considers us anti-  
This-and-that. It would be  
An honour to treat them  
Impartially, like every people. But

Somehow, if we whisper one  
Surly syllable about Jews, the things  
We did in Germany  
Are down on us like a stone tablet:  
We shouldn't be this way.

And bits of meat are lifeless  
In our gullets, while jackles  
Howl their snowdrifts  
Through our dreams. This  
Is daft. Still, the sun is wild  
As terror, and there's nothing a father  
Can do to shelter his child,  
Or me from a teardrop,

Except let the planet  
Accomplish its suicide:

This is utterly daft  
And every time a policeman  
Touches his bonnet to agree  
Good morning, we expect a thumping:  
Never again to cut hair in silence  
With its handy raceless scissors,  
Never again to rest the palm of a hand  
On the velvet of dark in a loft.  
We shouldn't be this way,  
It is all quite daft.

Yet, we can't condemn them any more  
With confidence. When they shoot Arabs, we  
Are the ones experience shame. In their power-block  
Eyes we perceive the scream  
Of the barbed wire, the fart  
Of the smoke drifting through the briers.  
We're embedded in their flesh;  
We have no organ inside us  
Where we can hide from them.

We shouldn't be this way.  
We've been sprinkled all over their fear, and over  
The failure to understand them. No doubt  
We must henceforth live their death  
Like this, with them as odd witnesses now  
To every Arab how best one meets one's maker.

NELLY SACHS

*Jewish Poet: 1891-1990*

You flitted your way amid the chimneys of the German language,  
Picking a brick up here, a slate there.  
You stepped across its ruins like a wren – on crumbs of snow –  
That didn't understand frost.

You entered the soul of the clutter to fashion, from your failing  
To comprehend, compassion. You came  
From the bitter quarry, hauling with your shoulders a cart  
Full of harsh stones.

You gathered them, ice, like pallid diamonds hardened  
By the breath of Israel's enemy, for the sake  
Of decorating her camps. You helped rebuild them  
To mark the zest

Of Eckart's lineage. But you fashioned no ice palace there  
But warm huts. Through the rubbish bin  
Where the earth had been tossed, you wished to restore it  
For a weak remnant.

Through imperceptive windows you lifted superlative rhymes,  
Crafting fine ceilings from their foulness.  
You turned the splinters of their yearnings into furniture  
Covered in red,

And lay with the sick incomprehensible enemy there,  
Conversed there through his silent wailing,  
And tried to teach through rubble that to change the uncomprehending  
Is to love the whole world.

## CUMBRIA

And this was our nation. Now its hillsides teach  
grace to the sky, to the surface of the lakes  
    bareness, so that no one  
    comes here to seek  
anything other than peace on Celtless shores.  
Isn't our disappearance an inexhaustible egg? –  
I pick up a white stone as pure confirmation.

"Inexhaustibly," it says, "I pick my way amidst the disappearance  
now, two seconds after an aeon of the disappearance,  
    rummaging around  
    for skulls people,  
and couple with them in their coffins. I am  
dealing with the unreason in surviving;  
but I'll sing the cry of lack of self-conviction.

"I will be a land that no one knows of at all,  
nine centuries before the aeon of the disappearance,  
    beautiful as  
    unrecorded poems by Taliesin  
that here for a moment heroes burrowed for:  
Carlisle was an acre of Llywelyn's. Madness,"  
a stone says, " is the way now to stay sane.

"Since after the rainskin murk, who's there?  
There are sheep upon the mountains cursing  
    the Welsh their shepherds  
    cannot comprehend. The totalitarian  
would have been moderate, compared to so overkind  
an extinction; but perdition is deathless.  
I will be a land whose gap none will deny.

"Knowledge is a myth. The cheeks of history are dry as well.  
At last I can see without eyes,  
    since I'm attempting  
    to keep my balance  
in the middle of not existing. At least the Nazis  
left four out of every five from  
Poland's population: our perdition's a superior claw.

"Comrades of Cumbria, you cannot leave us  
without saying a word. Don't beg for 'bread'  
    when our syllables  
    make no sense.  
You must see at last without an object:  
believe the lie of hope, amidst the uncoerced  
conviction that one cannot live without light.

"Sisters of Cumbria, to abort is love's ambition."  
And so, on these hillsides where ceasing  
    has made itself at  
    home in a nest of  
absence, and where I searched for an inextinguishable  
egg in the middle of disappearance, a stone  
survived... "This is the only bread there is," it said.

MY WAILS (selections)

*1. The Way*

The language that I'm writing in  
doesn't exist: it's like middle-class  
black women with speech impediments.

I lift the lost consonants like this  
with my asbestos gloves.

Wherever I go, though vowels  
think that they are ready  
to pounce on me, they're lame.  
They want to touch my side  
and see themselves as bruises  
on my skin, and then misplace  
the key; but they know the accents  
are already failing to  
bathe in me, because of the weather.

This isn't what I'm saying  
then. Listen to me with your deafness,  
white man. Listen to me with your wall  
for a minute. I'm doing my level  
worst to be silent.

One thing I don't have is time.  
And what I don't have, that is the way  
I love what I'm writing in.

### *3. A Fairly Small Country*

Wet land, what right had you to pour  
this transfiguring torrent over my head?  
I thought at the beginning that the motive  
was to wash me, or at least refresh me.  
How could I suspect your aim was to drown me?

No one told me these were tears  
you were pouring so heedlessly  
over my hair, my cheeks, as I  
was lying here sick, or pretending  
to be sick in bed, little land.

Passer-by, would you be so kind  
as to take a towel from that shelf and bring it  
to dry this prodigal land from my eyes?  
If it had grown larger, I would have been  
lost. If it had shrunk less, I wouldn't have noticed.

### *6. In Extremis*

You can't hate the Welsh who hate  
the Welsh language. You see them on their backs here and there  
the width of the field. Mud on their suits.  
In their hair, the untidiness of the flight of a job,  
and a kiss. They fail to perceive the maiden  
running naked through the valleys. They have  
no notion what they're missing.  
And she says, 'I'll give you everything,  
hope, wine, and beauty fleas can't measure.'

And they say to the mechanism, 'Put  
this devil in her place, will you.' You can't  
hate them. They're about to faint on principle.  
You see their wounds leaking Welsh-diaspora  
pus. Their lifeless eyes  
are worn-out in peering outwards; but  
the outside's now inside the borders, while the centre  
is hanging over the precipice of the edge. No,  
you can't hate the doors that hate  
the wind. They have nothing but dolphins,  
whales, "we've done our best, we are  
foreign amidst place names, tourists  
in the Eisteddfod." The battlefield is a country's fragments, failing  
to find unity without diversity  
except in the cemetery. How can you object to them,  
smug carcasses on their backs? How  
can you continue to peer at them  
from your nuclear shelter without venturing out  
on your tiptoes to bury them? They deserve,  
at least from the authorities, a State Funeral.

### *7. Shoah*

If it were easier to learn, we'd be more willing  
to be Welshmen. If it didn't take sweat,  
we'd be fervent about living ...  
And we watch the words  
wind through the chimneys  
like yellowish breath.  
Beneath their armpits  
violins are extinguished.

We watch them burn  
in the mouth of closed pits:  
we watch the backsides of the past  
learn stillness beneath  
the thin rod of the chimneys.  
Learn the verb "if".

Nothing but stillness  
can speak  
the proverbs that were meant to exist,  
the psalms that are  
smoke above the camp.  
We watch the poems snoozing  
within a heap of shoes.  
We cannot re-invent them,  
we cannot empathize,  
no one can ever compete  
with the Jews over there.

But they at least  
have shown that there is  
nothing left, after all  
the burning of skulls,  
but more fire;  
that no one's ready either  
to talk to us  
more agreeably than  
carcasses.

9. *Fantasy*

About the princes  
we made up lies.  
We couldn't depend on them, any more  
than on the quick-witted commoners, lads.  
But it was our hope,  
the eagerness to lie.  
The lies were searching  
in the darkroom  
for their own authentic  
photograph. The history was a hotch-potch,  
the photo less of a hotch-potch, in a dish.  
That, by taking it frugally, was what we gulped down.  
By our lies' ideal  
we built heritage  
centres, where  
for a mere pound one could touch  
the princes who disappeared,  
so that the centuries that we  
have walked through could walk  
through us. We caressed in the fabricated villages  
a host of untruths about our land (Oh Prince!)  
in a dish. Still, it wasn't wholly  
a lie, one pale moment  
of slow savouring the photo that itself was longing there  
to see the existence of princes.

## THE WOMEN AT THE PIT-HEAD

I find it difficult to not see the women  
at the pit-head, when I pass a closed pit.  
The pit itself is waiting for men  
to come up. And the job of these spectres  
is waiting and waiting to garner some leavings,  
so that I cannot look at the mouth of the shaft without  
them furnishing the ground around it with their shawls.

They are helpless doubly, helpless  
because of not being men, because of being unable to go  
down with them, and helpless along with the men  
in the elemental way they scrape together a crust.  
Dab hands at washing bodies and dressing them for coffins,  
well-versed widows, and all of it not for the sake  
of some fossilized principles, precious culture,  
but to survive in the flesh for the following day.

They are my mothers. There is nothing of me  
that hasn't come from this row. Since waiting, waiting,  
without anything they could do, was their labour of watching  
for the wheel to turn, for the cage to rise, and for  
stretchers racing towards the gate to the unavoidable  
meeting. A row of women was taught about waiting,

because, out of their own painful pits and their waiting,  
was drawn, against or in accordance with their will,  
a joy inconvenient, a little rapture costly  
to the agonizing world price of subjugation. Then,  
the after-birth and the after-birth's blood from the depths. Keep

your heroism, you romantics. This row is only  
a mechanism for giving birth that will go on waiting  
through gap-in-the-bed nights for children who might  
sometimes have a bit of schooling to tune a talent  
for crying plague on capitalists. Waiting  
for the coming some day – from the bottom of their hope's pit –  
of a little less despair, that will stumble out  
into the light ... with ousting in its fists.

## PORTRAIT OF A WORKLESS WORKMAN

Today he'd had half a pint that lasted  
three tender hours. But he didn't intend to say anything:  
everybody'd voted against him again;

scraps of the parish limping without a hat  
through centuries of drizzle, what's left of his spirit  
shattered; ruin of a land with its fill of failing

to happen. He picked the *Goleuad* out of the bin to  
wrap it around himself under his coat.  
He sat hunkered down outside the station

for a time amidst the spittle dregs. His conscience  
was saying, "better loiter in public libraries  
over news, without reading, to keep warm

lest you scare little children here." And he got up to not  
get up, because it was in the negative a Welshman  
was supposed to find himself. But he didn't go

to the library. Wouldn't giving in define him? On the seashore  
in trousers up to his calves, without breath, reminiscences  
of work were standing like stained beer glasses

on the counter of his memory, rusty wings of a seagull  
fallen down a chimney trying to open  
a door that isn't there; and chanting that not existing

wasn't enough. So he went wandering among

bankrupts of famished cats, reaching the Worst  
beyond which was nothing; then he alcholed

one mile further still ... Unless you find in this loser's  
determination a signpost to identity, then  
Welshman, you'll never find it anywhere else.

PORTRAIT OF A PATIENT

*(with Alzheimer's disease)*

It isn't her. It isn't her confidence or her high spirits,  
The tense dreading. The string of her feelings has been plucked  
And knotted. She can't direct her mind. It's a briar-patch  
For anyone, loving the shrill selfish stubborn little thing.

She went out to the shed to fetch three potatoes,  
Not to fetch loneliness. Came back with a box  
Of empty bottles. "But what's this?" She'd act as if  
She were searching for mushrooms on the carpet.

"Where is he?" she'd ask later. And she'd insist that she had  
A pet hedgehog named Harri S. Harris.

When we lose somewhat of our mind, we lose  
Every thing that can go through the mind. As for those left  
Behind, they can only attend, shut some of the ear  
To the wild tangle, the repetitive disconnection.  
All one can do is agree, bow together in prayer,

But it's a briar-patch now, cherishing the body's stranger  
What can be done with this? Nothing but ...  
Nothing but be with her, answering and smiling brightly  
At being's dissolution. That's what loving is, after all.

"Go on, I'll come later," her sister would tell me.

"I want to waste three hours here. I'm staying."

She'd look at her sister's flushed face. Stillness would come  
Steadily, like a chip of light, across that face,  
Like a sun that had always come to a meadow at evening.

Both would grow calm. For three wordless hours, they'd be one,  
Side by side on the couch, daydreaming calmly  
Like two girls basking together all afternoon on a meadow.  
Can one have any better job than recliner-on-grass?

## THE NEIGHBOURS OF THE PATH

I'd come to the conclusion that villages had lost the knack  
Of being villages, that no one knew anyone  
Any more, all the inhabitants had been exported, no blood ran  
Through their cottages, the cities had extended  
Their style the breadth of their society, and in the lost bones  
There was frost, a few drops of uric acid, severe cracks,  
Hard notches, stone. Never again to come back,  
The old neighbourhood's been excreted by the car; ...  
And then, I saw on a Path not far from home, beneath  
The shadow of the town that was breathing down its neck, something  
That made me doubt my doubt ... No doubtful outcome to such a nudge.

In spite of our coming there from everywhere, on the Path  
We halt as though we were neighbours, leaning on the make-believe  
Wall; with our elbows for a while now comfortable  
On the wind, we discuss the world and his wife. Bil  
Was a gardener. But if I'm the last person under soundless rains  
To venture a syllable in front of my spouse about gardening,  
With Bil I have half an hour of chat, delving into  
This and that, before moving on another hundred yards.  
Ah! Dicw. He's a broken-down bricklayer, out and out Labour;  
But on the Path he forgives me everything.  
We're a coalition ... our first attempt at sitting on a fence.

And then! "Good morning, ladies." The two of them  
And their bitch. My wife pretends she's suspicious when I mention  
That I've met my "ladies". And I respond  
Churlishly – that she wouldn't still tease me if she'd met them.  
They are Path neighbours, the bevy of the sky's bench,  
Conspirators against journey's end, fellow-residents of a stroll,  
They come in the concord of tiny birds burbling together

Till they see the hobbler through their smiles (and their greetings

That are a Gloria Patri). Then, we assemble a sort of village  
In dilly-dallying on a footpath, them up-river, me down.  
Birds have mercifully put up the Post Office,  
The houses almost exactly like Tarzan's huts.

There's scarcely one blacksmith's forge to be found this way,  
It's true, someone tells me who knows; and I'm not one  
To contend with those in the know on such a perennial topic.  
But I have my own opinion, since at times  
In one spot near a yellow iris I've lingered for a spell  
With a handful of ducks and two moorhens  
To listen to all their jokes. All of them would carry  
Tales about the near-by cattle, before showing me  
Their hooves. Ah, birds! Old old ducks, old  
Old people, with nothing to do but waste  
Their lives by praising the air, and versifying their hearts  
Around the anvil about the blessing of roaming  
Among the yellow-rattle, swearing how fine,  
Amid the bustle on the edge of the world, were neighbours.

And if it's a village, then there's need to support a W I.  
And the bushes make sure to prepare a branch for such  
Feathers. In the neighbourhood of the Path every bird garners gossip  
From the earth beneath it, tales of the pasture and the pebbles,  
Whispers that I treasure beneath my memory's wing.  
And who will blame them if they waggle the frieze of their frocks a little  
In approaching each other, trying not to show them off too much?  
All of these sing to one another, with not much of note  
Except that the Path includes them in its relationship.  
I hope there isn't any signpost to show where they are.

The Path is a village of song-thrashed thornbush and tranquillity,

Bowing upon horizons, learning to kneel by water,  
Because words caress one another, and syllables are friends.

So it is that the Path is slowly walking within us  
And ordinary devotion perches cheerfully on the banks of our stroll.  
There are scents of snow once in a while, always in ecclesiastical livery,  
With the bluebells' fellow-membership disinfecting the stones of our church.  
That is the dwelling which gave shape, before the coming of the car, to our village.  
To have a village, there had to be a church in the centre,  
But that, as you'd expect, was busy bearing tidings everywhere.

## PORTRAIT OF A BLIND BOY

We expected his hands, from watching him, to catch  
Dust, like a snail; but they went flying on,  
Swallowing nothing. They could no less than whisper  
Their tribulation to the air: the strain  
Of his throat was seeking a voice,  
Since his whole effort was to see the globe with his ears.

His eyes didn't leave his head. At times they'd roll  
Like a pair of rabbits in their cage bent on finding  
A gap in the wire. But the width of their patch  
Was somewhat skimpy, less than generous  
To such amiable little things  
Who'd done nothing to any except to not know a jaw.

From one channel's closure, another had taken its place  
To let the world trickle into the stone  
In his life. Neither sight nor hearing, despite that, gave  
A refuge for knowing. But their destination was there  
Before, will be there tomorrow; this,  
Igniting identity, gathered him in full orchestra.

What was it? Simply zeal of fellowship, base of memory:  
While his sight slept, this could open far:  
Airfield of every expectation, wild, moderate, tame,  
That he wished his senses to welcome. Out of its cell  
He'd gaze at a smick with the skin  
Of his hearing, creating a colourless face with his nose.

Still, he feared that borders might crumble like ice-cream

His hand had been holding, melt and march away.

He fashioned a corridor around himself, and as

He neared at arm's breadth, there was on earth a craving

To pretend not to be

Beneath the feet whispers everywhere coming and going.

Though he peered through his hearing, there were some walls

Less shapely than others, without a wink at anyone.

Not every noise was quite tall enough

For his stone to capture. Then, bang; and tasting

Nothing but blood, there was sound

Swelling red through his shoulders like a bassoon..

As he rolled on, he kept his shoes close to the ground

Lest it start to retreat. His hands might

Become proper wings if they could now evolve

In time, before dying. Their reach was floating there

Above the sea of their search for the noise

Of his unbeing. They walked, keeping dry, on the certainty of water.

## PORTRAIT OF A NON-FEMINIST HOUSEWIFE

Not solely a wife. There's still more:  
she's never seen a thing on the face of the earth  
as beautiful as an apron. She holds her deepest  
conversation with running water. In the kitchen,  
ironing the shirt, she draws to herself the arms  
that aren't in it; and the smell of the absent  
skin is the throne that cherishes her shoulders.  
And this at the radical tail-end of the twentieth century!

And not solely a craftswoman. There's more still:  
the farewell trust and uncertain confidence of the waving  
a hand to the children, before she returns to stand  
and reflect in slow losing, with shadows  
circling merry shadows. On the shelves of her Earth Mother  
bosom now, she puts the dishes away, but in  
her farewelling fingers the children are fragile; on brave  
tender boughs, their buds loiter in January.

What pours today into her bowl is the human  
excitement of the commonplace, strictures  
of saucepan's function and the sink's diamond sacrifice.  
She smiles soberly inside at the daily wallpaper,  
and yet never has house seen so many passions  
as, all by herself, were hers.  
This long ago led her captive to a vale of rejoicing,  
but not as Everywoman, since she knows of nothing better.

For she's champion of the splendour of insignificance.  
Hers is the prize for proving how dear, in the immensity's

view, are the tap and the oven. Gathered together – in minute art, – are the hoover's passions, the empire of furniture polish, the pure old havoc of cooking a house and planning it through wear and tear, and lofty flat-ironings, heavy with melons, giving out over the dishes, and countless fingers reckoning sun's gold in a duster.

But still, never should she be known as Humanity. What should be known was (untitled) Gwladys Williams, who was a Welshwoman because of her lack of confidence concerning identity, who was obliging towards neighbours and the grass of her lawn, her family's 'unconscious' matriot in an authentic limitless land in the middle of the cups, mercifully without ever managing (feminine-fashion) to become a World Citizen.

And her humility crushes me. She squeezes me to a pulp, into the earth. She scourges me with her service until there are weals all along my back. She annihilates me mightily. Her tone's the only target now to which a male may mature. She's the pattern that permits knowing to the utmost limit. How can pride ever grope through the jungle to her liberation? Although I'm within her, because of comprehending a little by understanding praise, there's still more.

## THE CONVERSATION OF THE DEAF

When one deaf person meets another,  
the door that shuts  
the ear will be, close at hand,  
flung wide.

Hand will listen to hand,  
and these hands are  
the thoughts that free them. Through the supple fingers  
the hard of hearing play piano.

The bars of the song, for so long iron,  
will be bent,  
like branches boys swing on. They're the ping-pong balls  
on jets of water.

Theirs is a dance inheritance,  
an identity that  
unites them as their hands waltz together,  
all ears.

Through these strings of flesh  
they pluck a tune.  
The bone staves and the spaces between them are chords,  
an ancient language so lively

that's a piercing, when one sees through them,  
better than sound.

Their culture's well-stocked by the alternative speech  
of the dullard hands,

the comely hands that bridge solitude  
with solitude.

We feel pity, we do, but in their story  
every gesture's a handshake.

In a wind outstretched the prodigal twigs  
caper warmly  
on the kiss of their leaves, and they're drawn, a nation, to be tuned  
into knowing each other truly.

And in a trunk they'll become a community by bearing fruit,  
a tongue's petals.

And through boughs that accentuate to the earth  
they'll listen to seeing.

## PORTRAIT OF AN OVERPOPULATED WOMAN

You'll hear her all the time on the street, talking quite sociably  
To the wall. That insists, in its unyielding way,  
On answering her with silence, if not with sheer astonishment:  
Everyone knows her as odd, without anyone knowing her really.

She waves her arms in front of her, mills of handy electricity.  
Without anything, no light anywhere, she's a dramatist of the absurd  
Enacting her own universe that's so gloriously giddy,  
Rushing home to an audience of tableful absence.

I do the same thing myself, but I'm respectably careful  
First that no ear is dawdling within my hearing.  
But she goes at it like addressing a public meeting.  
She's a traveller with her jaw raised to the wind

Who fills every yard of the path with a drove of turkeys  
Screeching through her megaphone, denouncing the rain  
And telling the world and his wife without mincing words  
What she'd do if she were in charge of such filthy weather.

She doesn't need anyone. Ignores all gossiping  
By sensible audiences around her. She has plenty always  
Of garrulous company inside her own large head.  
And such a head! They whisper (between you and me) that maybe

The skin oddity and her stoop betray the true situation,  
And that she was the result of incest. She loiters now within  
The complexity of a tribe of one, and guards her feeble fellowship.  
I've seen her for twenty autumns spewing her immanent

Concoction, uttering outward syllables to every breath of the Unknown.  
But today, amazingly, close by, she restrains herself for now;  
Look at her sitting on a bench near a sorrowful old man  
For a time, a minute of communication. A tiny syllable or two

Is all I've ever spoken to him. Though I knew a bit  
About the grindstone of his experience, I didn't dare  
Linger there to sympathize: my reserve was so stubborn  
And independence shyness so amply easy for me.

But across my awkward ditherings and bunglings  
I see the beautiful peace of two: this madwoman stays  
To settle down near him, and he smiles quietly  
In her lax company. They're so richly cheerful a duet.

Two of the disabled, one not exactly all there,  
Two apparently lonely, but quite conscious of a world  
Around them, that speaks of jumbled numbers on a balance sheet  
As broken dishes that can't be put completely together.

And I stumble ahead knowing that I have experienced,  
For a time, the grandeur that's oceans wide, the woundedness of praise,  
And the Hand that's upon the moon. I've seen two of the pretty  
Dishes that were placed in the three-piece cupboard of being.

Though her rags are impoverished, though her dignity's dreadfully frail,  
Though the dailiness of her spree is blathering to the void,  
(Indeed, because blathering to the overflowing void is her spree),  
Madness comes maching among us to sober us up.

NOBODY

Nobody wasn't to Non a denying  
of presence.

Nobody'd filled up with minus-me.

Shattered, she'd  
returned to the house.  
The two achievements had been to dig for her husband  
an unlucky spot,  
and then come to gather withered  
leaves in the dusk,  
more red-roar leaves.

And Nobody was coming to know  
there was Nobody  
in the house. Not her,  
it was he that fashioned the Nobody with the feel  
of his laughter, and the churning  
of his voice seeking her,  
and the passion of his long-winded  
random explanations  
striving for their co-existence.

Nobody was the cold  
night of her lying  
in a monk's bed:  
Nobody was the refraining answer.

There was Nobody unsobbed for

there: no trying to declare that Nobody was needed.  
And because she couldn't shut  
Nobody from her knowing,  
the pith of nearby  
absence was constantly yielding her  
a blight: the moaning,  
not because of opening  
a final gap,  
but for bringing presence to the departing.

Heart space was hard.

Before we're born, after we're born, and soon  
after we've landed, we see that the supernatural  
is every morsel's, every season's necessity.  
There are layers of being around a self.  
We cannot escape from devouring  
a person's fullness, nor defy it either  
for long; but tonight,  
tonight she'd arrived at that house  
as though it were already to her a home of mist stones  
in the numberless age of  
Nobody,

Where the other will not filter, an echo  
of an answer, and yet  
at the edge of doubt  
the pristine world of her barren spirit will be  
for emptiness too  
a haven.

## PORTRAIT OF AN UNIMAGINATIVE VISITOR

The same old journey in all weathers, the same view  
of cars. On the same bench daily, outside  
the gate of the cemetery, he would sit as though  
he were comfortably dead. Each day, for the last twelve months,  
he'd gravitate, though I didn't understand the practice, to spend  
the hours in futility. It seemed  
(as a custom) rather feeble.

Then,  
all was made clear without anything said. The bond  
that he'd made was bared.

They had never  
been parted, though the vow had ended, 'until  
Death did them part': that ninny  
had visited her and left, without leaving the husband.

He'd come, after clacking along in a little red car, to be  
on a bench in her presence for ages, morning and afternoon  
at the graveyard gate, come summer, come winter, like  
weather, like time itself, a dog that would roll himself up,  
hedgehog fashion, yoked to the feet of his true mistress,  
when she was asleep, unmindful of him.

Yes, I caught him when he rose from the bench to flit  
over there, his eye on earth that didn't hide her.  
See, there was still someone there who expected him,  
someone who remained, left by the outcreeping tide.

The vow itself died, nothing else. But what lived  
were his fond lips that would gently so often

adorn her, the ones that uttered his vow, lips  
and the breath that crossed them and the words spoken  
between chairs come evening, and the shared meals  
eaten together with zestful lips: from the bench today  
they wished for no greeting but yesterday.

And when I came by, somewhat abruptly,  
I heard those lips quietly wording  
a credo that fails to finish between lovers.  
I heard the conjoining that was meaningless to everyone.

"Good morning," he responded to my greeting. But his meditation  
hurried back to her. Who else? Where else would he go?

A handsome old man on a dependable bench: he  
wouldn't feel at home any place where he couldn't find her.

There wasn't much of her there: only her earth  
hiding itself beneath the earth in its own sleep,  
not a smidgen of a gap between her now and the clay and the grit  
and the gravel. Soon he rose slowly and tossed  
a glance her way: "May I see you again?" Yes,  
didn't I hear him with my own ears, and understand him perfectly,  
the simpleton (almost) who was making love there, scarcely?

For nine-tenths of my life I've been living  
close to cemeteries, but know them as passionate communities.

## PORTRAIT OF A STRANGER IN A PUB

Sometimes like a bit of meat that insists on sticking  
between one's teeth, a stranger edges into a company  
and manages to sit down. Then, without raising  
an eye, end-to-end his eyes command  
the benches. At the far end of the bar,  
he's a forest in which one goes astray.

And he crinkles a smidgen of a smile. Who is he? Does he know  
something ordinary folks don't know? Fronting a tranquil nape  
that's as if it were fleeing because of something shameful,  
his dark countenance discloses nothing.  
And this nothing is his mask. He's absent

after squeezing amidst their glasses. He unvoices everyone.  
And he stays without being there. That's why the artist  
who's called on to fashion a portrait of him  
must paint the one he isn't. He scatters their lull;  
and his dull silence jeers at them loudly.

He's a visitor on the border of understanding.  
He's Bendigeidfran perhaps who's stepped across their sea  
to their world. (The waves had said a heap about him.)  
He's sorcerer king of their razzle, come to hunt them,  
his cigarette smoke circling their scalps. No one calls him  
a remote memory. But he's the one not wanted.

Still, doesn't his lack of eyes leap like birds from twig  
to twig? His sideways look's hardly more than a shadow,  
but it's a shadow that moans without opening its mouth,

a shadow that's come to burrow in their fellowship,  
and discover them before they discover themselves.

He'll not set sights on them by indulging in chat  
or put on their bit of presence by hiding in them  
his monosyllabic words. He isn't one of  
the boys. Ah! They know his sort. He's come  
in outlandish clothing, mouthless, to say everything  
before he's done. His leaving encounters

us. We watch each other, without uttering a syllable.  
(Who was he then?) One by one, 'Good night.'  
A goodbye murmur of grey counter-greetings  
frozen for a moment for a moment's sake,  
when the flood of talk for a stupified spell is ended  
for a while, and we begin, before the leaving, to know him.

## PORTRAIT OF A GARDENER

*(and the garden that tends the gardener)*

Behind the walls of the house grows the gardener.  
You may come to stroll the width of his unplanned lawn.  
Van Gogh's flowers are there, across the handsome man's brows,  
and Monet's poppies through his eyes, and Cezanne's apples,  
each venturing to share the peace of his pottering.

It's pouring sun today. The daisies are sitting  
watching Dewi's growth. They'll neither stop nor act.  
Their function's to exist, holding light serenely,  
but not too hastily, lest this breeze speak up  
and call bluebell's knell to cense them from their early grave.

It's the seriousness that counts. Any silly baggage  
can fiddle with mattock and spade, unforgiving  
to convolvulus' twists, fussing about moss.  
But he was spied by the garden as a whole, that climbed  
onto his back and rode him, and saw very well his simplicity,

because there's a tribe of plants for which there exists  
no withering. They'll not behave properly when August ends.  
They veer for their pollen's sake from the cold wind's angle.  
They twine about barbed wire. They spiral round a beam  
in the day's eye. And their autumn goes ungathered.

It's pouring peace today. And here where stubble stood  
there's a stronghold against indulging in too much tending –  
the civility of a gardener, a snail-kindly man who gathers  
an occasional garland from the wild, and some eruptions  
of nature, explosive fruits and many-syllabled herbs.

Behind the walls of the house grows his secret.  
You'll see no attempt at ornamental cultivation.  
(You'd think that today's not the day to visit the festivity  
and you'd be perfectly right. You'd see only growth  
that daily to the unimaginative world is a scandal.)

It's pouring a gardener, its object a lad anti-oblivion.  
Today's the day there has come to his hand the joy  
of pulling up every lapse and lack, like thistles and wounds,  
putting the world in perspective, his lens to the dirt,  
because his harmony can never grow a thing that's rootless..

It was Art that made us all (to some extent) artists.  
He climbed on his parents' shoulders to whisper his language  
and saw from it in the Garden of Speaking a distant Avalon  
and a guide to lead him through it to fructify his work,  
a sun that would breed suns, their seed on the breezes.

But they're at one, the flowers and Dewi, his weather  
and his house. The garden's a plucker of tender weeds, protected  
by quiet, and its growth, this, many incomparable verses:  
the bees invested; many a gleam played its part  
in designing the loitering in a poet's paraphernalia.

Still, though there's neither stone nor weed anywhere  
because their definition's so broad, and dear earth so tender,  
his nature's governed by a garden, and he too like nature.  
And life's perplexity, that will haunt him perhaps for a spell,  
is why the flowerbed was persuaded not to become a rabble,  
and why the garden succeeded in growing its tidy gardener.

## PORTRAIT OF A YOUTH SUFFERING FROM CEREBRAL PALSY

I fell to reading, on a bench, a paper. Civilization  
lay dead before me. Arsenal, destitute Sex, politicians'  
misdemeanors – journalistic literature's instant wares –

and I raised my head. 'Don't let us see this boy,'  
said the leaves of the canopy, as if his loose bones  
were a sacrifice to the weather on their pity's altar.

His geometric betrayal was plopped as an angle  
of his wheelchair. Throughout winter his flesh had been,  
locked in sticks, too tender to be pulled from the cupboard.

His impossibility of a life had been put, to preserve it,  
away from cold's spittle for a season. But today it was plucked  
into view. May was master. And, articulatedly,

a carer was begged to promenade him like a plank.  
His corners were put in order, and the eyes rolled  
to roam around the canopy above his head.

Leaves, perils of leaves, with their shaken scents, they  
were tenoring between him and the vaults of the air. May  
was all the angels that loosed him as his wheels

ran him to worship magnificently down their aisle.  
And I suddenly, I heard him, from his leafless branches  
and his enormous eyes, his jaw tormented (able only

to utter 'Huh! Huh!'). His bold grasp was squeezing  
like scales from his clacking xylophone. At last in a choir  
he had joined exalted leaves. In him, ground

for a dance through what brain possessed, there was 'Huh!',  
while every throat, embarrassed to see him, coughed. The leaves  
were honoured by his woodwind body's procession.

It was May ordained this. Leaves were shaking their bells,  
a tower of hesitant transmission for wondrous ears.  
In the unison of a gust's surprise the lad was assembled.

I could swear my spirit heard between his branches,  
rising angular, sweet-sounding, the xylophone's  
square tunes where his grief was drawn from his winter's embers.

His modernist pitch was laid around shoot's psalmody.  
And so the year turned amidst the verdure  
his limbs into a May king. This wasn't the first time,

or the last, for that month, robust with joy  
purely parallel through avenue of leaves and in  
human remains, to take itself literally,

'Huh, Huh, Huh', – which leaves translated: 'it's May'...  
And I turned back to the paper's graveyard. And the crimes  
buried in it, autumn, summer, spring, and winter.

## ELEGY FOR A POSTMAN

Watch the postman coming on the current  
of the numbers, house by house... Because  
you've often heard about this letter, –  
a sort of circular, he seems to have  
an attitude of leisure, but if you look  
at his shoes, he's busy hurrying.  
There's no need for him to demonstrate  
the importance of his outfit, and if  
those who go to the gate to welcome him  
are fools, they'll hope he'll tip  
his hat, confessing a mistake.

The dog doesn't scare him across  
pavements, he isn't covered by a magic wand  
with snow. You marvel at such  
an effort to distribute a circular  
so infinitely stereotyped, if short,  
and incomprehensible: it's a bill,  
and its command is 'come'. Its rebuke  
contains a universe. Don't be misled  
by its high-principled lack of time  
or abundant scent on the envelope.

It will reach its goal punctually:  
expectation has long since constructed  
in the child's belly and the girl's womb  
the shape of the typescript. A charge  
has been laid at your old man's  
feet, above your forgetfulness, above every plait,

that contains just the single tidy word  
of trepidation to some – not a tax,  
or a summons for driving too fast – there  
like a scrap of bone in a covert,  
like unperceived heartwood: 'Come'.  
And its stamp, that bears a considerable strange  
King's face, was put on with precision.

Today at last it will arrive at the cottage  
of Jones the Post, and empty its message through its greedy mouth.  
In his own patch, patient beneath the roof,  
he'll know just what to do with it.  
No doubt everyone's posted his own letter with this news  
sometime. To some it's a puzzle. To some the night is messageless.  
But to Jones it's business. He remains a letter-carrier.  
Though he's been directed to a court of law  
by its messenger, Jones won't emigrate open-mouthed:  
because the grave itself will come home  
in him, and the empty letter fall through a cavity.  
Because, from knowing its contents, Jones will simply appeal  
to the man on the stamp to reply with the scars on his hands.

## A WREN IN ABERYSTWYTH CEMETERY

A riot of minuteness,  
The wren, gadflies' erosion,  
Numbering days for insects.  
Its sturdy tick-tick's its creed, –  
Thunder in a chalice, – busy  
Thrashing a precious hole on the verge.

Where widows enter its presence  
There's no respect for ill fate.  
Tireless tearless it comes  
To lay in their unconscious  
Its tune above the thrifty soil  
And the shy grave's unemployment.

The widows scarcely value  
The cheerful confounding notes.  
They've been instructed by clouds  
To harden themselves. To them  
It's the grave's closed ears, the black spring  
Ignorantly burgeoning.

So they want no wren strumming,  
Obscure ear-piercing auger.  
It won't nest in their dried leaves  
Or give their moss a lining.  
Yet, in a corner of their field,  
A scrap of its speckles plays.

Beneath stump rump, its beak pries  
Their good grasses' lattice roots.  
It tugs some of their seeds free  
Of confusion with stingy delving,  
Whispering a song to the sky  
That the yew's not wholly evil.

How shocking, above the grave's hush,  
To see widows half listening.  
More shocking, the tune digging  
Profound bits from black corruption.  
Widows and wren, through the same work  
Of boring a hole, reach hope.

## THE KESTREL'S RETURN

The recovery team, their white gowns streaming,  
scrambled, with jabs and oxygen  
and sackfuls of resurrection. To them the hawk  
was merely ecology for them to save.  
He could help shorten their waiting list.

But it was beauty saved him. There was no complexity.  
'Look,' said his ruddy return.  
His nature retains one way to celebrate  
his race's restoration. He bears his wings  
and spreads them on the zenith's hidden altar.

Climbing the oblivion he strips his soliloquy  
naked. He tightens his tail and tosses it.  
He rids himself, awkwardly, of half his body  
by feeding the heaven's flames with his feathers  
and he tears the morning to tatters.

He flings the loads of silver he's won,  
reward for his oratorical wings.  
He melts into the blue like the thawing  
of a rod's tiny hook into the dull  
pool. He drills into time

with his beak, that is henceforth nothing  
but a breeze or a breeze's peak, touching  
like a fingernail, softly, the noble solitude's  
trembling nose. And he turns like a gimlet  
in the sun's flank above Parc-y-llyn.

'Look', says the bearing of his wings.  
His cruelty climbs to vanish freely  
in the heavens. There's no other thanks.  
Existence is the thanks. Existence is the place  
where survival's true need was scattered.

He's electricity. It flows, a flame through him,  
like fever from him around him, as he stumbles  
across the red rope of every horizon, mounting  
step by quivering slanting step.

And he stands on the tower. He extends

a bloody banner. He's arrived.

He lingers. He's a quiet knife into the wind's  
belly. Yet, when every door the zenith  
possesses closes, he pushes;  
and a little one opens in a corner, prettily

he bows his head to go through it. Bows.  
Time to leap. He must be a spider  
crawling along the thread of the sunshine's  
lineage. Then he swings out, no hands,  
no rope, now, his spirit stoops,

the beautiful is imagination, it's the true that falls  
from the heavens, from the azure the live hurtles  
in a flash that shatters the veil into  
the world's being, into the crude nothingness,  
songless it leaves the praise of the blue,

like glory. Descends, like a bull bolting  
out of the cloud, and comes, wounds-praising  
cascade, with his tongs to crimson the prey,  
down from the fire lake with his nuclear mind,  
and to flay the ground and thee and me with his being.

## CONDOR

The bird has been designed  
with white heights in mind,  
where none of its dignity will melt  
near the plump clouds' snowdrift.

Like an emasculated  
tree standing high on a ridge,  
a sapless leafless trunk  
with death beneath its arm,

it's a monument to Indian tribes  
who heaped up stones here,  
to golden civilizations  
carved in thawless cessation;

ugly stillness overlooking  
a realm empty on every side,  
a sceptre raised on high  
to soothe the lusts of its flesh;

stillness with its strong shoulder  
bearing cloudy heaven's bareness,  
carrying Day's gold diadem  
overtopping rivers' silver.

Its beak is long accustomed  
to the purity of thin air,  
and as hardy as its lungs.  
Where the emptiness would be

a plague to me, the condor stands  
golden, confident. And I cling,  
a soft snail, on my belly,  
to the ground; I go through roots;

though I try with my frail shoulder  
to haul my silver trail.

## THE COW FROM THE ANDES LOWLANDS

Under the arse of the Andes,  
the river that wouldn't slow down was raving,  
was speeding up indeed, its lips on a lapful  
of cow, a carcass seething  
hot, hurtling towards the prairie,  
having fallen, poor abortive  
bundle, lost through misfortune  
in the gloom of formless water.

The flood was quite cravenly flogging  
the tame beast who couldn't swim.  
It flung its body from wave to wave, a lump  
of shame, having fallen ...  
Then a vulture landed and clung  
to the flesh, his beak in the foul  
food of luscious  
corruption, the death of his claws twitching.

The bird remained though the water was pounding him  
and running wild as it carried him like another straw.  
His body was going berserk and refused  
to loose its bond, or draw death's skewers from the nourishment.  
He, he wouldn't relax his grip,  
his lack of screech a mocking laugh  
or a steel cry in the poor critter's throat:  
like a friend, he meant to accompany the cow.

From afar to afar could be heard a cataract scourging  
air and foam:

near the Welsh settlement below, it was sending its water fall's  
colour of affliction on all flesh around it.

Haste towards the spume was the cow's craving;  
and our vulture, holding tight,  
he dared linger in the pantry of his Eden  
a while longer, in presumption.

The cataract bellowed like a goblin raising a ruckus  
in a factory. Chemicals there  
were drooling in digestion like  
a devil come down to fling  
his corruption on the verge. No day of atonement  
in water or on earth.

The stubborn condor whipped ahead  
on his mock chariot towards the sad turn.

He had to wade  
through the blood, not trying to leave  
aforetime. To the last second  
through smell's

effluent

through sound's

shelter

he would not stir from his station  
at all, like a globe whirling its despair  
through the senseless cosmos.

In the delicacies of his loss he failed to let go,  
pulling the whole song under  
he went, went  
year by year like a decoration  
on a feathered cloak intended for a cliff  
onwards to the end. Then, still onwards  
over the drop and the door of his memory  
he went without language, till he had no more greed.

## MARCH LAMBS

The pasture's mad beneath them. They're flying like  
crotchets, lest its lava silence them into standing still,  
the lambs that are falling on their noses.

The grass ignites in tossing their bright rags  
to the wool sunshine. The hind legs are higher as the wind

bursts. Hear the bleat of their sprightly gossamer smothering ewes.  
The sky's mad beneath them. What does a breeze know

about sobriety? There are daffodils in its silly hair,  
there are seeds between its teeth. The sky takes

the lambs by the hand lest the buttercups  
kindle them like dew. Hear the bleat of its

sap engine summoning April. The blood's mad beneath them.  
The horizon's never heard so many small limbs

reeling drunk as these songsters.  
Hear the stars frisking dimwitted syllables in the brisk milk,  
the lambs that are falling on their noses ...

Flying clay, don't fret if the universe for a time  
rolls as wildly as birthday eyes. The bleat

of their mountain stream will dry up commercially  
the day after 'the night before'. And I, in gazing at their carcasses,

sober as coffee, I'll see – on plates – children blown  
to bits in Palestine, – in butcher shops, hanged

women from Bosnia. I'll eat their silence. Dinner will be  
tails sleeping shortly in the lack of leaps. And the bleat

of our bellies, and the bounce of the red grapes from empty glasses,  
will demand the dripping of our remorse across the gentle fields,  
for the lambs that have fallen on their noses.

## HEDGEHOG

Not the beaks, but the space between  
the beaks breathes its wretchedness.  
You would say it's a tomb  
in the womb of the leaf pile  
in a squalid ditch, although  
in the silence of an old tree's  
roots a kind of insomnia  
is taking shape. The sight  
is a cemetery; and, a round space  
of forsaken birth, it sleeps,  
without daring to twitch an eyelid,  
through the wind and its frost. It searches  
blindness through the wet disgrace.

It's been hidden like Pompeii  
and feeds on introspection:  
it's gone heavily to the lead bottom  
of the sleeping self. There, in the space,  
Arthur of a region, its antiquity  
endures beneath the cold lava.  
Will fleas grow again on spiny  
abandoned industry?  
Will worms choose to wander  
across its wintry thorn crown?

Observe, however, traveller,  
how the seedling soldiers  
are starting to swear; and out  
of its legs and its weary mud

and the dying by this  
fir-cone that fell into space  
so it could brood about  
blooming once more and find  
its own end at last, see  
poking, from even a lifeless thing,  
under sunshine's empire, a squeak.

## CAMELS

The fact that it's through the desert  
their luggage-streams stroll above the shallow world,  
this translates (for us) the farthest memory.

Words through the wilderness slanting  
living water above peevish earth. They're clouds,  
the proud camels on their verb crutches.

Their water will not sink, an adjective,  
into the noun of the desert: the water will sail  
through the suns of their floating oasis.

The haughtiness of their noses' interjection  
will stretch in messenger gesture, supported  
by two-toed pads on the smother land.

It will be heard, their hidden water that accuses  
servile sand: let us give thanks that still tonight  
it is hover-speaking over a desert.

This is their form. In the wasteland of our facts  
their fantasy barrels will fly.  
And the wasteland itself is so natural ...

But in a zoo? How will they shape a sentence? ...Of course  
they are drains, capable there of arranging  
and stereotyping our overeasily traffic

with their speechless water's convenient channels,  
piping people through their hearing  
in a stride .. but silent drains.

## EELS

No one has watched them having  
sexual intercourse, not even  
on television; no one's watched the egg-laying  
or the hatching either. And no doubt  
the Sargasso's as good a place as any ...  
Some people prefer to be private.

Simple dignity, not celebrity, is the aim  
of eels. Not the dust of success,  
but the decorous round that is  
the basis of things, in the consonance  
between silt and coral. They are faithful  
to the gift bestowed on exotic flesh.

Down in the abyss  
where commonplace lungs do not  
flow, in the transparent abyss  
where the rhymes only found by  
slinking are thinly breathed,  
they couple and hatch in seclusion.

And you too have dived in deep waters  
for a nation's harvest. Hid in the black  
your mind has sniffed the grave  
through the nooks of misery, has pried  
for a sigh beneath prosody  
and for its wonder, as eels do.

And for poems underneath ribs  
and for company, as eels do,  
your fingers grope by fleeing  
the light, busily stretching:  
you've dived in polluted waters  
to seek your country, hidden in the deep.

And algae! Oh! you've always fancied  
a little bit of algae with regard  
to versifying, and deciding, and doing.  
Then murk, there's too much prejudice  
against it. But for eels' poems,  
it's a sign of spring, no doubt,

before these grey monks start upon  
a long pilgrimage, without land or man.  
On the strait way there must be many  
a halt for musing. If they were  
commonplace wrack they'd reach Wales  
with their song in less than a year.

But two years and a half!  
To the dearly-loved land! They must often  
have lingered, and considered; weighed  
the half-rhyme for a while, and having found it  
supposed that only the dead would go freely  
back again through a trackless ocean.

WASP

To drone disdain against everything  
it circles the walls. It hauls serpent steam

from the sullen air. It's in its element cutting  
atmosphere. Its splendour's engine descends

beneath curtains like a quote of snake spit.  
It's the claw of the casement, casement, casement.

Dusky princess of insects, in its amber beads  
it sows immorality on light.

There's nowhere here for a tigress to go but inside  
with the hum of its nettles. There it is, enclosed

reeling here in probing there: with nothing but  
lust, its angry failure's a luxury.

No honey, no nonsense, nothing but  
a fuse igniting amidst saucepans

along the sun's glass telephone  
wire, frost scream's missile

through the tunnel of death, with its eyes  
shooting the glass of each fist of a window, window.

In rounding the kitchen with its mournful alarm,  
pirate of the bees, molten metal,

it can never say how unhappy it is.

The ceiling's been terrified. One, two, three,

four walls. A baby getting hold of a note  
and sailing wailing homewards.

Shut within the spell of its own flying,  
it's savage for light. And it's doubtful,

hurls its doubt upon glass. Like a crowd  
it curses the whiteness it cannot reach.

Its scale coat's a furnace in midsummer.

Monotonous fire in its gullet, it becomes

an introvert firebrand in ambiguous  
mustard. Its bullet's forever revving

on an imprecise wavelength ... Disappears  
in landing, a truncated bonfire,

stops in the silent; doesn't exist in the waiting,  
and having sunk in an arrow has become disbelief.

Stop. Where is it? Shh! The echo of its curse remains there,  
merciless, close to the switch.

Is it trying to put out the world? Yes, it rises in full force -  
look, its nozzle's murdering again...

CAT

Two alien stars

above the wall enticed me

to brood

upon the dread formality

of this whole firmament.

I know full well

– though not on such a clearly

moonless night

as this evening is

– about a shiver in my sinews,

because of pausing

before two looks of steel

that render swirling

distances as furry spikes

rebuking my size.

I wonder will there come,

across the cruel

horizons of the numberless,

some music from them

tonight? Two shallow stars

from spaces that

one's thought can never scent.

And I above ground

less than a lame moment,

I peer, alone,

a brief while at their coldness,

fearsome, and nailed

in this creation's hearse.

But perhaps the stars  
are closer than our terror insists?  
Two searchlights,  
they're pursuing earthly things  
till the black of night  
skulks to their place above a wall.  
Tender the night  
that disclosed the challenge of  
unheeded distances.  
It was health indeed  
for stars to know –  
what we down here don't know –  
that we cannot perceive  
them wholly. Two that were planets  
one hundred times as great  
as this present world, so tiny  
were they up there that they  
could not usually be seen,  
and far apart, as  
far apart as we from them,  
and old, as slowly  
old as releasing night,  
in this dread immensity's  
endless order.  
They have gone now  
to look for yet more terror.  
But how wholesome for some  
down here in haughtiness  
it had been to see that they  
scarcely can be seen,  
that they're nothingness

to the troop who await their song.

I awaited their nightly

music that the poets,

so boldly smooth-tongued,

boast of: the sweetness

deluding night-birds that night

is a kind of day.

But nothing. Only shiver came

through this astounding.

Stars between two ears

were in their burning void.

And glories of total darkness

descended upon

steel hearing, silence

upon furry shoulders.

And I down here

but a limping moment,

I keep hearkening

– a while – to their coldness,

somehow thankful

for the failure to measure anything,

for not venturing

to the stars, naked, awesome,

and in their abundance,

for finding the stillness that oppresses.

But from awaiting them there

I am steadily undone.

I am taught the unexpected

concreteness of the white distance  
of unreachable gems that have broken  
my heart's exchange.  
Low down, the lights  
consume the absenceful in me  
within my soft brain  
my head bows, and I turn,  
and slink slavishly  
like a tomcat down his path  
to my lair. I wonder  
will there follow behind me purring  
music that will never  
scratch the sleep of creation,  
the music which none  
but emptied hearts will hear,  
for aren't the stars  
more of here than we can know?



They were drawn there,  
were drawn,  
                    their grey  
stains were stretched further, Oh! without fail, from their nets  
of recognition.

                    Nary  
one  
                    knew the true toll of its loss  
or why a tail was plucked from its lair.  
In the orphan lightning of their ridiculous  
remoteness from their cosy roosts  
they were becoming bankrupt of memory  
and to an extent there was secret reaching all through their ear roots  
aloft the terror language of their longing.

And yet,  
                    look, there's restraining:  
  here comes their untangling,  
look, there's the terminus of all concealing;  
and they can  
                    be released,  
  dispersed, to seek  
the faith now of the sunny roads  
of the slant breeze  
with its silver  
pavements.

                    They sprinkle  
their feebleness whirring high,  
flip-flapping their tribulation in the home-patch of their twirling  
ceaseless choiceless  
aloft in circled tomorrows, they chalk

back now,  
                    aiming  
along them on the course of their lineage.  
And ruled by their rapture,  
leaping to magnets  
and sailing back down sunshine,  
from their need gladness they fashion  
the pattern  
                    of pigeon mania's syntax.  
And the pigeon-coop claims its pigeons.

## ARMS AND LEGS

*(a summer day at the seaside)*

On a foolish day now and then  
they'll alight, behind sunbeams,  
around us, upon our eyes,  
from everywhere, like seagulls

on a rubbish tip. They're tossed  
on summer evenings to astonish  
our senses. They are butter-  
flies, with softness on

their minds, having shattered their  
cocoon with the strength of hidden  
muscles. I couldn't believe  
that woman there had arms.

Surely there'd never been  
so elegant a leg in water  
as his. For the weather's sake  
they emerge from perdition's maw.

They're sprawled on road, on roof,  
out of the drains. In my hair,  
acres of anonymous  
private flesh spewed from suits

on all respectability,  
their waves sloshing against  
the hard cliffs of our quiet,

exploding our pavements-full,

and thrusting their white splendours  
aslant. Ah! I know their story:  
they're some of winter's sleepers,  
of squirrel's lineage,

who've ventured out with their  
red tails to hunt for nuts,  
or something against the coming  
cold. And the season's suns

are the nuts they gathered  
and tucked away in their limbs.  
But I'm certain their flesh fragments  
have emigrated from art.

It's become, in our painting,  
the usual thing to fling part  
of an arm into the air,  
to see whether it will

stick to a firefly  
passing by. This insect doesn't  
catch it; nonetheless  
that won't stop anyone

from offering it a bit  
of disconnected thigh, like  
an accident of Miro's,  
dreaming his political

shock far away from his  
homeland, by playing at meat  
in a primitive sky,  
where there flies a kite's

curiosity. Today  
they've been tossed across  
the eyes of the lukewarm,  
arms, legs, a kiss.

And all the scraps have landed  
on my heart's canvas, a winking  
world of pink, expression  
of a summer day's wholesome red broth.

## PORTRAIT OF A PROVERBIAL SCULPTOR

The roof owns the dark corner. Away  
up there, Lord, out of easy

sight of those who are a rush to their jobs  
without noticing the monkey hanging there

prince-like beneath the cathedral's  
indifferent eaves, there's meticulous

carving. There's praise to a Being  
who will note that the one below has left

behind him, on the ground, smithereens  
of selfhood's acts. Away up

there, between heaven and him, he requires  
his chisel to cry praise. To our earth

ugly dark is his town; but heaven  
wrestles with him in light.

He's hidden from the trampling of the curse  
that's in a hurry. He doesn't crave the applause

(or the colourless hours) of the flood-tide men.  
A sole nightingale's role, on a desert island, is giving

to the heavens night's aria; the treasure  
scooped out beneath a violent ocean.

He trembles sharing with the roof his secret;  
and that is what makes him, unworthy,

climb towards the Lord each morning, plank  
by plank, to drill, surrendering his soul

on scaffolding. Is it in vain he offers  
the unseen his anointed words? ... This shape

requires of him the wound. Not surprising  
if he hears, at the end of some shifts, a voice

(his conscience, surely) speaking up,  
"It was right to have it hid from everyone

else." ... Yes. I have heard talk  
of the cheerful hero so hidden here

maintaining, out of sight, his obedient care.  
But tonight the hideaway man, who loved

the slates, he pulled, he hurled, a lightning flash, to the window  
enough radiance to ignite it for a minute. Away

up there in the dark house,  
he turned all the silent to song.

And in his corner there, on the head of stone  
he fastened a crown to be seen by none but a dove.

## VERMEER'S PAINT

Hold your breath in looking:  
    nothing's there but sunshine's  
feathered wings. They are healing  
the violence disallowed  
by the colour's inaudible music.

Hold your look in breathing:  
    nothing's listening but hair.  
The crowd of the silent is solitude,  
having contrived tranquillity as though  
an offence could be painted over.

Hear the furniture, hear  
    the girl's heart. These people  
are blossoms his oils, like moths,  
perched on to lose themselves  
quietly in a pausing.

Hear the dispassionate light  
    healing the absent warfare  
between Spain and the Netherlands.  
The picture's a rampart holding back  
all violence to the eye.

If his people are at work,  
    they're at work like a summer cloud  
that seems motionless, to the earth,  
but certainly, inch by inch,  
enjoys its tiny veering.

But if it is peace he gains  
    against the strain of debts  
and a mountain of children, he transforms  
the world to an anti-world; and on it,  
he hangs, like grapes, a refraining.

VINCENT'S CHAIR

*(in his picture of his empty room in Arles, October 1888)*

We saw how a chair could be an untalkative  
field of wheat,  
comely as the blonde hair  
of three quiet  
maidens at the heart of a whirlwind, close to the bed.

He squeezed one brush of his madness into its acres  
and its cries rolled  
with his prayers through  
the wild grass:  
all the furnace summer long he begged for some frosts.

And throughout this field the sunshine came to mutter atop  
each stalk, the  
sunflowers  
greedy-feeding  
all evening long the dry tongue of their gorse-teasing breeze.

It isn't a place for sitting on any longer,  
but flames of  
butter. Their waters  
were plucked  
nimble from the fragrant dangers of desert places.

It's a place, surely, for dancing softly on the intellect's  
grave, a stage  
for boys bent on  
diving back

into a river, like raspberries playing a while in cream.

But what if we ventured ourselves to sit on this chair?

Wouldn't we see  
visions? Perceive  
wholeness?

Near an Arberth of a stool the earth itself once came, on a prancing

horse. We could comprehend the light of the vale of Arles in its mane.

The jubilation of  
objects blazed on  
the stallion's back.

It's a chair in bloom, a memorial of paint asleep,

a patch of fresh cypress trees, a fruitful meadow that  
burgeoned from the black.

Though we'd confess it  
wouldn't be, beneath us,  
too comfortable

for a rump, it could at least be an explosion for our chains.

## MICHELANGELO'S THREE VOCATIONS

*(for D. S. J.)*

Often, confronting the hard, he would haul away  
    (by shelling the deceitful covering) a hidden  
person from the rock. He discovered Creation by quarrying  
    and destroying the bad. A way once closed would open.

Often, when he confronted the soft, he would put  
    something extra where flesh and blood were lacking  
on the limp canvas. He would interpret the Creation  
    by adding living being through a dash of paint.

But the essence of both would have been unseen, had their sound  
    not been shaped by a sonnet. He confessed there would have been  
no way for the one or the other, the subtraction or the addition,  
    to come to life from the depths of their deaths  
had the resurrection by the undying Word not turned  
    his words to living love through the grave's Creation.

## BEETHOVEN'S EARS

The winged rags were flying there,  
begging in the ultraviolet gloom. They struck posts, they collided  
with all the hush of Vienna.  
The ears were flitting through his head. They sought the light of sound  
on his head's cave walls.  
Without, flew rubbish heaps of silence. Within,  
the brain was listening for  
harmony, till it echoed from the bats in the depth of the cave against  
the immense chords of the stillness of his journey.

And he waved his internal wings so that he too  
was carried with his companions through the cave of voices that could not be had  
without a fall. Through the hidden loss  
calm infrared's harsh insult shouted now  
on his subterranean ears. Since henceforth bats  
would be his shepherds. They'd see through the stone of the dark  
without sight. And they'd hear the silent brightness.  
He saved up serene rage in their melodious flight: more lovably  
this dirty wash was hanging  
its squeaking along the ceiling of his head, squeaking on the risky  
frame of his most trusty firmament.

And because of that, he made his head  
a shell he fled to, into its most shapely labyrinths  
and its mane tunnels, until  
he revelled at times, in the grotesque and ocean-zestful halls  
of the Mass and the Ninth Symphony  
through the last Quartets and their churches, where all  
his bat fellows' seeing was penned  
on the wings of his pain. Though only silence thereafter  
pounded from the walls of his thunderous mystery,

with them his feelings would further open to the salt light.

And through their neighbourliness he was possessed  
and through their unity became demonic in his sonority's revolution  
the length of the cave. Hear reeling his grey  
anguish and his sepia suffering. Terror in mouse wings  
discovered the loving pulsations.  
Darkness would have been, stereotypically, the proper place to hide  
and burrow a refuge beneath the soil of the sky;  
but his rags were flitting now with the kyrie eleison,  
and the throbbing of voices was burying him  
rich as a pharaoh with his gossamer spades in full light.  
"Along those paths," the darkness  
frustrated sobbed, "your flight will be driven safely along the walls of the gloom."

So he took hold of his world again. "Where  
do I come from? What am I? Where will I go?" were stonily  
flapping and slapping his ears and cursing  
to and fro. They were flying to know the fruit of his burial's seeds,  
were tugging, were digging; madly  
the ignorant rags were howling. And in the Praise of the keyboards  
they would strike thereafter, beyond  
the senses, the spiderweb bats would caress his response  
in inaudible squeaking: "Under praise, the unretreating light."

PORTRAIT OF A "SELF-PORTRAIT" 1661

Amidst the faces on stilts in Florence was a somewhat  
odd one by Michelangelo, "Self-Portrait, as Saint  
Paul". And that was the one which permitted Rembrandt's

song of triumph also, in its zig-zag turn,  
to retreat in sixteen-sixty-one to unItalian  
democratized faces, and Amsterdam's defeated breasts.

It's a portrait's first job to bare guts. His excuse for a throat  
had vanished, with every other sound from it,  
into the dark groves. In the darkneses lurked

his brows, clipped by the hands of the clock, as though he were  
only saving his eyes to shape one ragged drop: regret.  
These eyes were mice that had retreated to their nest.

Every portrait is a lie, but this one lights up its lie  
on a mountain-top. In Italy one could have a jamboree  
in celebrating flesh, in parading ungrudging bodies;

but this netherland is space. It's painstaking in skin  
where submissions crept, with not a jot of a but, but  
a volcano of lull and a slow explosion of life expiring.

In his unheroism he turned to this from the smoothness. He,  
with his light-years of unworthiness that had spread the fanfare  
of self-righteousness in cinders: behold a fellow-worm.

Some people are conquered lands. This land's dust

wasn't swept away. It should be put in a rubbish lorry.

In the Master's everydayness he offered not a thing except

a confession of the helplessness of grace by a pimple of a brother.

Three-quarters of his picture was shadow. He vanished into the cloak,  
celebrating across his jaw the heaven of being poor.

## TWO

Just a single heart  
in a tomato sandwich,  
a single heart,  
boneless, with lunar landscapes,  
and the least little smidgen of mustard  
on a plate.

How many ragged labourers  
have sweated in snow and graveyards  
to put it here?

A single heart  
confronting the fork, wall to wall carpeting the plate,  
continents have sailed over seas  
and under pre-Cambrian and igneous rocks  
to fetch this.

A single heart  
offered to you  
across the ages  
in the rain, without a handkerchief to wipe its nose,  
with all the wrappers of the world's clouds  
on the floor close by like darkness.

Sliver clipped  
from a colony's headland,  
mockery of water  
at the bottom of a stomach's shallow dish,  
carrot's curse-word, temperance meat,  
half an ounce.

A single heart, then –  
but tonight, you'd rather have chips.

## ANOTHER EXCUSE

Have you noticed through our mists' white hair, my darling,  
That we haven't begotten any children lately?

Not for want of trying; but once we're getting  
On for a hundred, the seriousness of bringing

Life into the middle of this muddle deepens the responsibility  
A good deal: it must be the subconscious puts

A strain on the channel. It isn't the deciding, but the failing  
To decide that's the trouble, with the truism that the world

Is misery, while at the same time children are delightful  
Or at least a duty. It's thanks, they say, to the subconscious

Or whatever it is that's sub, that we aren't forcing seed  
To suffer our extravagance now, and we won't bring life

Into this lifelessness ... "What nonsense? Lifeless! When with the zestful  
Seeding of ecstasy all the goodness at hand

Is much too alive for our birth-giving gesture! Heaven help us!  
When our children's children are murdering all that's lifeless with their lives!

Let's go to it then. Something will come of each warm secret caress.  
Don't apologize now: old age isn't yet the excuse

That's driven us to bed on such a hot afternoon."  
"But the afternoon *is* hot." "Shush, excuse! Draw the curtains."

LOVE SONNETS OF AN OLD AGE PENSIONER (selections)

*An amorous old man is a perversion in nature (La Bruyère)*

1. The house is so glad of your walking through it.  
It holds your movement in its air. When  
You take your ease within it, I hear walls  
Primp themselves with silent foolery. Presently,  
When you go to bed, among themselves  
The furnishings whisper the delightful thrill  
Of those who've enjoyed for hours a presence  
Not found by this prosaic world in houses;  
The floors inscribe your name upon the ceiling;  
And though day comes to tidy up the place,  
What broom could wipe out the writing of floors  
Or the passion of furniture? It would take a fairly strong arm.  
But one today, who walks through the house without you,  
Complains, in coping with your dear invisibility.
  
2. I've often watched your shadow, as I have watched everything  
That you've created. I've watched the way the sun caressed it  
Along the floor, and spread you out there, smoothly flattened:  
Today I fabricate your presence through it. And the wearing down  
Of this grey gap of you is the pressure on my poem's craving:  
Your nothing gives me everything. Because the scar of memory  
Itches, so I sing through you, trying to fill all the vacancy  
Of your uncoming with my musing. And you've loosed my language  
To be a shadow, not precisely the same as you,  
But a testimony, cooled, and contained, and stored,  
Of you, a remembrance leaf you released,  
A shadow on the surface of the tongue, to be blown  
Here and there by my misshapen thoughts that plead for you,  
My shadow your muse's sunshine insists on drawing after you.

5. An avalanche of beauty swift as sneezing,  
Astonishing as stars, strong as time, tall as a haystack,  
Appling from the silver mountains over me  
To enrich me – with my foot sticking out;  
An explosion of whiteness pulsing from the height  
Where, in the middle of his graces, dwells the Father  
Who reminds us often that He can descend  
On people, beautifully hurtling prayers, and bountiful as seed.

"Sit down, sir, it happens – second childhood.  
A person goes just a little bit off his rocker.  
A trifle out of sorts. Feeling shaken up?  
Is your head spinning? And your heart? I'll call a car."

On body as on spirit a second foolish  
Childhood fell – more than forty years ago.

7. Fatigue insists on fighting to keep me tame  
By asking if it isn't high time I called it  
Quits, since lavish head-over-heels loving  
Is somewhat ambitious for a lack of teeth and a memory  
That's oblivion. For a lame little thing with his hearing addled,  
More suitable a drag to a corner, like an old dog  
Who once had a bit of a bark but is reduced  
To watching tiny puppies frolic, or like a bucket  
Emptied in flinging its water across the path  
Made dusty by so dry an autumn. None will credit a crock  
Who creaks in hobbling, and a little bit of a shock  
Would be dew on windows or across his eyes a haze ...  
But while my hair may be sparse, and we both have white hair,  
Keep your aching joints within mine.

8.

*Your eye*

Three million years this blind and purposeless  
gristle persisted at fashioning this rarity,  
from accident to sweet accident, by trying and failing,  
not knowing where it was going, to form itself as a muscle  
that could manage perception, with a few aimless leaps  
but quite effectively towards the end. The laboratory knows  
(though it isn't saying) how one could explain every part  
of the journey theologically wise and easily believed  
from the nothingness to sight. But it took just a moment  
to turn your eye from this indifferent observer,  
that was so tortuously evolved, to being music  
in a corner, lighting up the whole earth with its passion,  
billowing waves through many an ocean in my broken flesh ...  
so much so that I can scarcely believe it.

13.

In the smoking ad that you are, you open your windows  
To puff on me, and I bewitch my teeth clean  
With the miracle of your breath. Softer than dishwashing liquid  
Are your kisses: I come out all bright and sparkling.  
And I've planned to head for prison in holidays  
On your coast, and sunbathe in your ardour while  
A booking's available. You may ignore, sweet, the dogs'  
Vitamins while I'm barking my tail off.

But if I believe the world's best beer, what's so likely  
As my believing the lie that you've happened as well?  
Raising their eyes to peer at your hyperbole's a risk  
For drivers. Still, – though I'm not willing to return you  
And get my money back if they find a fault somewhere, you must  
Add the customary little health warning at the bottom.

14. Laugh, scraps of paper, laugh: here's the old man  
Hard at it spinning his yarns on you. See, his jaw  
Opens, and out they come: The racket playing tricks  
Is unruly praise, though it wails too – no, it's an ancient  
True witness who's at it ... Isn't this a bit of a perversion? they ask –  
Carving sunshine in snow, planting his white ink  
In black scraps of paper, an invisible growth  
That turns their leaves along carpet and floor and sink  
Into forests. Be gentle with the poor fellow, because  
It's a cliché of a story you find spewing from his head –  
"This moon hasn't seen such a flawless love  
Since the evening a silver moon was invented."  
Dishing out balderdash, said the sink that is full of  
The same kind of dirty china; but I wonder if a sink's always right?
17. Most of the time, I love you meditatively.  
Seeing the skin is doubtless a treat for nose  
And fingers; but more unfashionably often  
The feelings wish me to burn incense, cloaked  
In diligent devotion. You are a cell, my songbook,  
Where I go to contemplate this joy  
In somewhat pensive secluded lingering:  
You're still a subject I won't get to the bottom of. I  
Am frequently a monk, though your warm lips  
Are so very visible, but your invisible lips  
You've cultivated so long – don't laugh – don't they become  
A meditation for a dumbfounded numbskull? To my ignorance  
You are luminous, since the pouring into my spirit  
Of your mind's colour is so inexplicably enlightened.

21. The young never know what being beautiful is.  
They'll never have gathered (from the paths) a host  
Of silvery moons, as we have done:  
It's no wonder that the fields are blushing green,  
Though they're so old, in sunshine, but Night said,  
"This is the final time, the final time you will  
Make love. Go ahead, but remember that  
You won't again. The light's gone bad.  
Mad passions through the morning and the afternoon,  
A blow out through croaking lungs, a great antiquity  
Of vertical ferment in a horizontal self, an hour  
Of shedding leaves from an old manuscript. Then, bareness." Right,  
But when we married one another to the end,  
Not by youth's measure was determined our amen.

24. I am stillness at times. I stand dumbstruck  
If I sense in my gloom a flash of your colour.  
And I'm struck to the quick by the way silence too  
Can brew light back. For Seurat in sowing  
Dots, the picture was not the dots alone  
But the light that was peace between them that enlivened  
The substances around them. So between us,  
In the midst of strolling, I stand to listen to your dawn:  
Besides the conjunctions clinging in the peace  
Of each other's fingers, there are pauses just  
As radiant rising around our heads, along  
Cheeks, pauses that always soberly connect  
Our chatter, like lamps wagging their silent contemplation  
Back and forth to spotlight our street.

31. We will be tender now – But we two were always tender.  
–All right, then, tender surpassing tender, compelled to be  
Tender, in spite of ourselves. Our kisses are drifting snow  
That spreads so tenderly over us, as though we should no longer  
Exist, snow like that which flurries us under our doors  
And in between the cracks in the attic, warm, curly,  
Fresh snow – or your hair across  
My mouth blown by your love-breeze, fine  
And tender, and become so terminally white –  
Like our years that were blowing beneath our doors  
Without us noticing, loving and undeniable years, come  
To tenderly close their arms around us, and not release us  
Until we are released by tenderness into that whiteness  
We would never have dreamed could be so tender.
32. For some years now, one faculty after the other  
has stood in the stern waving and saying goodbye to these  
flatlands. Sometimes in nearing the sea our band would come out  
to raise a rumpus, the horns and the castanets, for them to go  
with a bit of jollity. Not all at once, and not swiftly, the boats  
departed. The spirits at their cranes were loading their goodbye  
for years. Their miracle master would come and pound our doors  
as though inviting this portion and that of our senses to turn  
the headland with him. He packed the hold and piled on his deck  
the flesh gear, clocks and unfrightening wooden rulers, stock  
for the great departure. But the edge on our hymns! The chat and the sap  
on tongues that are falling silent! The centuries the brain amended!  
Each one forsaking us, tipping a hat and tossing tenderness into a sack:  
two spirits will throw back to them one kiss, in honour of the fellowship.

34. I weep for your brief beauty, my long-loved wife,  
I decompose my verse above your dying that's denied,  
Because I cannot bear you ceasing in my eye  
Or vanishing from my tongue into the grove.

But I am satisfied your spirit's longer-lasting still  
Than my short while of flying in your breast,  
Though love wished but to travel through this heaven  
On breaths. Your deep breaths wait for me, a nest;

Yet I weep through the density your beauty into the ground,  
Weep for your tiny kiss, moan for your firm embrace,  
Joining in you above the face of our safe whirlpool,  
Lest your breath be a wraith, and, a fresh breeze,  
You shortly fall within the bosom of the One who loves us  
In spite of our little weeping, because of our grief.

37. It's no use the distances snowing fear tonight  
Upon us. Seldom do they love a woman or have a thought.  
Their terror isn't burying us: deep space  
Is the planets' dull faces, without a smile or frown.

Far more gracious than the vacant places is the little man  
Who perceives providence, and then knows pity:  
He rightly sees their distance and their density  
Are no stronger than the dry kiss on his lip.

He can know as well that the One who made these spaces  
A church for him can sing in it of his adoption  
To be a home for language that will praise  
The beauty of children, or the galaxy above.

And the motherly Architect of creation will hear him there,  
And the One who gives the Milky Way a breast will be to him a Father.

50. I'm composing poems, you say, in a grave.

With this stone firm above my head  
My rhymes insist on splitting planks; buried deep,  
My turns of speech, you declare, turn spectres.

And you're dead right. Every poem of mine has been  
Some form of song from the heart of a churchyard.

From the far side my ancient meditation comes,  
In foolish rhythms, to praise before a woman  
Vanishes from view ... What sleeping is our portion  
But a moon of dust slipping for a little moment  
Between a sun and us, between bright light and earth?  
After one act the moon drags its curtain  
Across our daytime stage, a curtain without much thickness  
To its black material ... Then the truth dawns on the house.

## THE CHESTNUT TREE DECIDING TO FLY IN MAY

The chestnut tree's fearful. It stirs  
nervously, refraining from shouting or shifting  
its whisper along the day's metres.

Slowly the white roof  
is born without a scream.  
The tree, it appears, is sleeping, snoring as well  
some naked evenings.

Hear its gossamer closing its eyelids.  
The chestnut tree's hard at it pretending to doze  
above its heavy engines,  
while it mass produces  
air for the sky to breathe  
and become more air. It's at work  
as secretly as snow.

The breath of its fair-and-Guenevere  
existence shies from the fleeing and head-over-heels  
horizons. The chestnut tree's growth  
is a mole in a grave,  
though its streams of pearl  
anoint the heavens, and the rooms of the highest  
boughs, through the roots,

penetrate its cellars, where  
the white wine is stored. Therefore this nuclear  
chestnut tree's a reeling palace  
for silence to open  
through its roots: even in

the firewood's pensive pool it readies  
the mushroom explosion of blossoms

without raising an uproar. This is how  
it forms its decision in its feather bed, as quietly  
as closing ...

Here however, is a district's home  
for a flight of crows. And so,  
though the inside's yearning, blossoms  
wishing to be sky, the peace upon the tree  
is complex, since its guests

are a riot. Like people who do not know  
how holy it is to touch the hem of the lake-shapely  
serenity's garment, the scarecrows  
of crows fire  
their idiotic guns  
on a morningful of branches dreaming their  
twenty years into a party.

There where stillness lingered  
invisible, and as oppressive as milk, look,  
the black noises flit across it  
(as if it rained  
cats and dogs), to crowify for hours  
air with their cloud bubbles, a thunderous  
shower of chicks

through the sun's negation, hunting  
and rolling in a carnival of hounds'  
crowish curses. The tree,

as slowly as  
solitude, remains content  
to be a silent explosion, saying  
nothing, refraining,

as taciturn as its candid  
ageing. And of course, our crows grow weary.  
Then, from within itself  
the tree comes  
back with the sound of its light,  
regaining confidence and the single-legged resolution  
of a church taking

triumphant shape in the midst  
of corpses on the field of battle. But it can only,  
unlike the crows and their fleshy beaks,  
intensify,  
as the branches kindle  
tiny lights high up on its sacred  
crest. The chestnut tree

shows that it too,  
because of the negation, can fly, a dazzling brightness,  
over them. It runs through existence a while  
before spreading its years  
of knowledge of the crows above  
the murk of their harsh croak, and on it flies  
with its chandeliers to floodlight

the refraining. Silently it spreads  
its white wings across their desolation,

a demented dome, and onwards  
it flies, a full-branched  
abundantly greened white  
angel, till the light flames in flakes,  
illuming its faith to the skies.

The chestnut tree is a guest-house  
that shelters us (its sleep a deceit) from a flight of crows,  
having drawn into itself the sunshine  
that on each branch provides  
another party for the squirrels,  
but which invests it in its radiance  
with every wounded thing.

Having climbed a tower, the blossoms  
are so high that they, in gazing back  
at the crows below, shoot fire specks  
unsaddened and soundless.

(Seeing is light's true guest.) And the blossoms  
fly for the whiteness to aim from on high  
and spread – against the multitude of noise – a single silence.

## CELEBRATION OF A BELLY

My thumbs strolled, dumb,  
along the silent hesitant skin, the petalled skin,  
the smooth marble murmurless skin, along the royal belly,  
tracing its shape like braille,  
the Word in the languageless, the Creator who did not know  
he was being created, the Saviour to be stored in a heart and read  
letter by letter  
with my fingers, angular, circular,  
past the navel towards  
the Shepherd, sensing the longings of my long lack of movement.

I wagged my thumbs lightly  
atop Mary's dome, above the cathedral of a belly  
between the flying buttresses where are only songless pews,  
and thought of the broad  
hollow, with almost a chancelful of murk,  
the hollow of the bloody waiting, and the joyful hollow's godhead.  
The belly lay on her  
and round her, like an untraversed  
globe, enclosing her  
within herself in a mercilessly dark meditation,

The hollow through the earth  
keeping the place where the worms squirmed like serpents, an earth  
heavy with Everests whose dearest zeniths are not climbed in vain.  
But hoy! World builder,  
Tailor of regalia, Mary's Carpenter, you've always been at it  
raising this belly, and easily you topped off the free gracious height  
in the gleaming darkness  
where climbers can hang  
their terror on a line above

their pores that pour their fear towards the Lord of the unruffled void,

#### Wonder of Manhood

here complete as creation binding the inane  
to the souls of the planets as fellows. Herdsman of the splendid spaces:  
see where the universe  
has been formed beneath a navel (the scar pioneer) as  
a potential of bits and bobs across perdition that awaited  
its re-formation. Within ancient needy  
non-being, stretching veins  
between the stars and the times, flies  
the King of the Dregs, old Absence, with no one emptiness containing Him.

Here our life was  
dreadfully spiritual. Then, flash, out of the nothing-at-all  
(apart from love), behold – things, incarnation of Light,  
a globe in its manger.  
Bang! here we were hard at it being soberly otherworldly, and it must  
have been at the time a little bit like eternity,  
and here's a superabundant bomb  
of a cosmos, an explosion  
of necessity, solid space and time  
a break-up of tidy, a vigour of right on, with all the trimmings,

Mistletoe games,  
balloons, crackers, and a good deal of blood. Here  
was our dreadfully spiritual mind. And then, ugh! presents higgledy-  
piggedy, like frankincense  
(whatever that is – something suitable, no doubt, for a stable),  
and in the stable behold a glutton and a wine-bibber, enough creation  
for everyone and everything, and in Cana  
a surfeit of drink to intoxicate the world  
and his wife – the box of ointment,

loaves and fishes all over the place, widows giving more than they can

To the gross temple, and matter,  
matter, matter a-plenty and leavings, nuts, the lights,  
the prodigality, a carcass on a holly tree, and their whole substance in a baby  
on real ground. With the meeting  
of the creation and the cradle, the new universe, the uncreated  
re-creating, was squeezed into flannel nappies. The Spirit  
had been strolling  
upon Mary's waters  
and there was ... Ah! light  
between thighs, a good light set apart as one with us.

The lyric that explodes into sight  
is the muse and the muse's breath, the unsilenceable Word  
a little word in the mouth of the child. It changes everything  
by existing, the meaning's different  
because the silence prattles a white inextinguishable fire  
on our hearth. Hallelujah all through the waters! Behold  
the sublime other land  
has squeezed itself into this our dung-heap,  
its foot a metre for our earth,  
with the contrary dancing as harmony in the close empty syllables.

Her red sea opened for him  
to roll through. He that was tender light, bringing our earth  
fruits and vegetables, and fishes teeming between its waves,  
the Godhead, is tethering  
to pain, his image on the ruler of the world, the tenant  
who tunes his praise, as one afternoon, after the true suffering,  
after the dying into a free  
tomb, comes the third creation

of himself beneath his scarlet crown  
that was the second's goal. The cry on the cross had prepared the way

For the cry of the birth, echo  
in anguish of the first word of all that thawed from the void,  
as He came from the black bleeding to perish within  
the devastation  
of my heart. Everything had its rise through him, behold the essence of everything  
in him, the life of everything around him – and within him has been born  
every life to shine –  
made visible.

And bobbing from her harbour belly in a manger's coffin ark,  
behold on the crest of the waves, better than every dawn, every dawn comes walking.

## NOTES

The Welsh source for each poem is listed after the title as follows:

- CG* *Casgliad o Gerddi (1989)*  
*CA 1* *Canu Anaf: Cyfrol 1 (1994)*  
*CA 2* *Canu Anaf: Cyfrol 2 (1995)*  
*YT* *Ynghylch Tawelwch (1998)*  
*ÔT* *Ôl Troed (2003)*  
*YFH* *Y Fadarchen Hudol (2005)*

The publisher in each case is *Cyhoeddiadau Barddas* (Swansea)

During the Children's Party. *Yn ystod parti'r plant (CA 1)*.

A Fractured Autobiography. *Hunangofiant drylliedig (CA 1)*.

The Other Grandmother. *Y fam-gu arall (CA 1)*.

Two Women and a Gift. *Dwy wraig a rhodd (CA 1)*.

the winter home: *hendref*, the dwelling in the valley where a family and its livestock lived, with summers spent in the upland farmstead, the *hafod*.

Portrait of an Aunt. *Portread o Fodryb (YT)*.

Yearning. *Dyhead (YT)*.

The Quarrel. *Y cweryl (CA 1)*.

The Traffic Between Us. *Y Drafnidiaeth rhyngom* (from *Rhieingerdd i Bechod, YT*).

Common Ground. *Man gyffredin (CA 1)*.

Landscape without Hat. *Tirlun heb het (CA 1)*.

Watching a Small Storm. *Gwylid Storm Fechan (YT)*.

Reading in the Rocking Chair. *Darllen yn y Gadair Siglo (YT)*.

Morning Is Whenever You Get Up. *Bore ar Bawb pan Goto (YT)*.

The Welsh title of the poem is an old saying: a more literal translation would be "It's morning for everyone when they get up".

November. *Tachwedd (CA 2)*.

Fifty Yards. *Hanner Canllath (ÔT)*.

The Scarecrow. *Y bwgan brain (CA 2)*.

Jim Crow hat: a round flat felt hat, once worn customarily by black men in the American south.

Right as Rain. *Maes o Law (YT)*.

The Welsh title is a play on words, meaning both "soon" and "a field of rain".

Ynys Lochtyn's Headland. *Penrhyn Ynys Lochtyn (YT)*.

Pennant Melangell. *Pennant Melangell (YT)*.

Melangell, patron saint of all small creatures was a sixth-century Irish princess who escaped the marriage her father had arranged for her by fleeing to Wales. She is said to have hidden a hare under her robes to save it from the hounds of the Prince of Powys, who because of her sanctity gave her the land around the present-day village of Pennant Melangell, where she founded a community of nuns and a twelfth-century church still stands.

Bilbao Cemetery. *Mynwent Bilbao (CG)*.

What's Left of a Mother in Ethiopia. *Gweddill fam o Ethiopia (CA 1)*.

The Relief of Chelumno. *Gollyngdod Chelumno (YT)*.

Anti-Semitic Song. *Cân wrthsemitaidd (CA 2)*.

Nelly Sachs. *Nelly Sachs (ÔT)*.

Cumbria. *Cymbria (CA 2)*.

Present-day Cumbria was once the central portion of the Celtic kingdom of Rheged, ruled in the late sixth century by Urien ap Cynfarch, whose court was probably at present-day Carlisle. Among the dozen surviving poems of Taliesin from this period are eulogies of Urien and his son Owain as defenders of the Britons against English invaders. See my translations in Thomas Owen Clancy ed., *The Triumph Tree* (1998).

Llywelyn: Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, killed by English troops in 1282, is known in Welsh as "The Last Prince".

For both this and the following poems, T. Gerald Hunter's overview of "Contemporary Welsh Poetry: 1969-1996" (in Dafydd Johnston ed., *A Guide to Welsh Literature c. 1900-1996*) provides a useful background. He calls this "a period characterized by political poetry and by the politicizing of the poet", noting that "[it] has been marked by events which have acted as forceful reminders to many of the status of Wales as a nation subsumed into (what remains of) the English empire:

protracted rule by a Conservative government never given anything close to a majority vote by the Welsh people, the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969, the failure of the referendum on a Welsh assembly in 1979. The events of 1969 and 1979 were, and still are, seen by a large minority of the Welsh people (and a much larger percentage of the Welsh-speaking minority) as a failure of Wales as a nation to defeat and transcend the passive, subservient mentality imposed upon them by years of English rule."

In his own essay in this book, on "The Present Situation" Bobi Jones commented that "the contemporary Welsh experience is nothing if it is not international, though not in the big-power sense. We have, up to the present, witnessed the worldwide imperialistic attempt to destroy peoples expeditiously and delete differences. Although the gentler, calmer annihilation of cultural diversity is not as sinister as the sudden physical extermination of a nation, the fact that it is more civilized and more hidden does not make results any less effective. 'Extirpate' is the diverting term used in the Act of Union of England and Wales [1536, referring to Welsh laws, customs, and language], and my dictionary explains this unambiguously as liquidate, however restrained and moderate may be its modern execution. The touchstone is the language ... To be a Welsh-speaker therefore is to be thrust immediately into battle. To write the language is to bleed."

My Wails. *Gwlad fy Nadau (YT)*.

The Welsh title, "Land of my Wails", is a pun on the national anthem's reference to *hen wlad fy nhadau*, "the old land of my fathers".

Eisteddfod: the annual Welsh-language festival of literature and music.

The Women at the Pithead. *Y gwragedd ar ben y pwll (CA 1)*.

Portrait of a Workless Workman. *Portread o weithiwr di-waith (CA 1)*.

*Goleuad*: the newspaper of the Calvinistic Methodists. Its title means "The Torch".

Portrait of a Patient. *Portread o glaf (CA 1)*.

The Neighbours of the Path. *Cymdogion y Llwybr (YT)*.

Portrait of a Blind Boy. *Portread o grwtyn dall (CA 1)*.

Portrait of a Non-Feminist Housewife. *Portread o Wraig Tŷ Anffeminyddol (YT)*

The Conversation of the Deaf. *Byddar a Byddar YT)*.

Portrait of an Overpopulated Woman. *Portread o Fenyw Orboblogedig (ÔT)*.

Nobody. *Neb (CA 1)*.

Portrait of an Unimaginative Visitor. *Portread o Ymwelydd Diddychymyg (YT)*.

Portrait of a Stranger in a Pub. *Portread o Ddieithryn mewn Tafarn (YFH)*.

Portrait of a Gardener. *Portread o Arddwr (YFH)*.

Portrait of a Youth. *Portread o Lanc a Ddiodefai o Barlys yr Ymennydd (YFH)*.

Elegy for a Postman. *Marwnad i Bostmon (YT)*.

A Wren in Aberystwyth Cemetery. *Dryw ym Mynwent Aberystwyth (CG)*.

The Kestrel's Return. *Dychweliad y Cudyll (YFH)*.

Condor. *Condor (CA 1)*.

The Cow from the Andes Lowland. *Y fuwch o iselder yr Andes (CA 1)*.

the Welsh settlement: a Welsh colony was established in Patagonia, a province of Argentina, in 1865.

March Lambs. *Ŵyn Mawrth (YT)*.

Hedgehog. *Draenog (CA 1)*.

Camels. *Camelod (CA 1)*.

Eels. *Llyswennod (CA 1)*.

the dearly loved land: a phrase from the Welsh national anthem.

Wasp. *Cacynen (ÔT)*.

Cat. *Cath (ÔT)*.

Racing Pigeons. *C'lomennod Rasio (CA 1)*.

Arms and Legs. *Coesau a Breichiau (YT)*.

Portrait of a Proverbial Sculptor. *Portread o Gerflunydd Diarhebol (YT)*.

Vermeer's Paint. *Paent Vermeer (YT)*.

Vincent's Chair. *Cadair Vincent (CA 2)*.

Arberth: In the story of "Pwyll Prince of Dyfed" in the collection of medieval Welsh tales known as *The Mabinogion*, it is from a mound above his court in Arberth that Pwyll sees Rhiannon, riding on a large white horse, and sets off in pursuit of her.

Michelangelo's Three Vocations. *Tair Galwedigaeth Michelangelo (YT)*.

Beethoven's Ears. *Clustiau Beethoven (ÔT)*.

Portrait of a 'Self-Portrait' 1661. *Portread o 'Hunan-Bortread' 1661 (ÔT)*.

Two. *Dau (CA 1)*.

Another Excuse. *Esgus arall (CA 1)*.

Love Sonnets of an Old Age Pensioner. *Sonedau serch hen bensynwr (CA 1)*.

The Chestnut Tree Deciding to Fly in May, (*Castanwydden yn Penderfynu Hedfan ym Mai (ÔT)*)

Celebration of a Belly. *Molawd i Fol (YT)*.

Bobi Jones, born in Cardiff in 1929 is a prolific author of short stories, novels as well as poems. He has also published extensively as a linguist, a literary critic, a theologian, and authored various political essays. He married Beti (née James 1952); has one daughter Lowri Gwennlian, one son Rhodri Siôn, and five grandsons – Peredur, Gwydion, Ynyr, Bleddyn and Carwyn. He has been awarded six first prizes by the Arts Council. As his alias Robert M. Jones MA, PhD, DLitt, FLSW, FBA, he is Emeritus Professor of Welsh, and former head of the Dept. of Welsh Language and Literature in Aberystwyth University. He is President of Yr Academi Gymreig since 2010; Former Vice-President of UCCF 1990-95; and President of CYD 1986; as well as Co-President of Cymdeithas Waldo Williams 2011.

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