

AS Literature in English – Paper 3 – 2017

Selections from *Songs of Ourselves, Volume 2*

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Part 1: Love and Family

The Uncles
John Goodby (1958-)

Uncles, talking the camshaft or the gimbel connected to a slowly oscillating crank. The Uncles Brickell, Swarfega kings, enseamed with swarf and scobs, skin measled with gunmetal but glistening faintly, loud in the smoke. Lithe and wiry above the lathe, milling out a cylinder to a given bore. Uncles, pencil-stubs at their ears, spurning ink, crossing sevens like émigré intellectuals, measuring in thous and thirty-secondths (scrawled on torn fag-packets); feinting with slide rules, racing, but mild not as mild steel. Pockets congested, always. Uncles with docket for jobs, corners transparent with grease, with a light machine oil. Time-served, my Uncles, branching out into doorhandles, grub-screws and the brass bits that hold the front of the motor case to the rear flange of the mounting panel. Release tab. Slightly hard of hearing now, the Uncles, from the din of the shop, slowly nodding. Uncles in 'Red Square'; uncles swapping tolerance gauges, allen keys, telephone numbers, deals and rank communism. Forefingers describing arcs and cutting angles. White and milky with coolants and lubricants, mess of order. Never forgetting to ply a broom after. The missing half-finger, not really missed any longer, just a banjo-hand gone west. My Uncles still making a go of mower blades, on the road at their age; offering cigars at Christmas. Uncanny if encountered in visors, overalls, confounding nephews in dignity of their calling, their epoch-stewed tea. Stand a spoon in all their chamfered years, cut short or long. Uncles immortal in the welding shed, under neon, lounge as the vast doors slide to a cool blue desk. My Uncles.

On My First Daughter
Ben Jonson (1572-1637)

Here lies, to each her parents' ruth,
Mary, the daughter of their youth;
Yet all heaven's gifts being heaven's due,
It makes the father less to rue.
At six months' end she parted hence
With safety of her innocence;
Whose soul heaven's queen, whose name she bears,
In comfort of her mother's tears,
Hath placed amongst her virgin-train:
Where, while that severed doth remain,
This grave partakes the fleshly birth;
Which cover lightly, gentle earth!

Sons, Departing
John Cassidy (1928-)

They walked away between tall hedges,
their heads just clear and blond
with sunlight, the hedges' dark sides
sickly with drifts of flowers.

They were facing the sea and miles
of empty air; the sky had high
torn clouds, the sea its irregular
runs and spatters of white.

They did not look back; the steadiness
of their retreating footfalls lapsed
in a long diminuendo; their line
was straight as the clipped privets.

They looked at four sliding gulls
a long way up, scattering down frail
complaints; the fickle wind filled in
with sounds of town and distance.

They became sunlit points; in a broad
Haphazard world the certain focus.
Against the random patterns of the sea
their walk was one-dimensional, and final.

Part 2: Birds, Beasts and the Weather

Ode on Melancholy
John Keats (1795-1821)

I

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

II

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
 Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

III

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Part 3: Travel, Migration, and Society

These are the Times We Live in
Imtiaz Dharker (1954-)

You hand over your passport. He
looks at your face and starts
reading you backwards from the last page.

You could be offended,
but in the end, you decide
it makes as much sense
as anything else,
given the times we live in.

You shrink to the size
of the book in his hand.
You can see his mind working:
Keep an eye on that name.
It contains a Z, and it just moved house.
The birthmark shifted recently
to another arm or leg.
Nothing is quite the same
as it should be.
But what do you expect?
It's a sign of the times we live in.

In front of you,
he flicks to the photograph,
and looks at you suspiciously.

That's when you really have to laugh.
While you were flying,
up in the air
they changed your chin
and redid your hair.
They scrubbed out your mouth
and rubbed out your eyes.
They made you over completely.

And all that's left is his look of surprise,
because you don't match your photograph.
Even that is coming apart.

The pieces are there
But they missed out your heart.

Half your face splits away,
drifts on to the page of a newspaper
that's dated today.

It rustles as it lands.

The Border Builder
Carol Rumens (1944-)

No sooner had one come down
Than he began building again.
My bricks, O my genuine bricks
Made of my genuine blood!
What would we be without borders?
So which one are you? he said
And stuck out his hand to me.
Birth certificate? Passport?
Which side are you on, which side?
Merrily he unrolled
Starry dendrons of wire
To give his wall ears and eyes.
Qualifications? he said.
Residence permit? Tattoo?
Which colour are you, which colour?
No colour, he said, no good.
He took my only passport,
He slammed it down on the wire.
My hand, O my genuine hand!
This is a border, he said.
A border likes blood. Which side's
Your bloody hand on, which side?

The Migrant
A. L. Hendriks (1922-1992)

She could not remember anything about the voyage,
Her country of origin, or if someone had paid for the passage:
Of such she had no recollection.

She was sure only that she had travelled;
Without doubt had been made welcome.

For a while she believed she was home,
Rooted and securely settled,
Until it was broken to her
That in fact she was merely in transit
Bound for some other destination,
Committed to continue elsewhere.

This slow realization sharpened,
She formed plans to postpone her departure
Not observing her movement en route to the exit.

When she did, it was piteous how, saddened,
She went appreciably closer towards it.
Eventually facing the inescapable
She began reading travel brochures,
(Gaudy, competitive, plentiful)
Spent time considering the onward journey,
Studied a new language,
Stuffed her bosom with strange currency,
Nevertheless dreading the boarding announcements.

We watch her go through
The gate for *Embarking Passengers Only*,
Fearful and unutterably lonely,
Finger our own documents,
Shuffle forward in the queue.

The White House
Claude McKay (1889-1948)

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To bear my anger proudly and unbent.
The pavement slabs burn loose beneath my feet,
And passion rends my vitals as I pass,
A chafing savage, down the decent street;
Where boldly shines your shuttered door of glass.
Oh, I must search for wisdom every hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
And find in it the superhuman power
To hold me to the letter of your law!
Oh, I must keep my heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of your hate.

Part 4: Love, Wisdom and Age

The Forsaken Wife
Elizabeth Thomas (1675-1731)

Methinks, 'tis strange you can't afford
One pitying look, one parting word;
Humanity claims this as due,
But what's humanity to you?

Cruel man! I am not blind,
Your infidelity I find;
Your want of love my ruin shows,
My broken heart, your broken vows.
Yet maugre all your rigid hate,
I will be true in spite of fate;
And one preeminence I'll claim,
To be for ever still the same.

Show me a man that dare be true,
That dares to suffer what I do;
That can for ever sigh unheard,
And ever love without regard:
I then will own your prior claim
To love, to honour, and to fame;
But till that time, my dear, adieu,
I yet superior am to you.

I Find no Peace
Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

I find no peace, and all my war is done.
I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;
And nought I have, and all the world I season.
That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.
I love another, and thus I hate myself.
I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,
And my delight is causer of this strife.

Amoretti: Sonnet 86
Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

Since I did leave the presence of my Love,
Many long weary days I have outworn,
And many nights, that slowly seem'd to move
Their sad protract from evening until morn.
For, when as day the heaven doth adorn,
I wish that night the noyous day would end:
And when as night hath us of light forlorn,
I wish that day would shortly reascend.
Thus I the time with expectation spend,
And feign my grief with changes to beguile,
That further seemes his terme still to extend,
And maketh every minute seem a mile.
 So sorrow still doth seem too long to last;
 But joyous hours do fly away too fast.

Rooms
Charlotte Mew (1869-1928)

I remember rooms that have had their part
 In the steady slowing down of the heart.
The room in Paris, the room at Geneva,
The little damp room with the seaweed smell,
And that ceaseless maddening sound of the tide—
 Rooms where for good or for ill—things died.
But there is the room where we (two) lie dead,
Though every morning we seem to wake and might just as well seem to sleep again
 As we shall somewhere in the other quieter, dustier bed
 Out there in the sun—in the rain.

Verse written on her Death-bed at Bath
To Her Husband in London
Mary Monck (?-1715)

Thou who dost all my worldly thoughts employ,
Thou pleasing source of all my earthly joy,
Thou tenderest husband and thou dearest friend,
To thee this first, this last adieu I send!
At length the conqueror death asserts his right,
And will for ever veil me from thy sight;
He woos me to him with a cheerful grace,
And not one terror clouds his meagre face;
He promises a lasting rest from pain,
And shews that all life's fleeting joys are vain;
Th' eternal scenes of heaven he sets in view,
And tells me that no other joys are true.
But love, fond love, would yet resist his power,
Would fain awhile defer the parting hour;
He brings thy mourning image to my eyes,
And would obstruct my journey to the skies.
But say, thou dearest, thou unwearied friend!
Say, should'st thou grieve to see my sorrows end?
Thou know'st a painful pilgrimage I've past;
And should'st thou grieve that rest is come at last?
Rather rejoice to see me shake off life,
And die as I have liv'd, thy faithful wife.

Now Let No Charitable Hope
Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

Now let no charitable hope
Confuse my mind with images
Of eagle and of antelope:
I am in nature none of these.

I was, being human, born alone;
I am, being woman, hard beset;
I live by squeezing from a stone
The little nourishment I get.

In masks outrageous and austere
The years go by in single file;
But none has merited my fear,
And none has quite escaped my smile.

from The Vanity of Human Wishes
Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

The Tenth Satire of Juvenal, Imitated

Let observation with extensive view,
Survey man kind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wav'ring man, betray'd by ven'rous pride
To read the dreary paths without a guide,
As treach'rous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.
How rarely reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice,
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppress'd,
When vengeance listens to the foo's request.
Fate wings with ev'ry wish th' afflictive dart,
Each gift of nature, and each grace of art,
With fatal heat impetuous courage glows,
With fatal sweetness elocution flows,
Impeachment stops the speaker's pow'rful breath,
And restless fire precipitates on death.

But scarce observ'd the knowing and the bold,
Fall in the gen'ral massacre of gold;
Wide-wasting pest! That rages unconfi'd,
And crowds with crimes the records of mankind,
For gold his sword the hireling ruffian draws,
For gold the hireling judge distorts the laws;
Wealth heap'd on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys,
The dangers gather as the treasures rise.

from An Essay on Criticism
Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of Arts;
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind,
But, more advanced, behold with strange surprise
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky;
The eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last;
But those attained, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthened way;
The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

Part 5: War, Sleep and Death

Song

(On seeing dead bodies floating off the Cape)

Alun Lewis (1915-1944)

The first month of his absence
I was numb and sick
And where he'd left his promise
Life did not turn or kick.
The seed, the seed of love was sick.

But oh! the drag and dullness of my Self;
The turning seasons wither in my head;
All this slowness, all this hardness,
The nearness that is waiting in my bed,
The gradual self-effacement of the dead.

The second month my eyes were sunk
In the darkness of despair,
And my bed was like a grave
And his ghost was lying there.
And my heart was sick with care.

The third month of his going
I thought I heard him say
'Our course deflected slightly
On the thirty-second day –'
The tempest blew his words away.

And he was lost among the waves,
His ship rolled helpless in the sea,
The fourth month of his voyage
He shouted grievously
'Beloved, do not think of me.'

The flying fish like kingfishers
Skim the sea's bewildered crests,
The whales blow steaming fountains,
The seagulls have no nests
Where my lover sways and rests.

We never thought to buy and sell
This life that blooms or withers in the leaf,
And I'll not stir, so he sleeps well,
Though cell by cell the coral reef
Builds an eternity of grief.

Soldier, Rest!
Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armour's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here
Mustering clan or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans or squadrons stamping.

Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
While our slumberous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
Bugles here shall sound reveillé.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying:
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye
Here no bugles sound reveillé.

I Dream of You, to Wake
Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

I dream of you, to wake: would that I might
Dream of you and not wake but slumber on;
Nor find with dreams the dear companion gone,
As, Summer ended, Summer birds take flight.
In happy dreams I hold you full in night.
I blush again who waking look so wan;
Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone,
In happy dreams your smile makes day of night.
Thus only in a dream we are at one,
Thus only in a dream we give and take
The faith that maketh rich who take or give;
If thus to sleep is sweeter than to wake,
To die were surely sweeter than to live,
Though there be nothing new beneath the sun.

Care-charmer Sleep...
Samuel Daniel (1562-1619)

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born:
Relieve my languish and restore the light;
With dark forgetting of my care, return,
And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth:
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn
Without the torment of the night's untruth.
Cease dreams, the images of day desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow;
Never let rising sun approve you liars,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

To Sleep
Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

Come Sleep! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low;
With shield of proof, shield me from out the prease
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw;
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland and a weary head:
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

from Paradise Lost – Evening in Paradise
John Milton (1608-1674)

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird, 600
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
She all night longer her amorous descant sung:
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living Saphirs; Hesperus, that led 605
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw;
When Adam thus to Eve: "Fair consort, the hour 610
Of night, and all things now retired to rest
Mind us of like repose; since God hath set
Labour and rest, as day and night, to men
Successive, and the timely dew of sleep,
Now falling with soft slumberous weight, inclines 615
Our eye-lids. Other creatures all day long
Rove idle, unemployed, and less need rest;
Man hath his daily work of body or mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways; 620
While other animals unactive range,
And of their doings God takes no account.
Tomorrow, ere fresh morning streak the east
With first approach of light, we must be risen,
And at our pleasant labour, to reform 625
Yon flowery arbours, yonder alleys green,
Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
That mock our scant manuring, and require
More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth.
Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums, 630
That lie bestrown, unsightly and unsmooth,
Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease.

To the Evening Star
William Blake (1757-1827)

Thou fair-hair'd angel of the evening,
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves, and while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And then the lion glares through the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flock are cover'd with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thin influence!

This is My Play's Last Scene
John Donne (1572-1631)

This is my play's last scene; here heavens appoint
My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race,
Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace,
My span's last inch, my minute's latest point;
And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint
My body and my soul, and I shall sleep a space;
But my'ever-waking part shall see that face
Whose fear already shakes my every joint.
Then, as my soul to'heaven, her first seat, takes flight,
And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,
So fall my sins, that all may have their right,
To where they'are bred, and would press me, to hell.
Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evil,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil.

Death
William Bell Scott (1811-1890)

I am the one whose thought
Is as the deed; I have no brother, and
No father; years
Have never seen my power begin. A chain
Doth bind all things to me. In my hand, man,--
Infinite thinker,--vanishes as doth
The worm that he creates, as doth the moth
That it creates, as doth the limb minute
That stirs upon that moth. My being is
Inborn with all things, and
With all things doth expand.

But fear me not; I am
The hoary dust, the shut ear, the profound,
The deep of night,
When Nature's universal heart doth cease
To beat; communicating nothing; dark
And tongueless, negative of all things. Yet
Fear me not, man; I am the blood that flows
Within thee,--I am change; and it is I
Creates a joy within thee, when thou feel'st
Manhood and new untried superior powers
Rising before thee: I it is can make
Old things give place
To thy free race.

All things are born for me.
His father and his mother,--yet man hates
Me foolishly.
An easy spirit and a free lives on,
But he who fears the ice doth stumble. Walk
Straight onward peacefully,--I am a friend
Will pass thee graciously: but grudge and weep
And cark,--I'll be a cold chain around thy neck
Into the grave, each day a link drawn in,
Until thy face shall be upon the turf,
And the hair from thy crown
Be blown like thistle-down.

Last Lines

"The following are the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote."

(Charlotte Brontë)

Emily Brontë (1818-1848)

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life--that in me has rest,
As I--undying Life--have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as wither'd weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine Infinity;
So surely anchor'd on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy Spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou--Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

Requiem

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he long'd to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.