I. ‘We saw doom patterned in the ordinary sky’

1. THE CONScriPTS

We go to war in various ways
From farms and factories, the usual ways
Of life suddenly distorted to terrible
Experience. Thus fear becomes the visible
Coffin at the funeral.

_We saw doom patterned in the ordinary sky._

Here we go who yesterday
Were the people, the men who are to be
The people after the whirlpool stills
And quiet regains the valleys and the hills.

These were the neighbours
Of our fear, theirs was the curse
As well. The prophecy ran coldly
In our common blood and cried loudly
For swift sacrifice.

_We saw doom patterned in the ordinary sky._

After all there was a universal
Tongue waiting patiently to assemble
The unmarshalled needs. Who sought to leap
Alone are marching now in step.

We go to war in various ways
Yet each aspires above himself to raise
The defeated banners. We have broken our fear.
The hour explodes the familiar life: we bear
The bleeding memory on.

_We see birth patterned in the deathly sky._

EMMANUEL LITVINOFF

LP 1 1
2. **Thoughts on the Eve**
I could love Life the more
Would it but pass away
As quietly as the day
Ebbs from the darkening star.

This dearly cherished thought,
Deep and enraptured pain,
Soothes like a gentle rain
My wild tempestuous heart.

To sail a billowing sea
And watch the departing shore
From a tall sea-girt tower
Is to die splendidly.

But to my chosen end
I would more humbly creep
As men weary for sleep
Pray darkness descend.

But should some savage Hand
My rising manhood stem,
Torn, haunted by its dream,
From Time, lonely to stand;

Life had I loved the more
Had it but passed away
As quietly as the day
Ebbs from the darkening star.

**Emmanuel Litvinoff**

3. **Come! Let Us Dance**
Come! let us dance
   The dance of death!
Dissemble doom
   With love’s light breath!
Pipe away
To the metal moon
That hears unmoved
Our witless tune.

Pluck the lyre
In a funeral dirge:
We face unswerving
Death’s dread purge;

Dauntless, despotic,
Devilish, drear,
The purge of death
Is coming near;

The purge that leaves
Nor king nor fool
Nor measures man
By any rule,

But takes us all
In any order
By heart disease
Or front-page murder!

Dance, dance
To the beggar’s lute.
Dance, and sing
Ere he strike you mute.

Come to the dance!
The dance of death!
Dissemble doom
With love’s light breath!

Peter Baker
4. THE LEVEL MIND

The level mind bodingly watches
the green leaf that the wrinkle touches—
across young lands the brown leaf marches.

The streets weep, grey and fearing
their memory’s sons, summer’s bearing—
their heartless foil cold puppets wearing.

Dead plants in honeymoon gardens fallen,
seeds still remembering the vain pollen—
odies that march, their voices stolen.

The level mind bodingly watches
the fraud hand that the slim life snatches,
the streets that weep the children’s marches.

ALEX COMFORT

5. EMPTY SHELLS

I

The red hands took you; to the hot dust beyond
the cool village walks, climbing, riding in rain
past Druid stones, cows at the moorland pond;
kicks at the beech leaves in the lonely lane.
Gorse fired from hill to hill; the golden curl
of cloud; sea-walls cracking, the lean winds flashing
knives of foam to our throats; but you heard
the straining gates where fiercer waves were crashing.

Discussions in cold blood, meetings, delay;
your bag packed, handshakes, everyone away.

I watch the sea-gulls, white screams round the plough;
walk out to the low tide over the red
sand, crush empty shells, thinking of Spain, how
I grow old, and you perhaps are dead.
II

Some thing of Spring in Autumn, of brooding
on change; a deepened music in the skies,
sun striking new chords from the organ earth, moving
deep harmonies in the sea; the woods are wise.

Only our dreams are real—the leaves are dust
where we walked; now, in the blank-staring street,
for those who wait, no answer, only rust
on the clutched rails, and the tread of wearied feet.

The cold dawn, aching; in the numb rain,
lonely travellers in the crowded train.

No strain for hoping now; I can reach
to stillness, with eyes Janus-like at last.
But in empty shells, picked up on the beach,
murmurs the storm to come, the storm past.

MARGARET CROSLAND

6. WAR

Because the world is falling and there comes no answer;
Because the leaves soon hide an outworn age;
Because the time is past for children's playing,
And a stranger suddenly walks upon the stage;
Because the world is not the world we lived in
And life is not a game,
And most of the Gods we worshipped lost their haloes
When the muses lost their name,
We would remember the old days and their imagined
glories;
The tinsel trappings of a wondrous past.
Postulating that the new world shall be born now
And that this war is the last.
And we would hope that something should be altered
In the cruel careless fundamental law,
But we must beware or the moment will escape us;
It has done so before,
And we must see that out of the practical slaughter
Rise no mere vapoury dreams,
But a world where the poor are fed, the tyrants humbled
And men know what life means.

Jock Curle

7. News of Suffering
Shouldering a way through crowds,
Or brooding with the dance of leaf
Delightful on the sunlit page,
I freeze in grief
For trees that will not bud in Spring
Now murder drags faith from its bed,
And the potential serpent coils
In the stern head,
But know my sorrow will not ease
Eyes empty in the last despair:
For me now are the claws of love,
And the sick prayer.

Clifford Dyment

8. Metropolis
I dreamt that suddenly the metropolitan sky
Closed in its dark dome a million dead,
Blindly and soundlessly, merciless like lead,
Shut in a huge tomb that company
Of mad imperial men. I heard their cry
Fade as the door closed, and as the stone
Rolled on their lust and laughter I saw
One most beautifully spared like Noah
Reaching towards me. His blood and bone
Through a pellucid miraculous prism shone.
‘I am Shakespeare’, he said, and then I knew
How Hamlet hung like a vision in his eye,
Questioning my right to live or die:
Lear and Othello in a storm of dew
Whose passion and tragedy we travel to.

‘I too am Christ.’ His lips were red
With the bitter vinegar he’d rinsed thereon.
O like a classical bird his heart bore on
My fate like an omen. ‘I come’, he said,
‘With Calvary’s disaster on my head.’

Strange in a dream, alone with that man, I stood
At the world’s centre, while east and west
Winds worried the nostril of each beast,
The sun shone, birds hopped, leaves of the wood
Lay embalmed in an unreal solitude.

‘Shakespeare and Christ, the bright and brittle blade
That splinters with power the city sky,
This is the nerve you live and labour by.’
I remembered the huge tomb, its million dead,
‘O what of those mad imperious men?’ I said,

And woke. And suddenly the metropolitan sky
Broke in a thousand fragments. I heard
Shakespeare shouting his innumerable word
Louder and louder—the creed, curse, cry
Of men in history.

JOHN HALL

9. CONSCRIPTS
Related to the picnic in the wood,
The letters that the lover failed to post,
To August, and the closing of the year,
No formula can exorcise their fear.

7
Tomorrow stalks the country of their pleasure
And misconstrues the need for sacrifice;
    Because they grudge the summer that they give,
Our glib memorials are no palliative.

Shipwrecked, they grope forever underseas
Or plot the graph of human recollection.
    Here, on a mountain-range they did not know,
They see the future buried under snow.

To some, a window set above the park
Affords a passage to their common love;
    As retribution for the cancelled hours,
Imagination gives the actress flowers.

Others must loiter in the ruined house,
Knees flexed above a phantom of the mind,
    Or let the demon lead them to the street;
For them love’s currency is counterfeit.

Recoiling from the certainty of touch,
They write their passion in another’s book:
    The rhyme and reason of the present tense
Is found in motion or impermanence.

In privacy they play their own Iago,
And juggle with the language of the flesh;
    Because pretence and disbelief are one,
They fear the revelation of the sun.

Shall they return to find the garden empty,
And sweep the cobwebs from an upstairs room?
    See, in the wounded mirror on the wall,
The anger of the present shadows all.

FRANCIS KING
10. GONE IS THE SPRING

Gone is the spring, and the undertones of summer, heavy and ominous, demanding from the living life, from the dead that their ageless shadow obscure not the sickening lie which haunts the pages of history.

Now let us simplify the issue, canalizing moods and currents which fox us into believing this or doing that, irrespective of the long insistent desire to thatch our untented houses.

Weaving our dreams of folly and delight, or examining with microscopic glance the fears and visions of childhood, the conditional why of events which suddenly shamed our pretty, unwanted endearments.

‘We too have demands of a rational nature, we guests to your dream kingdom; for we have our claim, our honour; your hidden anger cannot relieve you now: we are not very impressed with your ancient sport of the ostrich, the power and the subtlety of the seashell’s wished-for music, sharpening the bronze voices of boys, and their waiting bodies, the hopes and desire of their graceful, desolate movements.’

The cant of reactionary, forget it! Renounce now the plaint of children, with their stupid, lovable faces and futile regrets, for theirs is the sensitive withdrawal, the studied retreat of the snail.
or the cannon. For you is memory and magic,
power of limb and the possible forgiveness.
Say ‘For us to act, and action is loving—that,
and the silent faith to unite with life, ignored by the
selfish.’

Because hatred is power, and impotence
suffering, to idle death to the living,
what then? Shall we say the link, the long and magical
chain of history is broken, the umbilical cord is severed?

And so on this summer evening the voices
of saints, and the prayer of the small and the lonely
shall be our questioners, and the silent face of memory
our accuser; the song of the helpless our history, and
our answer.

ALAN ROOK

II. SEPTEMBER HOLIDAY

All Nature’s agents image war to me.
Even that butterfly above the ditch
Fluttering with sinister intent; a bee,
Heavy with honey, drones at bomber’s pitch.
The distant tractor furrows for attack
Trenches meticulous as a general’s plan.
Those corn-shocks rest like rifles in a stack;
That sheaf ungathered is a fallen man . . .
Nothing is simple now, nothing immune
From war’s contagion, time’s conspiracy.
Throughout the sunny Cotswold afternoon
All Nature’s agents image death to me.

CLIVE SANSON