

Some sample poems

Poems

Holland

Holland land of bikes and tulips  
Near naked harlots behind plate glass  
But also Vermeer's interior calm  
Tree lined canals  
Tall beautiful women  
The wide tolerance  
And the wonderful light.  
Where two is always two and a half.  
The Dutch have made so much  
Of their small low flat land.  
I do love Holland.

A Poem For You

If I could I would write a poem for you  
But just now I can't think of one  
So I send these few words instead

But perhaps they are a poem after all  
For poems do not live in words  
But in the heart and in the head.

Merivale

A hot afternoon: the sun still;  
Bees buzzing in the lavender,  
I hadn't been there for forty years.  
It was much as I remembered it  
An apple tree grubbed up  
Flower beds extended  
A handful of past summers  
All gathered in a cup

How houses remember. The past  
A silent presence in the stones.  
What once was now and now is not  
Risen to a new more solemn life  
As if by transubstantiation:  
'Hurry up Lucy we're already late'  
'Darling don't forget your bathing suit'  
The chatter of another time  
Become ritual incantations.

What is this strange emotion? Proust  
Would have understood. How those years  
So long ago we fled away the time  
As if we lived in the golden world.  
A happiness profounder for its loss  
Remembered now with an acuter joy.

We do not dwell in time, for even  
As we speak is becomes was, now then.  
Only memory remains immune  
Translucent as the windows  
Neat and trim as the smooth lawns  
The flowers of those happy years  
Still shining in the sun.  
Mirrors of the everlasting  
Waiting just behind the eye.

#### A Poem for Valentine's Day

I hadn't thought of them for years but today I remembered them  
The pheasant eyed narcissi in Richard Ray's orchard  
Perfumed Arabian princesses gossiping in their wedding gowns  
Until one day over sixty years ago I picked them, and then a fortnight later  
Their flowers withered and leaves curled brown and water foul and slimy  
I threw them in the trash can and that was the end of them.  
Except that today for no apparent reason I remembered them  
The perfumed Arabian princesses gossiping in their wedding gowns  
In Richard Ray's orchard over sixty years ago.

#### *Castaway*

I think I'll take to my desert island the late novels of Henry James  
How I'll luxuriate in those thickets of complex implication  
As – plop! – the coconuts drop inconsequentially and randomly  
Quite without intention or irony  
In quiet moments of stillness too still for meanings or names.

Nine bean rows shall I have there, upon my fabled isle  
Much of the day I'll spend, I plan, in meditation  
Sitting for years just quietly  
Like the Buddha under the bojum tree  
While the bees work the bean flowers with neither guilt nor guile.

I'll hear the waves sussurring softly with a low sound on the shore  
In gentle rhythmic unplanned regulation  
I'll have breakfast at three (pm)  
And cornflakes and mangoes for tea  
While I shout to the seagulls 'Hi there! Nothing matters any more'.

I'll think of the empty atomic spaces in the solid grains of sand  
Piled up in trillionned drifted aggregation  
I'll listen to the winds whispering strange words  
I'll have a shot at learning the language of the birds  
And cry out 'Mine! All mine!' upon the echoing strand.

But it's no good -

I'll never drift in the lazy noon through the hot lagoon dreaming  
Of Maggie Verver and Millie Theale  
The local park will have to do as my theatre of elation.  
Most consequentially defecating dogs, pram-pushing mums  
Drunk tramps on benches, lobelias and geraniums  
The discarded evidence of *en plein air* copulation  
Are paradise indefinitely postponed – but real.