

Gog and Magog



Ciaran O'Driscoll

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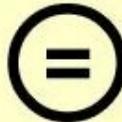
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The author gratefully acknowledges the receipt of a Bursary in Literature from An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council in 1984.

Produced with the generous assistance of The Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon) and Galway Corporation.

Acknowledgement is due to the editors of the following publications in which many of these poems previously appeared: *Aquarius*, *Cyphers*, *Galway Civil Rights Broadsheet*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *the Irish Times*, *New Irish Writing (The Irish Press)*, *North Magazine*, *Omens*, *Orbis*, *the Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Salmon*, *Voicefree Anthology '86*, *Writing in the West (The Connacht Tribune)*.

A number of these poems appeared in *Trio 4* (the Blackstaff Press, 1985). 'The Tree Outside My Window' appears in *Hard Lines 3* (Faber and Faber, 1987).

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Hardcover ISBN 0 948339 08 X

Softcover ISBN 0 948339 09 8

Printed by Clódóirí Lurgan Teo
Bound by Kennys Fine Binding
Text processed by Dublin University Press
Cover by David Lilburn

First published by Salmon Publishing, Auburn,
Upper Fairhill, Galway, 1987.

While taking my severely injured wife out to the riverbank by the side of the hill of Nakahiro-machi, I was horrified, indeed, at the sight of a stark naked man standing in the rain with his eyeball in his palm. He looked to be in great pain, but there was nothing that I could do for him.

Unforgettable Fire, by survivors of Hiroshima

Anger is better than sadness.

St Thomas Aquinas

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It's out of the question that we don't
pull ourselves together now chaps
for various Muslim and Hindu reasons
also reasons of State, various
longterm goals but above all
because of the task in hand, namely
fixing this blowup length of track.
To which purpose, it almost seems, rebels
have been deployed in the country round -
those flashes of light up on the hills
are not chance reflections, it's called
heliography. I thought that would
be able to concentrate your minds.
Well it's all together then chaps
for the Empire and the young prince
in the carriage happily absorbed
collapsing houses of cards.

A VIGIL

No images emerge from the country
beyond the roadblocks.
Under the stars, the cosmic wheels,
no images emerge.

I watch you toss your body backwards, forwards,
and work your jaws as if trying
to gnash your teeth at the air
silently, and finally

like a small coarse fish splashing the surface
you say, 'They've finished the post-mortem.'
Your tone of voice is defiance
with sadness in its tail

like a prisoner's who forebodes
a harsh sentence, a peerless jury.
You speak replacing your head
in the nosebag of oblivion.

Everything is normal on all roads
leading to the interior
under the conniving stars.
Everything is normal.

ANATOMY OF THE COPPER MAN

(copperwork figure in a pub, Co Galway)

The entry wound is under the right elbow - here.
And as you can see
the neck of the fiddle has struck the heart. In fact
almost the whole fiddle has entered the body.
Only the head and feet remain intact.

Each arm, each leg, is fifteen fragments;
the trunk an archipelago, a jigsaw
presided over by the moonstruck face.

A relic of *geansaí* adheres to the neck;
lapels of a vanished coat. A straw hat
crowns this extraordinary apparition.
It fidgets forward in fine copper boots,
its own backbone for walking stick.

A king of shreds and patches, gentlemen,
held together by no thread of consequence.
Note how the fixed grin belies
the fact that the night sky floats through the wounds.

CLOSE COMBAT

Before knowing it, we had rounded
a corner on to the hackneyed
carpet of falling corollae,
the rhododendron ambush!

And lighter than the tree's
sporadic light bombardment
your lips began falling
on me, all over me,

and my protective hands
were soothing each place on you
the mauve petals mildly grazed,
places also out of their range.

Later, by the lake, we sat
rehearsing separate ways that led
up to that classic contact,
when straight out of *Dr Zhivago*

the cherry trees went scattering
another hoary old chestnut
of blossoms, and I knew
I had sustained a hit.

AUBADE

(for Shena)

Hear the woman
at the upstairs window
saying goodbye
with the voice of parting

Turn your apologetic
figure once to sketch
a smile's
embarrassed lineaments

Take with you down
hilly sidestreets
the room where she
is visited by cold sunlight

ICE AGE

Now practise ongoing
strategies for November:
stay with evening courses
on art, car maintenance,
or teach the flatmate chess.

There's knitting, the old reliable;
exploratory lists
of presents, invitations;
the milking of commonplaces;
long milkings of silence.

Finish the outsize jigsaw.
Play the parakeet's tape.
Oil the bicycle. Read
over again the twice-read
tales of Sherlock Holmes

and keep the coalbox filled.
Now ice has sealed the dead
anatomy of politics,
the cheers from hustings gel
in monopolies of frost.

IN THE SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

These are hard times
to be pronouncing the word 'shellfish',
but I do pronounce it, softly,
more to myself than to the waiter
who would like something more specific.

I could tell him
of Sunday afternoons in London
between pub-opening times,

the scranrel notes
of a badly-played tin whistle
in Underground stations,

a blind man fumbling
his piano accordeon
through the doors of curry-houses,

how time wears on, and wears down
all but the most liberated
of liberation theologians;

or say that I have given up
masturbating, and with the proceeds
of the sublimated energy,
bought a sea-green Mercedes.

Instead, I place the word 'shellfish'
in the begging bowl
of his doleful countenance,
nothing more specific:

some of my best friends are mussels.

MAN WITH MACAW

This man with a multicoloured bird on his shoulder
often got on the Underground at Burnt Oak.
The multicoloured bird dropped feathers
that schoolchildren grabbed, but mostly
sat mute and trusting on the man's shoulder -
just a little apprehensive, you'd know it
from watching the not-quite-still claws.
Not so much as a squawk from this
serene and multicoloured bird
on the shoulder of a serene-looking
man who wore shabby clothes. They seemed
to lend serenity to one another.
Often he smiled back at smiles,
talked in a matter-of-fact way about
moulting and birdseed, and civilly answered questions.
Always for me his arrival in the carriage
was like the first time I ever saw him,
unobtrusive but slightly wonderful -
Man with Macaw, serene
man and multicoloured bird, children
watching for the fall of a dazzling feather.
Often, because the tube went no further,
we got off at Colindale and waited
for the next one to take us to Burnt Oak:
so ordinary it seemed then, a man
standing on the platform with a macaw on his shoulder,
that stern faces softened and dry tongues
found a couple of friendly words.

THE TREE OUTSIDE MY WINDOW

There are many mansions in
the tree outside my window.

James Joyce is there, reciting
the sequel to *Finnegans Wake*
to oysters eating fillets of the rich
in its seafood restaurant,

and there's the repentant pope
nodding in total agreement
with the Marxist theologians
of its leafy constellations.

And the cringing olive-eyed
mongrel from down the lane
takes the evening paper
from his former master's mouth,

while the children of Peru
throw away their begging bowls
and screaming with delight
climb to the topmost branches.

O the fine ales the beautiful dead
drink in the tree outside my window!

Green is its darkness and its silver
in the breeze is starlight.

AN EXILE

The girl from Cavan who
was reading Seneca now
dreams at the window. Blown
leaves and soothing rain,

a shy intelligent girl.
On Friday evening she'll
read no more, embrace
the comfort of her race

in a Dalston pub, her home
from home. Later, at some
convenient excuse,
let an old anger blaze.

Upon the table lie
Seneca's open play
and *Cooking in a Bedsit*.
Where will she next eat?

THE RAIN GOD

Tonight, the rain god has decreed,
there will be nothing only rain.
Already leaves are deeper green
in the foreground, surfaces have darkened,

and beyond that last solid gable
there's a grey evening, vague about
the presence of a city,

lights and rumours of lights
pulsate faintly from
uncharted overlapping wards.

Sound isn't everything
in the rain god's midnight kingdom,
the favoured eyes are those
of people under streetlights.

JOSEPH

I see seven golden ears of wheat
dancing on the side of a baker's van
before a bus-impatient queue
who raise umbrellas into rain.

There's no bus coming. I hijacked
the one due half an hour ago,
and motoring to Egypt now
through time and story, I'll bring back

the boy who lost his fancy coat
but not his economic flair,
the dreamer who provided bread,
to be my corn-interpreter.

CONQUEST

The rain's authority
is now unquestioned
in this kingdom of paddock and stables
where a horse's muzzle
dips like an aardvark's snout
over a half-door, and inside
horse-darkness moves in the still
depths of darkness itself.

And the rain's writ runs
on lawn and driveway:
ribbed and rusting spearheads
carpet under the chestnuts
and are found everywhere
around the house. Eaves-gutters choke
where they fought it out on the slates.

No need any more for the big
guns of the wind, the mines of frost:
all's pacified now in the steamy
provinces beyond the gates;
and I notice in fading light
a diminished military presence,
relaxed raindrops falling
as of customary right.

I can stand with impunity
a little longer and admire
how over the garden wall
a kind of life continues
in the stockade of a long-
abandoned fig-tree:
its few organic pennants,
faded and motionless
on the extremities
of unprofitable pales,
detach with the slightest pressure,

like the obovate flesh
of small green fruits in families
along the dykes of air,
bleeding a little milk.

ANIMA

The shades are light here,
the surfaces smooth;
cool bright skies have found
substance to furnish pleasure. Curtains
are placed judiciously
and room leads into room
by delighting the eye before
haunches are lifted from deep armchairs.
She sails
through french windows,
the scarcely recognized female
of my dreams. Her lips are parted
by words I am not meant
to understand or hear, sensible
as breasts under a loosefitting dress.

THE UNCOMPLETED PARK

Someone who dumped a mattress over the wall
provided me with a soft landing
in what a gate crested with flourishes
of iron penmanship, its middle dangling
a heavy chain and lock
like well-hung genitals, defined as park
and my eye defined as uncompleted.

Saplings were trained to posts
by wire in shoes of rubber hose,
but paving stones were told apart by moss.
There was no seat, sculpture or fountain yet,
only a wild grass tame enough to let
the wild carrot's occasional crown and stalk
stand out and indicate the depth of space.

Between the entrance and the bank
of the old railway, I collected leaves
to take home and identify in a book,
and now I know it was the wind
switching a poplar from green to silver
brought to my notice the uncompleted park
on the city's penny-pinched long finger.

WINTER LANDSCAPE

(for Tony O'Malley)

Farmer to used car dealer
my brother's son converted:
dismantler, assembler
of plausible hybrids.

And late into the night
we heard his power tools:
steel-cutter, welding torch,
varieties of drills.

At all hours, heavy trucks
scored the vibrating lane,
inch by abrasive inch.
One night a roof caved in,

at which my neighbour shrugged
and bought three neighbours out.
The accumulating years
saw land and buildings rot.

● * * *

•

Visit it any time
you like. Winter is best,
when snow has disappeared
from the low ground, but frost

cripples mid-afternoon.
Turn left at the third pothole
on the pacified boreen,
where a ghost sheepdog still

waits for a schoolgirl's ghost.
Carry an umbrella:
plaster may fall, or slates,
as you stand in turn before

what were seven windows
in five houses, and now
are seven studies of rust
against a ridge of snow.

THE IRISH GIANT

(in the John Hunter Museum, London)

'Twas bribery betrayed this hunted
one to Hunter; circumvented
the young Irish giant's planned
escape to sea-burial.
Body and soul had not a proper
parting before the Hand
of Science in a copper
boiled the flesh from the frame.

And now O'Brien for all time
continues to make appearances.
The height which earned his bread
bills him with such additional
attractions: twins that share one head,
cyclopean foetuses.

GOG AND MAGOG

Some say Magog started it all
by shouting his name in a quarry.

But it was a long time ago,
a shout and a shout's echo
from so far back, the origins
have been distorted again and again.

For example, it's said that one
was a gymnast, but had a son
who was born plated with armour;
or that when one devoured
a book, the other excreted tomes.

The names *may* signify the same;
but whether it took one, or two,
to begin, there are thousands now,
and one is as bad as another.

Here and there, mainly together,
the names crop up
in scriptures and on the lips
of travellers ill-met
outside everyday's gate.

A hairdresser lived long enough to tell us
of several very hairy creatures,

and a dead postman caught in a crossfire
cycling round a street corner
spoke of two men
with identical weapons
who stood over his body

and traded greetings curtly.

WEST

There's a lemon ghost
of sunlight in my trails
of cloud, today I am
the suave eye-cheater
with yellows greens and browns

so finely modulated
you came for pleasure. I
am pliable, collapsing
neatly on to your bookish
frame of reference,

the eye nevertheless
is drawn into my depths
from small cromwellian fields
and scattered ice-age boulders.
Even as rain tightens

Over my curved rim
I am beckoning you
to endless bog. My charm
is at odds with all known
technologies of survival,

your feet on the tarred lane
taking you back from the edge
of fabled treachery.
Listen to the wind now,
my howling inwardness.

FOREST TRAILS

Although I've not left my chair,
I've travelled much tonight,
always returning to my tense
body, pen-hand by the desk-light

poised on paper. Unlike a child's
who ventures a little and comes back
for reassurance, my comings
and goings down the forest tracks

have been to seek a reassurance
that isn't here. And while they try
my love's patience, while she wants to say
'Find your reassurance in me',

she doesn't, in case I stumble on
a trail leading to something bigger
than the cramped times we live in,
and we could increase there together.

HOGAN AND THE THISTLE

1. Hogan's Monologue

Despite time's ravages, Hogan my friend
insists on diagnosing the world's ills,
and I say to him, 'A fine day in the end
of January's too rare - before night falls

let's take a walk.' As for the diagnosis,
it's never quite the same, it cannot sit,
or even progress with grace like the houses
outside my window on the sloping street.

I track their honest gables capped with plain
chimneys, until they disappear in trees.
The river valley's colours, contours drain
to random lights, a dull suggestiveness.

In the first house, there's a drawing of curtains;
a bedroom light shines in the first but one.
Hogan drones on with Hegel, Marx and Keynes.
People are doing things they've always done.

2. Hogan's Regimen

Hogan, in the tundra of the unemployed,
gets up to stay alive, and guarantees
a nightfall dream-bottle to thirsty pride.
Walks into town, delves for appearances'
maintenance in his overdraft. Returned,
jogs once or twice round the Atlantic Pond.
A strong wind drives the waves straight past him. Dogs
ignore him, bark at gulls like rubber ducks.

He takes a shower, cursing obscurely
in the thrill of cold water. Sits to write:
'I have dallied with the shadow of delight's
shadow in parked cars.' Through the open window
some unfamiliar hymenopteron flies,
crash-lands on his carpet. Fails to rise.

3. *The Spider Plant*

If Hogan only listened, I'd tell him
about the spider plant. How its long blades
are white highways with sloping grass margins,
unfinished bridges leading to the abyss

in every direction. And when it trails
a few dividing shoots, more bridges rise
from the abyss itself - miraculously,
a dozen spider plants grow in mid-air.

Some runner plant I can't identify
has sunk a root in this pot. Otherwise,
I'd hold it right in front of Hogan's face.
He has lost contact with such mysteries.

4. Hogan and the Thistle

Hogan reclines in the dim
memory or corner
of a crowded pub, savours

his pint and his distinctness:
as the pineapple-textured
hourglass-waisted thistle-bud

displays its purple tuft
above the green clamour
of nettles grass and brambles

green green till everything
is green: Hogan erupts
in a purple tuft of song.

5. Murder has come a long way since Attila

That life itself may be included in
the Higher Order, its essential phantom
shimmers inside this window, a vapour
distilling to unheard significance.
The lighting pools in ceiling corners, soft
on plants, on bookshelves and on varnished wood.
Behold, upon the desk, the instruments
of emasculation: typewriter, headed paper,
a pen for signature, and now the Hand
appears on the side-support of an armchair,
wearing a wineglass. 'And did you have
a busy day, my dear?' 'Yes, but I wished
it had been metrically more regular.'
Time is slow here, there are
hungry generations to tread down,
a matter of routine correspondence.
Meanwhile, pentameters illustrative
of the approved trend will accumulate
with trickling increment of salary.

The man outside the window won't enter,
won't even put his envelope
in the letter box for fear of being heard.
He settles down for a midnight siesta
beside a pickaxe in the flowerbed, left
by workmen doing a job with paving stones.

6. Literary Criticism

What today passes as verse is the debris
from an exhausted mine.
In the largely unpublished corpus
of Hogan, there's a few good lines

that I am privileged to hear him bellow
as I pass daily under the walls
of the Institution: chunks of soul
evinced with the aid of batons.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

(with apologies to Count Dracula and Sweeney Todd)

The old man in the armchair by the fire
has no reflection in the mirror.

Leaving 'The Economist' aside, he smiles:
his canines have grown longer, sharper.

As usual, he talks of fishing, shooting,
scotch malts, and such appropriated
trivia as clan and tartan.

His floors are sown with trapdoors
(‘Regrettably,’ he concedes).
He owns a chain of bakeries
famous for delectable meat pies.
Each time she visits him, he has
a new set of servants.

He is a connoisseur
of anything she cares to mention;
expansive, with his arms
casting no shadows in the firelight

which fades as he proudly traces
ancestry to Attila. But he deplores
the Hun’s lack of refinement: ‘Mere
spilling of blood. So
messy, so irrational...’

The impeccably wistful voice
draws her irresistibly closer.

Stooping to sweet embraces, she sees
headlines in the light of his red eyes:
‘Laird Takes Top Bakery Award’;
‘World Shortage of Garlic’.

BARBIE'S MOVED

Of course Barbara Dickinson's moved -
did you think she'd stay?
She lives in Eye now.
Did you really think she'd stay

after that evening the blind fell off your window
and Mary Sutton looked in and seen
you reddening her bare arse with a cane?
Did you really think she'd stay

after that, you old lecher you?
You ought to be ashamed of yourself!
Though I must say it gave us down
at the soap factory many a laugh -

you rotten old bum-fetishist!
Mind you keep your hands off
our June's bottom long as you're here.
Lord but it gave us many a good laugh

down at the soap factory. Yes, Barbie's moved all right:
did you really think she'd stay?
She lives in Eye now, and I hope
it's far enough away!

FREUD ON FORGETTING A NAME

I was being driven from Ragusa
to a place in Herzegovina
by a man who turned out to be a vet.
It was the last day of Christmas
and we were discussing
the Turks of that region - the great
confidence they have in doctors
and how resigned they are to fate

What we omitted to mention
(being strangers) was that the Turks
of Bosnia and Herzegovina
place a higher value on sex
than they do on anything else.
Indeed they esteem it rather more
than the people of Orvieto
esteem 'The Four last Things'

which I had mentioned to him earlier
and found to my embarrassment
I couldn't remember the name
of the painter; but by the time
we were driving up to the farmhouse
he visited *en route*,
I knew Botticelli was half-right.
Where then was Boltraffio coming from?

Something I wanted to forget
lurked in the name of the second painter:
Trafoi, a hamlet in the Tyrol
where a few weeks before
I received news of a suicide,
a man I took much trouble over
although the sexual disorder
that vexed him was incurable.

And something I wanted to remember
had refused remembrance because
of a similar stray connection
with death and sexuality:
'Herr' was how Turks would address me
and one said 'Herr, life has no value
if *that* comes to an end.' From 'Herr'
I went to 'Signor', then to Signorelli.

At this stage, since the vet
invited me to accompany
him, we walked down a muddy lane
to the gate of a small field
where an old horse with sunken
hindquarters and spavined hocks
was quietly cropping grass.
It was the Feast of the Epiphany.

THE POST-HOUSEKEEPING HOUSEKEEPER

Peering over the edge of your poem,
young man, I see it is a fine deep well.
And you might be the fittest to go down
first, and inspect them rusty iron rungs
that may have loosened in the stonework, and
make sure 'tis as dry as you say it is,
for I think you'll be coming after me,
young and all as you are, in a few years.
A fine reward it is, the Lord save us,
for an old woman to go down into
and spend the rest of eternity there.
Is it *economizing* that he's at,
for all he ever gave me? Well, I hope
his young mistress will serve him equally
with saddles of mutton and onion sauce,
and the patient loyalty of a cur,
washing and scrubbing and ironing till
she collapses at all hours of the night.
I'll descend to the bottom, dry or wet,
of this poem or well or what-you-call-it;
and maybe now and then, when I look up,
I'll see my title blurring at the top
under the bright circle of the sky,
or it might be the dark blob of a face,
his honour coming to cajole me back.
But he's too late for *plámás* now: the crack
of doom itself won't shift me from this place.

GREAT AUKS

The great auk is an extinct bird
that keeps on laying eggs;
and the more eggs it lays,
the more extinct it becomes.

The eggs, as soon as they are laid,
are put in glass cases in museums,
where egg-reviewers look at them and say:
'This is the best egg yet
from this particular great auk,
we look forward to the next.'

All the eggs of all the extinct great auks
in the world are exactly the same shape and size,
pages upon pages of them,
and if you placed them end to end,
they would circle the globe many times,
and there's more coming.

It's not easy to become a great auk:
you must first become extinct
so that the quality of extinction
can be transmitted to the eggs you lay.

Great auks don't speak to other birds,
and since they can't fly
they have founded a Great Auk Society
to declare flying unfashionable,

and all other birds that wish to become great auks
must consent to have their wings clipped
by the Great Auk Society,
and meditate, night and day,
on the virtue of great-aukness.

Eventually, they'll lay
eggs of the correct shape and size,
scarcely noticing in the process
that they have become extinct.

RAILWAY PORTERS IN VICTORIAN FICTION

The hero or narrator has got off
at some country station in fine weather.
Preferring to walk, he must ask directions
and leave his luggage for the squire's car.
The obliging porter will be garrulous
even after receiving his tip:
the irritable M.R. James denotes
his coda with a few etceteras.
If it's a traveller with a bicycle,
the porter will pronounce it 'bysticle';
but we must leave him scratching under his cap
as the ticking chain fades out of his earshot,
for the cyclist has weightier matters
to hand - being haunted by a Tudor ghost
or falling in love with an unhappy
young woman, whom a scheming foster parent
keeps in confinement for her legacy.

FROM A JOURNAL

As far as possible, I try to live
a monkish life, and find that poetry
comes readily enough when a cold bath
has chastened certain wild propensities.

But always on late Thursday afternoons,
I wash my hair and take a warm one.
As I lie in it for an hour or more,
and darkening undercoats of shadow tone

the window behind me, I hear my dark
secrets, deciphered by the filling cistern
in the clearest syllables of water –
scarcely a language I understand.

VITEBSK, SOMETIME IN 1941

It was my wedding day:
I remember the neck of a beer bottle
sticking out of my coat pocket,
and someone joking, 'You're armed well.'

And we thought it was a joke
until the major's wife came in.
We saw that she was crying,
and believed it then.

In Belarus, we have a good
memory for things like that:
not far from here, a village was burned
with everyone in it,

and there's a copper bell
on the site of every house
that tinkles in the wind,
reminding us.

A TALL STORY

The children were scared when the radio
crackled and finally died,
so I told them it was nothing more
than a bad cold, and went outside

to watch for fireworks along the sky's edge,
hoping they'd go to sleep -
and almost tripped on something smooth and round
that was lying on the doorstep.

When I carried it in from the darkness
to the study, it looked like
a cast I saw in a museum once
of the egg of the great auk.

In fact, it *was* an egg. I made an omlette,
and we were able to survive
for two more days, stringing it out.
On the third day, help arrived:

a chap in uniform, driving a jeep,
came to the door with provisions.
Hearing the story of the egg, he laughed
and told a less likely one.

FIRST COLLECTION

How Margaret waters the plants
under the tap should be included,
running her fingers through the leaves
so that each one gets its share
of the sprinkling her other hand makes
with a motioning gesture
of some fussily competent teacher
ushering children into a station.

I do it grudgingly, dole
water out of a pint glass
into the compost; but she
creates showers for the housebound
with all the difference between
intuition and the instruction manual,
lifting them carefully then
like children out of the bath.

All afternoon, it seems,
while I sit unable to read,
wondering whether my first collection
in the hands of some far-off
publisher's anonymous reader
will open out or remain pressed
flowers between the pages
of one typescript among thousands,

in the short winter light,
moving from window to sink
and from sink to window,
a Tibetan girl
conducting a herd of yaks
in single file down a steep path
to a Trans-himalayan oasis,
Margaret waters the plants.

LAUNCHING

The winter sun, shining through the windows
of the warehouse dusted for the occasion,
enhanced green wineglasses, flower-printed kimonos
and the coloured drapes that covered books
the publishers had remaindered there.

It was not a large heart that beat
in the author's breast but one curiously constrained
as was evident to the more discerning,
who actually read the handsome volume

and wanted to run away from what they were reading:
something most inappropriate, to do with death,
and each poem getting into it deeper,
like a queue of deranged faces
in a contest to pose for *The Scream*,

faces that floated like autumn leaves
in the limbo of the author's memory,
gratefully acknowledging their first appearances
in summer magazines, though the revised versions
in the collection were scarcely recognizable.

DOGBARK

A dog barks
in the afternoon
that threatens rain
and passes slowly.

The dog barks
with self-restraint,
thinking 'I could stop now
or give them a dozen more.'

Then he falls silent
and the rain comes down
steadily: the moment
of dogbark has passed.

I think he has retired
to his kennel, disgruntled,
disgusted he hasn't set
the whole street barking.

Perhaps he'll try again
later; meanwhile
as the afternoon acquires
a further assurance

and the light is holding
with March tenacity,
I record his dogbark
for posterity.

THE TRAVELLER

This is the country of conversations,
of marram grassland rolling and slowly ascending
over long distances to end and begin
again in the gentle drops of bluffs or ledges.
Houses are bluffs, designed
in scalene triangles whose longest sides
are rooflines lifting from the earth
to apexes where roofwings, poised for flight,
dovetail with perpendiculars fronts
of glass you may look through on moonlit nights
and see how all these modest elevations,
man-made or natural, seem to be
crests of the land's sure tidal movement
towards and beyond the horizon. The grass
whispers its conversations over the dark mounds,
but what goes on inside the lighted ones,
while surely pleasant, is not substantial.
I know from having been a guest in some,
where I felt like an agent of justice,
unfitted for the part, who couldn't bring himself
to get round to the point of his visit,
a missing child, a body's whereabouts.
And just when I'd begin to feel at home
in the firm seating and the soft lighting,
among smooth surfaces sensing the dark
green taciturnity of breadfruit plants,
just when they'd begin serving the liqueurs,
when the ceremony of hospitality
was seeming to lose its arduousness,
and I was about to phone my guest-house
and book an extra night, it's then they'd tell me
that I *must* visit the people further on,
who were interestingly different - so they said.

ROADS

(for Margaret)

Where is the road to Wigan Pier
which I set out upon last May
with labour's bread, with heart of fire,
with factories that mounted higher
on each side in the dawning day,
and at my side this child so dear?

The dew rang out where grass grows sweet
from fertiliser tractors spread,
and cattle grazed where buses run
transporting manpower by the ton
to where the complex has been laid;
and this child climbs on tired feet.

I walked the road to Wigan Pier
where factories send up their smoke
and metal gleams in hardening light.
White-coated teams came into sight
in glass-built plants; and then I spoke
to spur my child whose blood is dear.

'All energy the task demands
is gladly given, freely spent,
since it is bread in the freshening breeze
to feed on what the warm heart sees
the little share of each, when blent,
can make to build what love commands.'

Where is the road to Wigan Pier
which I have tramped on all my days,
inspired by Larkin, Connolly?
This road leads downwards, to the sea;
and at the pier my boat delays.
But there remains a child so dear.

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In short, the battle Gog and Magog is war in the latter days (Last days) when a confederacy of nations attack Israel, which has been restored in the last days. These nations, which attack Israel in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, include nations, which are Muslim and have a clear animosity to Israel. Along with these Muslims nations, a northern kingdom, called Gog and Magog, which many identify, as the land Russia, will ally itself with Muslim nations, to oppose Israel in the last days. Gog and Magog (/É^É;É'É; Ě^meÉ^É;É'É;); Hebrew: x'Ö¼x•Ö¹x' x•Ö¼xžÖ,x'x•Ö¹x' Gog u-Magog) appear in the Hebrew Bible as individuals, peoples, or lands. In Ezekiel 38, Gog is an individual and Magog is his land; in Genesis 10 Magog is a man, but no Gog is mentioned; and centuries later Jewish tradition changed Ezekiel's "Gog from Magog" into "Gog and Magog", which is the form in which they appear in the Book of Revelation, although there they are peoples rather than individuals. Gog and Magog, in the Hebrew Bible, the prophesied invader of Israel and the land from which he comes, respectively; or, in the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), evil forces opposed to the people of God. Although biblical references to Gog and Magog are relatively few, they assumed an important.Â { "237108": { "url": "/topic/Gog", "shareUrl": "https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gog", "title": "Gog and Magog", "documentGroup": "TOPIC PAGINATED MEDIUM", "gaExtraDimensions": {"3":"false"} } }. Gog and Magog.