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JOURNEYS AND PLACES

NEW POETRY

- CONRAD AIKEN *Landscape West of Eden*
GERALD BULLETT *The Bubble*
NORMAN CAMERON *Winter House*
RICHARD CHURCH *Twelve Noon*
HUGH SYKES DAVIES *Petron*
CLIFFORD DYMENT *First Day and Straight or Curly?*
LL. WYN GRIFFITH *Branwen*
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FRANK KENDON *Tristram and The Cherry Minder*
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EDWIN MUIR *Variations on a Time Theme*
MARGOT RUDDOCK *The Lemon Tree*
ERNEST RHYS *Song of the Sun*
BLANAID SALKELD *The Fox's Covert*
DYLAN THOMAS *Twenty-five Poems*
W. J. TURNER *Jack and Jill and Songs and Incantations*

UNIFORM
WITH THIS
VOLUME

JOURNEYS AND PLACES

EDWIN MUIR

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TO
FLORA GRIERSON AND JOAN SHELMERDINE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

NINETEEN of the poems in this volume are new. The others were published some years ago in a hand-printed edition by the Samson Press under the title of *Six Poems*. All that remained of this edition was recently destroyed by fire, and partly for that reason, partly because these poems fit into the general scheme, I have included them here.

I should like to express the gratitude I have long felt to the Samson Press for the beautiful volume, now so unfortunately lost, in which they presented these poems, and my regret that so much of greater value should have been destroyed along with it. The six poems in question are *The Stationary Journey*, *Tristram's Journey*, *The Fall*, *Judas*, *The Enchanted Knight*, and *The Threefold Place*.

The references in one of the new poems may need some explanation, for Hölderlin is little known in this country except as the name of a German poet. The journey of which I try to give an imaginary account is one which he made in the summer of 1805. Hardly anything is known about it. He was at that time in Bordeaux as a tutor, having been driven from the house of the woman he loved in Germany by an angry husband. The woman was Susette Gontard, the wife of a Frankfort business man: she is the Diotima of the poems. In the midsummer heats of 1805 Hölderlin suddenly set out on foot from Bordeaux. He arrived in Germany several weeks later, ragged, emaciated, and out of his mind. It is recorded that he passed through Arles. Susette was dead when he arrived. He partly recovered, and during that short period wrote some of his finest poetry; but he presently relapsed again, and for the last forty years of his life suffered from a form of insanity.

The Journeys and Places in this collection should be taken as having a rough-and-ready psychological connotation rather than a strict temporal or spatial one. The first deal more or less with movements in time, and the second with places reached and the character of such places; but I have also included in the latter division imaginary situations which by a licence of the fancy may perhaps pass as places, that is as pauses in time. The division, however, is merely one of convenience.

Certain of the new poems have appeared in the *Spectator*, the *Listener*, the *London Mercury*, the *Criterion*, the *Modern Scot*, *Outlook*, and *Poetry* (Chicago), to the editors of which my acknowledgments are due.

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JOURNEYS

THE STATIONARY JOURNEY

HERE at my earthly station set,
The revolutions of the year
Bear me bound and only let
This astronomic world appear.

Yet if I could reverse my course
Through ever-deepening yesterday,
Retrace the path that led me here,
Could I find a different way?

I would see eld's frosted hair
Burn black again and passion rage
On to its source and die away
At last in childhood's tranquil age.

Charlemagne's death-palsied hand
Would move once more and never rest,
Until by deadlier weakness bound
It lay against his mother's breast.

Saint Augustine gives back his soul
To stumble in the endless maze,
After Jesus Venus stands
In the full centre of his gaze,

While still from death to life to naught
Gods, dynasties, and nations flit;
Though for a while among the sand
Unchanged the changing Pharaohs sit.

Fast the horizons empty. Now
Nothing's to see but wastes and rocks,
And on the thinning Asian plains
A few wild shepherds with their flocks. . . .

So, back or forward, still we strike
Through Time and touch its dreaded goal.
Eternity's the fatal flaw
Through which run out world, life and soul.

And there in transmutation's blank
No mortal mind has ever read,

Or told what soul and shape are, there,
Blue wave, red rose, and Caesar's head.

For there Immortal Being in
Solidity more pure than stone
Sleeps through the circle, pillar, arch,
Spiral, cone, and pentagon.

To the mind's eternity I turn,
With leaf, fruit, blossom on the spray,
See the dead world grow green within
Imagination's one long day.

There while outstretched upon the Tree
Christ looks across Jerusalem's towers,
Adam and Eve unfallen yet
Sleep side by side within their bowers.

There while fast in the Roman snare
The Carthaginian thinks of home,
A boy carefree in Carthage streets,
Hannibal fights a little Rome,

David and Homer tune their harps,
Gaza is up, sprung from its wreck,
Samson goes free, Delilah's shears
Join his strong ringlets to his neck.

A dream! the astronomic years
Patrolled by stars and planets bring
Time led in chains from post to post
Of the all-conquering Zodiac ring.

THE MOUNTAINS

THE days have closed behind my back
Since I came into these hills.
Now memory is a single field
One peasant tills and tills.

So far away, if I should turn
I know I could not find
That place again. These mountains make
The backward gaze half-blind,

Yet sharp my sight till it can catch

The ranges rising clear
Far in futurity's high-walled land;
But I am rooted here.

And do not know where lies my way,
Backward or forward. If I could
I'd leap Time's bound or turn and hide
From Time in my ancestral wood.

Double delusion! Here I'm held
By the mystery of the rock,
Must watch in a perpetual dream
The horizon's gates unlock and lock,

See on the harvest fields of Time
The mountains heaped like sheaves,
And the valleys opening out
Like a volume's turning leaves,

Dreaming of a peak whose height
Will show me every hill,
A single mountain on whose side
Life blooms for ever and is still.

THE HILL

AND turning north around the hill,
The flat sea like an adder curled,
And a flat rock amid the sea
That gazes towards the ugly town,
And on the sands, flat and brown,
A thousand naked bodies hurled
Like an army overthrown.

And turning south around the hill,
Fields flowering in the curling waves,
And shooting from the white sea-walls
Like a thousand waterfalls,
Rapturous divers never still.
Motion and gladness. O this hill
Was made to show these cliffs and caves.

So he thought. But he has never
Stood again upon that hill.
He lives far inland by a river

That somewhere else divides these lands,
But where or how he does not know,
Or where the countless pathways go
That turn and turn to reach the sea
On this or that side of the hill,
Or if, arriving, he will be
With the bright divers never still,
Or on the sad dishonoured sands.

THE ROAD

THERE is a road that turning always
Cuts off the country of Again.
Archers stand there on every side
And as it runs Time's deer is slain,
And lies where it has lain.

That busy clock shows never an hour.
All flies and all in flight must tarry.
The hunter shoots the empty air
Far on before the quarry,
Which falls though nothing's there to parry.

The lion couching in the centre
With mountain head and sunset brow
Rolls down the everlasting slope
Bones picked an age ago,
And the bones rise up and go.

There the beginning finds the end
Before beginning ever can be,
And the great runner never leaves
The starting and the finishing tree,
The budding and the fading tree.

There the ship sailing safe in harbour
Long since in many a sea was drowned.
The treasure burning in her hold
So near will never be found,
Sunk past all sound.

There a man on a summer evening
Reclines at ease upon his tomb
And is his mortal effigy.
And there within the womb,

The cell of doom,
The ancestral deed is thought and done,
And in a million Edens fall
A million Adams drowned in darkness,
For small is great and great is small,
And a blind seed all.

THE MYTHICAL JOURNEY

FIRST in the North. The black sea-tangle beaches,
Brine-bitter stillness, tablet strewn morass,
Tall women against the sky with heads covered,
The witch's house below the black-toothed mountain,
Wave-echo in the roofless chapel,
The twice-dead castle on the swamp-green mound,
Darkness at noon-day, wheel of fire at midnight,
The level sun and the wild shooting shadows.

How long ago? Then sailing up to summer
Over the edge of the world. Black hill of water,
Rivers of running gold. The sun! The sun!
Then the free summer isles.
But the ship hastened on and brought him to
The towering walls of life and the great kingdom.

Where long he wandered seeking that which sought him
Through all the little hills and shallow valleys.
One whose form and features,
Race and speech he knew not, shapeless, tongueless,
Known to him only by the impotent heart,
And whether at all on earth the place of meeting,
Beyond all knowledge. Only the little hills,
Head-high, and the winding valleys,
Turning, returning, till there grew a pattern,
And it was held. And there stood each in his station
With the hills between them. And that was the meaning.

Though sometimes through the wandering light and shadow
He thought he saw it a moment as he watched
The red deer walking by the riverside
At evening, when the bells were ringing,
And the bright stream leapt silent from the mountain
Far in the sunset. But as he looked, nothing
Was there but lights and shadows.

And then the vision
Of the conclusion without fulfilment.
The plain of glass and in the crystal grave
That which he had sought, that which had sought him,
Glittering in death. And all the dead scattered
Like fallen stars, clustered like leaves hanging
From the sad boughs of the mountainous tree of Adam
Planted far down in Eden. And on the hills
The gods reclined and conversed with each other
From summit to summit.

Conclusion
Without fulfilment. Thence the dream rose upward,
The living dream sprung from the dying vision,
Overarching all. Beneath its branches
He builds in faith and doubt his shaking house.

TRISTRAM'S JOURNEY

He strode across the room and flung
The letter down: 'You need not tell
Your treachery, harlot!' He was gone
Ere Iseult fainting fell.

He rode out from Tintagel gate,
He heard his charger slowly pace,
And ever hung a cloud of gnats
Three feet before his face.

At a wood's border he turned round
And saw the distant castle side,
Iseult looking towards the wood,
Mark's window gaping wide.

He turned again and slowly rode
Into the forest's flickering shade,
And now as sunk in waters green
Were armour, helm, and blade.

First he awoke with night around
And heard the wind, and woke again
At noon within a ring of hills,
At sunset on a plain.

And hill and plain and wood and tower

Passed on and on and turning came
Back to him, tower and wood and hill,
Now different, now the same.

There was a castle on a lake.
The castle doubled in the mere
Confused him, his uncertain eye
Wavered from there to here.

A window in the wall had held
Iseult upon a summer day,
While he and Palomide below
Circled in furious fray.

But now he searched the towers, the sward,
And struggled something to recall,
A stone, a shadow. Blank the lake,
And empty every wall.

He left his horse, left sword and mail,
And went into the woods and tore
The branches from the clashing trees
Until his rage was o'er.

And now he wandered on the hills
In peace. Among the shepherd's flocks
Often he lay so long, he seemed
One of the quiet rocks.

The shepherds called and made him run
Like a tame cur to round the sheep.
At night he lay among the dogs
Beside a well to sleep.

And he forgot Iseult and all.
Dagonet once and two came by
Like tall escutcheoned animals
With antlers towering high.

He snapped their spears, rove off their helms,
And beat them with his hands and sent
Them onward with a bitter heart,
But knew not where they went.

They came to Mark and told him how
A madman ruled the hinds and kept
The wandering sheep. Mark haled him to
Tintagel while he slept.

He woke and saw King Mark at chess
And Iseult with her maids at play,
The arras where the scarlet knights
And ladies stood all day.

None knew him. In the garden once
Iseult walked in the afternoon,
Her hound leapt up and licked his face,
Iseult fell in a swoon.

There as he leaned the misted grass
Cleared blade by blade below his face,
The round walls hardened as he looked,
And he was in his place.

HÖLDERLIN'S JOURNEY

WHEN Hölderlin started from Bordeaux
He was not mad but lost in mind,
For time and space had fled away
With her he had to find.

'The morning bells rang over France
From tower to tower. At noon I came
Into a maze of little hills,
Head-high and every hill the same.

'A little world of emerald hills,
And at their heart a faint bell tolled;
Wedding or burial, who could say?
For death, unseen, is bold.

'Too small to climb, too tall to show
More than themselves, the hills lay round.
Nearer to her, or farther? They
Might have stretched to the world's bound.

'A shallow candour was their all,
And the mean riddle, How to tally
Reality with such appearance,
When in the nearest valley

'Perhaps already she I sought,
She, sought and seeker, had gone by,
And each of us in turn was trapped
By simple treachery.

'The evening brought a field, a wood.
I left behind the hills of lies,
And watched beside a mouldering gate
A deer with its rock-crystal eyes.

'On either pillar of the gate
A deer's head watched within the stone.
The living deer with quiet look
Seemed to be gazing on

'Its pictured death—and suddenly
I knew, Diotima was dead,
As if a single thought had sprung
From the cold and the living head.

'That image held me and I saw
All moving things so still and sad,
But till I came into the mountains
I know I was not mad.

'What made the change? The hills and towers
Stood otherwise than they should stand,
And without fear the lawless roads
Ran wrong through all the land.

'Upon the swarming towns of iron
The bells hailed down their iron peals,
Above the iron bells the swallows
Glided on iron wheels.

'And there I watched in one confounded
The living and the unliving head.
Why should it be? For now I know
Diotima was dead

'Before I left the starting place;
Empty the course, the garland gone,
And all that race as motionless
As these two heads of stone.'

So Hölderlin mused for thirty years
On a green hill by Tübingen,
Dragging in pain a broken mind
And giving thanks to God and men.

PLACES

THE FALL

WHAT shape had I before the Fall?
What hills and rivers did I seek?
What were my thoughts then? And of what
Forgotten histories did I speak

To my companions? Did our eyes
From their foredestined watching-place
See Heaven and Earth one land, and range
Therein through all of Time and Space?

Did I see Chaos and the Word,
The suppliant Dust, the moving Hand,
Myself, the Many and the One,
The dead, the living Land?

That height cannot be scaled again.
My fall was like the fall that burst
Old Lear's heart on the summer sward.
Where I lie now I stood at first.

The ancient pain returns anew.
Where was I ere I came to man?
What shape among the shapes that once
Agelong through endless Eden ran?

Did I see there the dragon brood
By streams their emerald scales unfold,
While from their amber eyeballs fell
Soft-rayed the rustling gold?

It must be that one time I walked
By rivers where the dragon drinks;
But this side Eden's wall I meet
On every twisting road the Sphinx

Whose head is like a wooden prow
That forward leaning dizzily
Over the seas of whitened worlds
Has passed and nothing found to see,

Whose breast, a flashing ploughshare, once
Cut the rich furrows wrinkled in

Venusberg's sultry underworld
And busy trampled fields of sin,

Whose salt-white brow like crusted fire
Smiles ever, whose cheeks are red as blood,
Whose dolphin back is flowered yet
With wrack that swam upon the Flood.

Since then in antique attitudes
I swing the bright two-handed sword
And strike and strike the marble brow,
Wide-eyed and watchful as a bird,

Smite hard between the basilisk eyes,
And carve the snaky dolphin side,
Until the coils are cloven in two
And free the glittering pinions glide.

Like quicksilver the scales slip down,
Upon the air the spirit flies,
And so I build me Heaven and Hell
To buy my bartered Paradise.

While from a legendary height
I see a shadowy figure fall,
And not far off another beats
With his bare hands on Eden's wall.

Troy I

HE all that time among the sewers of Troy
Scouring for scraps. A man so venerable
He might have been Priam's self, but Priam was dead,
Troy taken. His arms grew meagre as a boy's,
And all that flourished in that hollow famine
Was his long, white, round beard. Oh, sturdily
He swung his staff and sent the bold rats skipping
Across the scurfy hills and worm-wet valleys,
Crying: 'Achilles, Ajax, turn and fight!
Stop, cowards!' Till his cries, dazed and confounded,
Flew back at him with: 'Coward, turn and fight!'
And the wild Greeks yelled round him.
Yet he withstood them, a brave, mad old man,
And fought the rats for Troy. The light was rat-grey,
The hills and dells, the common drain, his Simois,

Rat-grey. Mysterious shadows fell
Affrighting him whenever a cloud offended
The sun up in the other world. The rat-hordes,
Moving, were grey dust shifting in grey dust.
Proud history has such sackends. He was taken
At last by some chance robber seeking treasure
Under Troy's riven roots. Dragged to the surface.
And there he saw Troy like a burial ground
With tumbled walls for tombs, the smooth sward wrinkled
As Time's last wave had long since passed that way,
The sky, the sea, Mount Ida and the islands,
No sail from edge to edge, the Greeks clean gone.
They stretched him on a rock and wrenched his limbs,
Asking: 'Where is the treasure?' till he died.

TROY II

I^{VE} often wandered in the fields of Troy
Beneath the walls, seen Paris as a boy
Before youth made him vicious. Hector's smile
And untried lion-look can still beguile
My heart of peace. That was before the fall,
When high still stood Troy's many-tunnelled wall.
Now I am shackled to a Grecian dolt,
Pragmatic, race-proud as a pampered colt.
All here is strange to me, the country kings,
This cold aspiring race, the mountain-rings
On every side. They are like toppling snow-wreaths
Heaped on Troy's hearth. Yet still an ember breathes
Below to breed its crop of yearly ills,
The flowering trees on the unreal hills.
These bring Troy back. And when along the stone
The lizard flickers, thirty years I'm thrown
At odds and stand again where once I stood,
And see Troy's towers burn like a winter wood.
For then into their country all in flame,
From their uncounted caves the lizards came
And looked and melted in a glaze of fire,
While all the wall rustled and sang with ire
As heat ate all. I saw calamity
In action there, and it will always be
Before me in the lizard on the stone.

But in my heart a deeper spite has grown,
This, that they would not arm us, and preferred
Troy's ruin lest a slave should snatch a sword
And fight even at their side. Yet in that fall
They lost no more than we who lost our all.
Troy was our breath, our soul, and all our wit,

Who did not own it but were owned by it.
We must have fought for Troy. We were its hands,
And not like them mere houses, flocks, and lands.
We were the Trojans; they at best could swell
A pompous or a bloody spectacle.
And so we watched with dogs outside the ring
Heroes fall cheap as meat, king slaughtering king
Like fatted cattle. Yet they did not guess
How our thoughts wantoned with their wantonness.
They were too high for that; they guessed too late,
When full had grown our knowledge and our hate.
And then they thought, with arms as strong as theirs,
We too might make a din with swords and spears,
And while they feared the Greeks they feared us most,
And ancient Troy was lost and we were lost.

Now an old man—why should that one regret,
When all else has grown tranquil, shake me yet?
Of all my life I know one thing, I know,
Before I was a slave, long, long ago,
I lost a sword in a forgotten fight,
And ever since my arm has been too light
For this dense world, and shall grow lighter still.
Yet through that rage shines Troy's untroubled hill,
And many a tumbled wall and vanished tree
Remains, as if in spite, a happy memory.

JUDAS

JUDAS ISCARIOT drearily
Wheeling round the deadly tree:
Adders sleep
Awake and keep
Their watch, encircling scale to scale
The tree of bale.
From whose cleft fastnesses glare out
Basilisks furnace-eyed,
Within whose shade like matted hair,
About, about,
Pronged hornets cruise and glide,
Sting, sting the glassy air.

And all around the labouring ground is torn;
Hoof and horn
Thrice-deep their hieroglyphs have lined,

Lead in and in his mind,
And wind him in a maze forlorn.
Judas, awake and pass
Dryfoot the charmed morass,
Break the bright fence of glass,
Lift up your eyes!
Asleep in light great-limbed Judaea lies;
Dark wood and sunny hill
Will let you where you will,
And by some road perhaps young Judas waits,
Not found yet by his twelve doom-bearing mates.

*O that all time had stopped then, had rolled back
A little way, let Judas out again!
I saw Him stand in the Garden, by the snare
The dove-eyed Decoy. Had I taken my life
Just then it would have been in time. O that
I had stumbled and fallen then, died suddenly!
I stumbled and did not fall; the vast earth turned,
Then stopped awry, half-way, all mad and strange,
The ponderous heavens heeled over, stars, rocks, soldiers,
The very roots run wrong, locked wrong forever!
Now Time beats on, all changed, and yet the same.*

Judas Iscariot wearily,
Wheeling round the darkening tree:
Now winds the sting
Deeper,
Now the faint fairy death-bells ring,
Now the mind's surly keeper
Makes the thirty death-coins spin,
Winding Judas in:
*With such thin-edged unearthly sound
As ours the stones cry from the ground:
The little stones that cut the feet
Of travellers going up the hill,
Of sad and merry, lame and fleet,
And cannot show
Compassion though
Their little arrows striking make
With such mean war some heart to break
That thought to die undaunted on the hill.*

Now all the air is still.

He chose, and I was chosen. No one knew Him.

Judas Iscariot by the tree.

MERLIN

O MERLIN in your crystal cave
Deep in the diamond of the day,
Will there ever be a singer
Whose music will smooth away
The furrow drawn by Adam's finger
Across the meadow and the wave?
Or a runner who'll outrun
Man's long shadow driving on,
Break through the gate of memory
And hang the apple on the tree?
Will your magic ever show
The sleeping bride shut in her bower,
The day wreathed in its mound of snow
And Time locked in his tower?

THE ENCHANTED KNIGHT

LULLED by La Belle Dame Sans Merci he lies
In the bare wood below the blackening hill.
The plough drives nearer now, the shadow flies
Past him across the plain, but he lies still.

Long since the rust its gardens here has planned,
Flowering his armour like an autumn field.
From his sharp breast-plate to his iron hand
A spider's web is stretched, a phantom shield.

When footsteps pound the turf beside his ear
Armies pass through his dream in endless line,
And one by one his ancient friends appear;
They pass all day, but he can make no sign.

When a bird cries within the silent grove
The long-lost voice goes by, he makes to rise
And follow, but his cold limbs never move,
And on the turf unstirred his shadow lies.

But if a withered leaf should drift
Across his face and rest, the dread drops start

Chill on his forehead. Now he tries to lift
The insulting weight that stays and breaks his heart.

MARY STUART

My brother Jamie lost me all,
Fell cleverly to make me fall,
And with a sure reluctant hand
Stole my life and took my land.

It was jealousy of the womb
That let me in and shut him out,
Honesty, kingship, all shut out,
While I enjoyed the royal room.

My father was his, but not my mother,
We were, yet were not, sister, brother,
To reach my mother he had to strike
Me down and leap that deadly dyke.

Over the wall I watched him move
At ease through all the guarded grove,
Then hack, and hack, and hack it down,
Until that ruin was his own.

IBSEN

SOLLNESS climbs the dwindling tower
And all the hills fall flat.
Hilda Wandel down below
Now is no bigger than her hat.

Sollness steps into the air.
All Norway lies below him, Brand
Frowning on the rusty heath,
Peer's half-witted fairyland,

Nora stumbling from a door,

Hedda burning a book,
Doctor Stockman fishing up
Bacilli from the brook,

Rebecca circling in the weir,
The Rat Wife whipping round a wall;
The Pillars of Society
Fall thundering with his fall.

And flashing by his house he sees it
Split from earth to sky,
And his wife and children sitting
Naked to every passer-by.

THE TOWN BETRAYED

OUR homes are eaten out by Time,
Our lawns strewn with our listless sons,
Our harlot daughters lean and watch
The ships crammed down with shells and guns.

Like painted prows far out they lean:
A world behind, a world before.
The leaves are covering up our hills,
Neptune has locked the shore.

Our yellow harvests lie forlorn
And there we wander like the blind,
Returning from the golden field
With famine in our mind.

Far inland now the glittering swords
In order rise, in order fall,
In order on the dubious field
The dubious trumpets call.

Yet here there is no word, no sign
But quiet murder in the street.
Our leaf-light lives are spared or taken
By men obsessed and neat.

We stand beside our windows, see
In order dark disorder come,
And prentice killers duped by Death
Bring and not know our doom.

Our cattle wander at their will.
To-day a horse pranced proudly by.
The dogs run wild. Vultures and kites
Wait in the towers for us to die.

At evening on the parapet
We sit and watch the sun go down,
Reading the landscape of the dead,
The sea, the hills, the town.

There our ancestral ghosts are gathered.
Fierce Agamemnon's form I see,
Watching as if his tents were Time
And Troy Eternity.

We must take order, bar our gates,
Fight off these phantoms. Inland now
Achilles, Siegfried, Lancelot
Have sworn to bring us low.

THE UNFAMILIAR PLACE

I DO not know this place,
Though here for long I have run
My changing race
In the moon and the sun,
Within this wooded glade
Far up the mountainside
Where Christ and Caesar died
And the first man was made.

I have seen this turning light
For many a day.
I have not been away
Even in dreams of the night.
In the unnumbered names
My fathers gave these things
I seek a kingdom lost,
Sleeping with folded wings.
I have questioned many a ghost
Far inland in my dreams,
Enquired of fears and shames
The dark and winding way
To the day within my day.

And aloft I have stood
And given my eyes their fill,
Have watched the bad and the good
Go up and down the hill,
The peasants on the plain
Ploughing the fields red,
The roads running alone,
The ambush in the wood,
The victim walking on,
The misery-blackened door
That never will open again,
The tumblers at the fair,
The watchers on the stair,
Cradle and bridal-bed,
The living and the dead
Scattered on every shore.

All this I have seen
Twice over, there and here,
Knocking at dead men's gates
To ask the living way,
And viewing this upper scene.
But I am balked by fear
And what my lips say
To drown the voice of fear.
The earthly day waits.

THE PLACE OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

WALKING on the harvest hills of Night
Time's elder brother, the great husbandman,
Goes on his ancient round. His massive lantern,
Simpler than the first fashion, lights the rows
Of stooks that lean like little golden graves
Or tasselled barges foundering low
In the black stream.

He sees that all is ready,
The trees all stripped, the orchards bare, the nests
Empty. All things grown
Homeless and whole. He sees the hills of grain,
A day all yellow and red, flowers, fruit, and corn.
The soft hair harvest-golden in darkness.
Children playing
In the late night-black day of Time. He sees
The lover standing by the trysting-tree

Who'll never find his love till all are gathered
In light or darkness. The unnumbered living
Numbered and bound and sheaved.

O could that day
Break on this side of Time!

A wind shakes
The loaded sheaves, the feathery tomb bursts open,
And yellow hair is poured along the ground
From the bent neck of Time. The woods cry:
This is the resurrection.

O little judgment days lost in the dark,
Seen by the bat and screech-owl!
He goes on,
Bearing within his ocean-heart the jewel,
The day all yellow and red wherein a sun
Shines on the endless harvest lands of Time.

THE SOLITARY PLACE

I

O I SHALL miss
With one small breath these centuries
Of harvest-home uncounted!
I have known
The mead, the bread,
And the mounds of grain
As half my riches. But the fields will change,
And their harvest would be strange
If I could return. I should know again
Only the lint-white stubble plain
From which the summer-painted birds have flown
A year's life on.

But I can never
See with these eyes the double-threaded river
That runs through life and death and death and life,
Weaving one scene. Which I and not I
Blindfold have crossed, I and not I
Will cross again, my face, my feet, my hands
Gleaned from lost lands
To be sown again.

O certain prophecy,
And faithful tragedy,
Furnished with scenery of sorrow and strife,
The Cross and the Flood
And Babel's towers
And Abel's blood
And Eden's bowers,
Where I and not I
Lived and questioned and made reply:
None else to ask or make reply.

II

If there is none else to ask or reply
But I and not I,
And when I stretch out my hand my hand comes towards me
To pull me across to me and back to me,
If my own mind, questioning, answers me
And there is no other answer to me,
If all that I see,
Woman and man and beast and rock and sky,
Is a flat image shut behind an eye,
And only my thoughts can meet me or pass me or follow me,
O then I am alone,
I, many and many in one,
A lost player upon a hill
On a sad evening when the world is still,
The house empty, brother and sister gone
Beyond the reach of sight, or sound of any cry,
Into the bastion of the mind, behind the shutter of the eye.

THE PRIVATE PLACE

THIS stranger holding me from head to toe,
This deaf usurper I shall never know,
Who lives in household quiet in my unrest,
And of my troubles weaves his tranquil nest,
Who never smiles or frowns or bows his head,
And while I rage is insolent as the dead,
Composed, indifferent, thankless, faithful, he
Is my firm ally and sole enemy.

Come then, take up the cleansing blade once more

That drives all difference out. The fabled shore
Sees us again. Now the predestined fight,
The ancestral stroke, the opening gash of light:
Side by side myself by myself slain,
The wakening stir, the eyes loaded with gain
Of ocean darkness, the rising hand in hand,
I with myself at one, the changed land,
My home, my country! But this precious seal
Will slowly crumble, the thief Time will steal
Soft-footed bit by bit this boundless treasure
Held in four hands. I shall regain my measure,
My old measure again, shrink to a room, a shelf
Where decently I lay away myself,
Become the anxious warder, groan and fret
My thankless service to this martinet
Who sleeps and sleeps and rules. I hold this life
Only in strife and the aftertaste of strife
With this dull champion and thick-witted king.
But at one word he'll jump into the ring.

THE UNATTAINED PLACE

WE have seen the world of good deeds spread
With its own sky above it
A length away
Our whole day,
Yet have not crossed from our false kindred.
We could have leapt straight from the womb to bliss
And never lost it after,
Been cradled, baptized, bred in that which is
And never known this frontier laughter,
But that we hate this place so much,
And hating love it,
And that our weakness is such
That it must clutch
All weakness to it and can never release
The bound and battling hands,
The one hand bound, the other fighting
The fellow-foe it's tied to, righting
Weakness with weakness, rending, reuniting
The torn and incorruptible bands
That bind all these united and disunited lands,—
While there lies our predestined power and ease,
There, in those natural fields, life-fostering seas.

If we could be more weak
Than weakness' self, if we could break
This static hold with a mere blank, with nothing,
If we could take
Memory and thought and longing
Up by the roots and cast them behind our back,
If we could stop this ceaseless ringing and singing
That keeps our fingers flying in hate and love,
If we could cut off,
If we could unmake
What we were made to make:

But that we then should lose
Our loss,
Our kingdom's crown,
And to great Nothing toss
Our last left jewel down,
The light that long before us was,
The land we did not own,
The choice we could not choose.
For once we played upon that other hill,
And from that house we come.
There is a line around it still
And all inside is home.
Once there we pored on every stone and tree
In a long dream through the unsetting day,
And looking up could nothing see
But the right way on every way.
And lost it after,
No foot knows where,
To find this mourning air,
Commemorative laughter,
The mask, the doom
Written backwards,
The illegible tomb
Pointing backwards,
The reverse side
Where strength is weakness,
The body, pride,
The soul, a sickness.

Yet from that missing heaven outspread
Here all we read.

THE THREEFOLD PLACE

THIS is the place. The autumn field is bare,
The row lies half-cut all the afternoon,
The birds are hiding in the woods, the air
Dreams fitfully outworn with waiting.

Soon

Out of the russet woods in amber mail
Heroes come walking through the yellow sheaves,
Walk on and meet. And then a silent gale
Scatters them on the field like autumn leaves.

Yet not a feathered stalk has stirred, and all
Is still again, but for the birds that call
On every warrior's head and breast and shield.
Sweet cries and horror on the field.

One field. I look again and there are three:
One where the heroes fell to rest,
One where birds make of iron limbs a tree,
Helms for a nest,
And one where grain stands up like armies drest.

THE ORIGINAL PLACE

*This is your native land.
By ancient inheritance
Your lives are free, though a hand
Strange to you set you here,
Ordained this liberty
And gave you hope and fear
And the turning maze of chance.*

To weave our tale of Time
Rhyme is knit to rhyme
So close, it's like a proof
That nothing else can be
But this one tapestry
Where gleams under the woof
A giant Fate half-grown,
Imprisoned and its own.

*To your unquestioned rule
No bound is set. You were
Made for this work alone.
This is your native air.*

*You could not leave these fields.
And when Time is grown
Beneath your countless hands
They say this kingdom shall
Be stable and beautiful.*

But at its centre stands
A stronghold never taken,
Stormed at hourly in vain,
Held by a force unknown
That neither answers nor yields.
There our arms are shaken,
There the hero was slain
That bleeds upon our shields.

THE SUFFICIENT PLACE

SEE, all the silver roads wind in, lead in
To this still place like evening. See, they come
Like messengers bearing gifts to this little house,
And this great hill worn down to a patient mound,
And these tall trees whose motionless branches bear
An aeon's summer foliage, leaves so thick
They seem to have robbed a world of shade, and kept
No room for all these birds that line the boughs
With heavier riches, leaf and bird and leaf.
Within the doorway stand
Two figures, Man and Woman, simple and clear
As a child's first images. Their manners are
Such as were known before the earliest fashion
Taught the Heavens guile. The room inside is like
A thought that needed thus much space to write on,
Thus much, no more. Here all's sufficient. None
That comes complains, and all the world comes here,
Comes, and goes out again, and comes again.
This is the Pattern, these the Prototypes,
Sufficient, strong, and peaceful. All outside
From end to end of the world is tumult. Yet
These roads do not turn in here but writhe on
Round the wild earth for ever. If a man
Should chance to find this place three times in Time
His eyes are changed and make a summer silence
Amid the tumult, seeing the roads wind in
To their still home, the house and the leaves and birds.

THE DREAMT-OF PLACE

I SAW two towering birds cleaving the air
And thought they were Paolo and Francesca
Leading the lost, whose wings like silver billows
Rippled the azure sky from shore to shore,
They were so many. The nightmare god was gone
Who roofed their pain, the ghastly glen lay open,
The hissing lake was still, the fiends were fled,
And only some few headless, footless mists
Crawled out and in the iron-hearted caves.
Like light's unearthly eyes the lost looked down,
And heaven was filled and moving. Every height
On earth was thronged and all that was stared upward.
I thought, This is the reconciliation,
This is the day after the Last Day,
The lost world lies dreaming within its coils,
Grass grows upon the surly sides of Hell,
Time has caught Time and holds it fast for ever.
And then I thought, Where is the knife, the butcher,
The victim? Are they all here in their places?
Hid in this harmony? But there was no answer.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Minor variations in spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[End of *Journeys and Places*, by Edwin Muir]