Poems from the Dark Times

by

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Somewhere in England
(corn=wheat)

The birds were flying in a wide circle
over the cornfield -
The tall stooks waited in their level rows
and the stubble was
yellow between.

Beyond the field some trees were dark and
quiet under the grey sky;
And I? I stood, my body rooted, heavy
on the brown cart track,
Yet, strange it was, that the pure breezes
blowing, passed on their way
and found no obstacle.

1947? - 48?

A Lonely Man

A lonely man goes on his restless way.
His anxious spirit wanders, grasping, groping.
Out through his busy talk and action flows
The life he clutches - so the void engulfs him.

A man alone goes on his quiet way,
His mind at rest, his spirit undemanding.
Gently withdrawn and stripped of all possession,
Deep in his emptiness he finds the peace of God.

1947

CONFIRMATION
SEPTEMBER 25TH, 1947

The strong slow pressure of a hand
And I become a shaft of darkness
Piercing the silent earth.

The clear words sound in heart and mind.
The hidden seed invades the dark.
Passive, the dark receives it.

Seed of the spirit, flame of life,
How will you grow?
Make room, my soul, make room.
Love in unceasing quiet.

Step by Step

Step by step into the heart of sorrow
Thou, Lord, has led me, emptying all my world.
Strong and inexorable while I sank in weakness,
Deaf to thy voice, down into blackness hurled.

Though through my guilt and anger, deep untroubled
Flows the dark water of thy purpose high
Yet I dissolve and know the fear and horror
Of barren souls that cannot live nor die.

But in this moment as I cease to struggle,
I think I glimpse through clouds of fear and sin
A point of utter stillness in the whirlwind.
Blindly I lay my stricken will therein.

Slowly my eyes now open in the darkness,
Slowly my life stirs in the inward part.
Here am I rooted - Can this be my sorrow?
"Yes, child, thy sorrow, now living in my heart."

1948

Today Time was my Master

Today time was my master - restless, afraid
I clutched and grasped at action and reward.
Impatience, even anger caught and ruled me -
Ship without rudder, scabbard without sword.

But now, when all are sleeping, in the darkness
My candle's flame is shadowed on the wall -
And slowly in my heart awakes the knowledge
"Nothing is done, O lord, nothing at all."

Today I woke with strength and calm, unhurried,
I met the pattern of the flowing hours.
The setting sun brought comfort of achievement,
The praise of friends, the sense of growing powers.

Yet now again I gaze, withdrawn in stillness.
The flowing flame is mirrored in my soul,
And so once more I hear the healing message,
"Nothing is done - nothing - for life is whole."

1948

Sometimes in Spring

Sometimes in spring it seems to me
That I become a chestnut tree!
Or else, if you will have it so,
The chestnut tree in me doth grow.

In February how black the bough
Yet tipped with hint of sticky brown.
Already in my stirring heart
I sense the new life's hidden crown.

In March with joy I watch the buds,
I feel the thickly swelling life,
Rich with the coming burst of green,
Their beauty pierces as a knife.

And now the world around is new
And bursting from the pregnant bud
The chestnut's yellow shoot springs out
To greet the sun and fire my blood.

From bud to leaf the time is short
From yellow shoot to green star spray
The sap flows strongly now - and soon
Will bloom the glorious flowers of May.

Sometimes in spring it seems to me
That I become a chestnut tree.
1948

For E, J, N, and F

There are four rocks in this my house
Four swiftly flowing streams
Four lives in which a dancer moves
Both waking and in dreams.

I would I had a minstrel's voice
To praise with love and art
These valiant four whose light and dark
Are bulwarks to my heart.

One has the strength of red and black
Shot through with shining white.
In one deep blues of sea and sky
Give birth to golden light.

The next is rich brown earth, wherein
The green elf-stone is found.
And in the fourth bright silver threads
Gleam on a wine dark ground.

Four separate lives, yet, one in joy
Turned to a single end
And - wonder to my thankful heart,
Each is to me - a friend.

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