

Poetry Series

john coldwell
- poems -

Publication Date:
2019

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

john coldwell(18th June 1948)

Only recently started writing poetry. Previously only wrote verse to celebrate special occasions, but increasingly realise that people are more likely to listen/publish your views if they are in verse. Interested in a wide variety of literature and think it important that poetry should have good structure, rhyme and rhythm.

If you read my poems please comment on them and give a score, and if you have work of your own you would like me to read then I will reciprocate
Thank you.

Always welcome comment on what I have submitted so far.

A Walk In The Country

My stick swings like a pendulum,
And it ticks like a clock,
My boots grind the gravel,
And stay firm on the rock.
Sunlight on hillsides,
And scent in the air.
Ah, a walk in the country,
A walk to nowhere.

But why must I carry,
The guilt of the day?
This lingering work ethic,
Will not go away.
Don't I deserve it?
The pleasures I see.
Seems the joys of retirement,
Don't come easily.

Troubling moods swirl all around me,
Oh, I keep them at bay.
But like the midges and greenfly,
I can't waft them away.
The Cowslip may mock me
The Columbine too,
O course! Their work is to be...
And not to do!

john coldwell

A Day In Africa

By day we search the hidden veldt,
In fear of what we'll meet,
The night performs it's scorpion dance,
Beneath our victim feet.

Looms vast the tusk's silhouette,
And chill the jackal's bark,
We laugh at giraffes circus like,
All set for Noah's ark.

Beware the invisible crocodile,
We have come upon too soon,
And the hippo's absent minded yawn,
Which swallowed our afternoon.

We saw the jaundiced fever trees,
Where tiny demons swarm,
And recoiled from a centipede,
Which offered far less harm.

john coldwell

A Funeral

We passed by the silent sliding curtain,
That closed the final act upon her life.
Through the florist's dank smell of the courtyard,
And passed wilting flowers in rusty vases,
Into the bright, insensitive, sunlight.

Amongst the black and gleaming cortège cars,
In dark suits and modest hats,
We spoke soft words of present grief,
And some with hugs of comfort,
Said their slow, and sad, farewells.

She was of our generation,
Unassuming soul- wife and mother,
Extravagant of her to go before us,
Or so the shock has made it seem,
As we envy her, her dignity in death.

I had a vision on that day,
When reality briefly lost it's grip,
I saw the gathered congregation,
In rigid transparent silhouette,
Their gaze affixed upon her fresh flowered casket.

I was given then the eyes of God,
And saw each gathered mortal soul,
As wilting flowers in rusty vases,
Amongst the courtyard's sweet dank florist's smell
And all affronted by her freshness in her death.

john coldwell

A Godless Christmas

Bethlehem's star still marks the place,
Where an empty manger now holds stage.
We'll have no saviour for the human race,
No need for God, in our new age.
We unbundled the gift in swaddling clothes,
We cut it with a knife,
What is this gift so rudely wrapped?
O, 'tis only everlasting life.

Away, you child they call the Christ,
Who cheated Herod's sword,
Your gift it comes too highly priced,
Your presence brings discord.
We will not have this God made man,
That He, mankind, may damn.
We will not look on Calvary,
Away, you sacrificial Lamb!

Ox, ass and shepherds in woe depart,
From that fading angelic light,
Only gloom and emptiness in man's heart,
And winter's now far darker night.
Kings bring gifts, unwanted now,
For there is no-one to receive,
To the god of Gold we already bow,
This, and every Xmas eve.

The heaven sent gift we have declined,
For His cross we have put our own.
And for all the ills of humankind,
We must now ourselves atone.
No joy in our world this Winterville
Only grief to men on Earth
What now your echoing soul fulfil?
What now will be of worth?

john coldwell

A Haunting

Dare you, today, accompany me,
To the murky wells of memory,
It's said we don't remember pain,
We cannot, by recall, wince again,
But there are other hurts and lurking fears,
That return in full, their sobs and tears.

The lid that caps that caustic pot,
Ill fits, and spills at any jot,
Must it, it's porous prison, once more leave,
And make again the heart bereave?
O that time would fade the dreaded thing!
Or some sacred salve remove it's sting!

At night in dreams, you know when,
We're taken back to madness then,
Our smiling valet's waiting there,
With tailored suit of grey despair,
And misty mirror for me to see,
The reflection there is truly me!

john coldwell

A Nightly Halloween

Dare you, today, accompany me,
To the murky wells of memory,
It's said we don't remember pain,
We cannot, by recall, wince again,
But there are other hurts and lurking fears,
That return in full, their sobs and tears.

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And misty mirror for me to see,
The reflection there is truly me!

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A Remembrance Day

All our veterans are hero's, especially the dead one's.
Paper poppy'd, toy soldiered, military bearing,
I'm there to pretend that I might have been like them.
Remembering the glorious dead that I know nothing of.
Grainy, monochrome, unknown soldiers in lumpy uniforms,
Bayonets fixed, jerkily, unhesitatingly,
Swarming out of their trenches,
And over the top, into a shell shocked sky.

Except that one, indistinguishable in the charge,
Was stopped, arrested, on that ridge of life and death,
And slumped back motionless,
In a flickering moonscape of mud.
The first to contact the enemy, a speculative bullet or shrapnel?
Not for him the tea and foxhole,
Not for him memories of action,
They recover the fallen from the front, not the rear.

I wonder about that soldier,
Did they return and tenderly remove him?
Are his lifeless remains amongst the white stones of Ypres,
Still proudly to attention on the field of battle?
Or was he not there, that unknown soldier?
Am I the only one in which a coward can find space to reside?
Does he yet sit alone in his chair
On remembrance day?
The nurse says He never talks about the war.

john coldwell

A Visit To Rome

Buongiorno, Benvenuto!
At last to Rome you've come,
At last you paths have found it,
This in your heart is home.
Amongst it's ancient maestrie,
Let eyes and spirit stroll,
In shady Trastevere's
Cobbled alleyways of the soul.

'Tis I that stands on Trajan's Mount,
His ashes at my feet,
His victory column in death does show,
The Emperor's last defeat..
From here I see the slaughterhouse,
That drew the vagrant crowd,
To see my brothers tortured lives,
Played out in death unbowed.

Now who keeps the city Gate?
Now who holds the keys?
The glory that did once make Rome,
Was deaf to martyrs pleas.
But theirs is the Eternal City,
And this a bouldered ruin,
It's broken columns are rotten teeth,
It's pride is it's undoing.

Hard by stands our brother Paul,
In Marcus Aurelius's stead.
Who in this place at Nero's wish,
He did treacherously behead.
Now who holds the city gate?
And now who sets men free?
Nay not the Epaphroditus sword,
I, St Peter, hold the key.

Beneath Bernini's baldachin,
There they say I lie,

Thus all the pomp of Papacy,
Is gathered here on high.
Let all the earth make pilgrimage,
Let every soul pursue,
A path, to this, The Lord's House,
And never mind the queue

john coldwell

Caput Mundi

Buongiorno, Benvenuto!
At last to Rome you've come,
At last you paths have found it,
This in your heart is home.
Amongst it's ancient maestrie,
Let eyes and spirit stroll,
In shady Trastevere's
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For Brian

A few motes of dust in a bottle,
Made dainty with a blue ribbon bow,
The mortal remains of a someone,
I had occasion to know,

I, and ninety nine others,
Have what is left of a friend.
We are charged with the weighty burden
Of ministering a suitable end.

I didn't think when I took them.
That they would so trouble my heart.
Of the deeper grief of another,
I become suddenly a part.

I am forced to turn to a memory,
A sentiment recalled from the past,
I seek for an appropriate moment,
That will join the first to the last.

Warm handshake and big hearted smile,
Is all that my mind's eye can see.
I'm glad of this happy remembrance,
and in peace these ashes will be.

But bitter words and sour rancour,
Whatever the reason why,
Will not scatter like dust in the sunshine,
But seethe, toss and won't die.

Now my soul has received such instruction,
To all I meet I will be,
Big hearted and kind as my friend was,
Until the bottle's contents are me.

john coldwell

For My Loved One

Let the children of your anxious mind,
In other arms their comfort find,
And come yourself away with me,
Beyond the palms and limpid sea.

To where the crystal drops of rain,
And wading birds in silent train,
Stir placid ponds of liquid balm,
To bathe your troubled soul in calm.

O, look beyond the daily dread,
O, seek out nature's joys instead,
Join the curlew in it's cry,
And in the purple heather lie.

Does the joyful coloured flower,
In troubled heart, both shrink and cower?
No, it faces God, and smiles for Him,
And sings for glory, a sweet victory Hymn!

john coldwell

For Security Purposes...

My call was important, the voice repeatedly said,
For the twenty or so minutes the phone was stuck to my head,
And I was officiously told,
In tones stern and bold,
That I was to be recorded,
For training, and security purposes.

Imagine my delight, now quite late at night,
When I was presented with the choice of five options,
But none suited me,
So I just pressed number three,
And was disconnected, in mysterious circumstances.

I don't regret the rude word, but I doubt that they heard,
My opinion of the service they offered.
I had ready a mouthful,
That I think would have been helpful,
For their training and security purposes.

Then again, the call was just fine,
Even though nine, nine, nine,
For the burglar's security purposes!

john coldwell

Give No Thought For Tomorrow...

He was living under the shadow,
On the x ray of his lung.

On the appointed day for the answer,
The consultant remarked, 'It's not cancer,
Not nearly as bad as we painted.'

Surprisingly, the patient fainted.

Now perhaps there is a lesson here,
That might dispel some anxious fear,
Whatever it is that you've been told,
None can know what fate may hold,
That dread that holds your life in thrall
May simply not happen to you at all.

john coldwell

Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder

I was once both lost for words,
And incapable of speech,
I had paucity of verbs,
And antonyms were out of reach.
But then, in fortune's hand, there came gift,
A lexicon of splendour,
And now I say just what I wish,
Thanks to Gustavus Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder.

Would you bathe in Mercury's light,
Of eloquence and spark?
Is there timely wit in your repartee,
And in every casual remark?
Do they listen like the felon does,
As the judge pronounces guilt, or,
Perhaps you need a copy of,
Gustavus Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder?

Would you, your sweetheart's love to own,
And take the Romeo's part?
Who's ardent soliloquy 'neath moonlit sky,
Shall cage her fluttering heart?
Then be advised my lovelorn friend,
The one way to allure her,
Is with flowers, ring and aftershave,
And Gustavus Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder

Poor Shakespeare brief career closed,
When his plays reached thirty seven,
How many more might have been composed,
Had he the publication sent from Heaven?
It is a wonderland of wordage,
Your expressions it will guild,
Like many multi-coloured birds that sing,
Is Gustavus Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder.

Get yourself a copy, friend,
I'm sure you won't regret it,
T'will all misunderstanding thus forefend,

If you will only let it.
So if you wife can't understand you,
And your speeches just bewilder,
What you need, my inarticulated friend,
Is of Gustavus Hartrampf's Vocabulary Builder!

john coldwell

Hartrampfs!

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□

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I Would Be A Poet...

My words shall be gemstones, precious and few
Chosen for clarity, for depth and for hue
I'll set them in memories, with artful design
That sparkle with meaning, transcendent of time

I'll choose the deep rhythms of blood's pulsing flow
That vital life's metronome, no angel can know
Or stirring loud drumbeats that call us to war
Or gentle tap tappings of ghosts at the door

From polar extremes and in fragments of dreams
From all the four winds, I'll seek out my themes
Of love, life and death, and nature's invention
Let Heaven inspire, and let hell take convention

I'll watch for a twinkle in the eye of creation
For as novel a notion as has ever been written
I'll spear with delight, bright flashes in motion
That play on the surface of my subconscious ocean

May my poems add coinage to the treasures of art
And would that I know it before I depart
Even so be it, only after I've gone
May their joys, be there any, for sometime live on

And may they fall freshly on the parched lips of boredom
As the mists that rise early, or the dew drops of Eden
But If all can think of is plain and banal
Then let my ink be dried up, I'll write nothing at all.

john coldwell

Idle Thought From My Holiday Resort.

We no longer tip the waiters,
Condescendingly, Pesetas.
And few they are, that need now know,
How to properly pronounce, Escudo.

Alpine peaks, now bleak and chilling,
No longer ring to the Austrian Schilling.
And the Fatherland's paternal spark,
Surely died with his child the Mark.

Recall the Gilder, or Dutch Florin,
Which was, quite comfortably, foreign.
And what used to make the heart much cheerer,
Than the exchange rate of the Italian Lira?

The staff at your bank will frankly look at you blank,
In your warm reminiscence of the Belgian franc,
Serving only to make my sad point the starker,
I may as well stop at the Finnish Markka.

All conquering Bureau de Change,
Need few national flags in their range,
Now Sovereign states have put to one side,
To avoid the commissions, their national pride.

And so has risen the 'Euro zone',
Our drab pan- European monochrome.
Phrases coined with such thoughtless ease,
Inevitably sound like a disease.

And brought to it's knees by this unpleasant sound,
Is my humble friend the British Pound.
It's not the collapse of capitalism we should fear,
It's the effect it's all having on the price of beer.

john coldwell

In The Queue At The Piazza San Pietro

Buongiorno, Benvenuto!
At last to Rome you've come,
At last you paths have found it,
This in your heart is home.
Amongst it's ancient maestrie,
Let eyes and spirit stroll,
In shady Trastevere's
Cobbled alleyways of the soul.

'Tis I that stands on Trajan's Mount,
His ashes at my feet,
His victory column in death does show,
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Now who keeps the city Gate?
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Nay not the Epaphroditus sword,
I, St Peter, hold the key.

Beneath Bernini's baldachin,
There they say I lie,

Thus all the pomp of Papacy,
Is gathered here on high.
Let all the earth make pilgrimage,
Let every soul pursue,
A path, to this, The Lord's House,
And never mind the queue..

john coldwell

La La Land

The Earth has turned,
The truth runs cold.
All you have learned,
Will no longer hold.
We're ringing out the times of sand,
And we're living in La La Land

Our new liberality,
Ignores all reality.
What we now call equality,
We once called depravity,
Those things that are no longer banned
Now we're living in La La Land.

Our new definitions,
For once pleasant words,
Cover, like perfume,
The stench of milk turned to curds.
And much else that's deep underhand
Now were living in La La Land

God is being mocked
As we pass laws that grant sins
And we're no longer shocked
At Bibles in bins
There is nothing now we need understand
But that Hell was once like La La Land.

john coldwell

Let Not The Sun Go Down

A broken dawn I yet foresee,
My inner courtroom convicts me,
A sentence passed so bitterly,
For when I raise my head.

The longer left, the harder be the key to turn,
And harder still new words to learn,
But only thus, forgiveness earn,
Of the one to whom I'm wed.

Sounds to say by candlelight,
Sighs to breath so late at night,
Whispered words to make things right,
Before I lay my head.

john coldwell

Letting Off Steam

Agitation, slowly bubbling to boil,
The stoking-up has begun.
With spiteful hiss and hot oil,
We depart on our ramshackle run.

Chuff, chuff, the sound mocks my fate,
The pressure is beginning to rise.
Vigorous steel arms now gyrate,
Under my seat, growling brown eyes.

The force that drives us, and steams,
Reluctantly drags these old cars,
And this carriage's rattling beams,
Jail me behind second class bars.

The barks of an overweight poodle,
The rat-at-tat-tat of the wheel,
The din of the whole damn caboodle,
I know how the boiler must feel.

O how the steam longs for freedom,
And is bursting to break forth from it's cage.
An explosion like that would be awesome,
All fire, and brimstone, and rage.

White clouds of hot retribution,
Metal parts flung far and wide,
T'would be a true revolution,
And I would escape by it's side.

With the driving force gone to the heavens,
To meet itself in the air,
This old train's lost motivation,
And the passengers are left in despair.

I have nothing against those in first class,
As they quietly sit there and foam.
And as for the dog down the carriage,
Let the little sod walk it's way home.

john coldwell

Love? What Do You Mean..?

Sunlit sighs, white clad thighs,
On Sunday in the park.
Chance holding hands, faint hearts delight,
Sweetly high on eros youthful potion's might,
Wistful whispers, kisses make the loins tight
Cheeks that blush, hearts that flush,
A schoolgirl, schoolboy crush,
Is this the love?

Being two, like old shoes,
That wear has made to fit.
And walk together, side by side,
Each the others sometime guide,
In philia's mutual, easy stride,
A kindred soul that can rely
In time of need, no help deny,
Is this the love?

Arms to fall in from long ago,
Faces that place, I call my home.
Parts of me that you never see,
Given to make me family,
For bad or good,
Our storge blood,
Is this the love?

Hands that lift me into bed,
When I can no longer speak.
That dress, caress and clean for me,
And know there'll be no thanks for thee,
For all thy lifelong agape.
From wart'ed lips and marbled eye
Your sacrifice until I die.
Is this the love?

john coldwell

Media Studies

Modern poets, like modern art,
Are quick to loose the tricky part.
The few blue squares, the splashed azure,
The dribbled free verse, sense obscure,
Will not wash with he who knows,
they are the Emperor's new clothes.

If words came only to your cost
Be sure there'd be less meaning lost.
And as for you that despise the rhyme,
I'll remind you of another time,
When Wordsworth, Longfellow and Pope,
Amassed a fame beyond your hope.

Vague abstractions have no part,
In proper, representational art.
I'll trade your Pollock, Braque and Klee
For just one of da Vinci.
But if you must, then do your worst,
Only show you can do the hard part, first.

john coldwell

Memes

Wonder where your thoughts came from?
what you stand your suppositions on?
Did they creep in second hand,
Ready processed, tasteless, bland,
In harmonic uncontroversial themes
These sinister, invading memes?

Infections from another mind
Invading spaces, making blind.
These my friend are cooked for you
In Satan's slow boiling stew
And in your mind they're made to grow
As you watch your favourite TV show

Those natural history entertainers,
Ceaslessly remind us we are apes in trainers.

You'd like to think "my thoughts are mine"
But no, you're just a product of your time
And if it were some other age
With other spirits on the stage
You might see things in a different way
Such as, what you mean, when you say, gay.

What once was shame is now a pride
As popular opinion becomes our guide
What once was crime is now the law
Ten Commandments, reduced to four
The counsels of a world of fools
Now taught as wisdom in our schools

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Monet's Garden

Its always April,
Here, in Monet's Garden.

Showers of colour,
Caged in canvas,
Liquid,
High lights,
Fixed, by the artist's eye,
In the impressionable sky.

john coldwell

Not A Miracle...

I saw my latest grandchild yesterday
All lagoon eyes and fat little fingers
A perfect beauty in every way
What joy pure time, and chance can bring us.
Just a mindless collision of matter of course,
Because we have proof empirical
Whatever else the little girl is
She is certainly not a miracle

No space, no time, no void, no law
Now pregnant nothing gives birth to everything
The biggest bang you never saw
Distills to field and sea and eagles wing
A self starter to shame us all is that,
Because we have proof empirical
Whatever else the universe is
It is certainly not a miracle

And now deep in those primeval ponds
Randomness brews its impossible recipe
The 100 billion to one coincidence responds
Given time and chance, with you, and me,
Unlikely, maybe, but didn't Mr Dawkins say
We now have proof empirical
Whatever the gift of life may be
It is certainly not a miracle

I looked down at my mother, that gentle soul
In hospital, on her final day
I know heaven is her certain goal
I thought, as she quietly passed away
Now here's a question for all rationalists
And please don't be equivocal
Prove that we have no immortal soul
Now that would take a miracle

john coldwell

Obituary

It falls to me, I know not why,
To report to you, the death of the pie.
Following a lengthy illness, and sharp decline
I have lost a very dear friend of mine.

Born in hardship and time of need,
Supporter of families with mouths to feed,
It rose to the occasion every time,
Always crusty, always sublime.

A wholesome meal that all could trust,
Even by the upper crust,
Armies have marched on it, and the Navy
Have sailed on it's gravy

But then came a thing to make us slave,
To artificial food, yes the microwave,
And our households have lost the will,
And that most important skill.

The manufacture of the perfect pie.

So shed a tear with me and say goodbye,
To the inimitable meat and potato pie!

john coldwell

Odd Days.

On cold days it's nice,
To sit in boiled rice,
If your not in a hurry,
To add in the curry.

On hot days it's nice,
To sit in crushed ice,
Without being afraid,
If they add lemonade.

On sad days it's best,
To visit chapels of rest.
That way your long face.
Won't seem out of place

On glad days it's best,
To strip down to your vest.
Then go hug a tree.
Before you jump in the sea.

On work days your boss
Maybe get very cross,
But avoid getting stressed,
Or a cardiac arrest.

On Sundays it's good,
Not to wallow in mud,
Before you go off in search,
Of a welcoming church.

john coldwell

On Remembrance Day

All our veterans are hero's, especially the dead one's
Paper poppy'd, toy soldiered, military bearing,
I'm there to pretend that I might have been like them.
Remembering the glorious dead that I know nothing of.
Grainy, monochrome, unknown soldiers in lumpy uniforms,
Bayonets fixed, jerkily, unhesitatingly,
Swarming out of their trenches,
And over the top, into a shell shocked sky.

Except that one, indistinguishable in the charge,
Was stopped, arrested, on that ridge of life and death,
And slumped back motionless,
In a flickering moonscape of mud.
The first to contact the enemy, a speculative bullet or shrapnel?
Not for him the tea and foxhole,
Not for him memories of action,
They recover the fallen from the front, not the rear.

I wonder about that soldier,
Did they return and tenderly remove him?
Are his lifeless remains amongst the white stones of Ypres,
Still proudly to attention on the field of battle?
Or was he not there, that unknown soldier?
Am I the only one in which a coward can find space to reside?
Does he yet sit alone in his chair
On remembrance day?
The nurse says He never talks about the war.

john coldwell

On The Occasion Of My Sister's Birthday.

The trees that blossom each year in the Spring
Mark the event with an annual ring.
And igneous rocks record their age by the layer,
Should we think they are troubled, or that they care?

Are they concerned at the onset of age?
At their brief moment upon this life's stage?
Are they, like men, who at each fleeting day,
Fear memory loss and hair turning grey?

Do they note comings of age and key to the door?
Is there mid life crisis, and time to mature?
Do they, like us, sense their mortality,
The knowledge they face a certain finality?

I don't know if they do, but I do know for sure,
That this Creation we have will not forever endure,
And for them the clock ticks and measures their day,
When the final inferno sweeps all things away.

Happy birthday to you, dear sister today,
Fear not, Child of God, do not dismay.
For the illusion of time is transient, like smoke,
And far more enduring are you than granite, or oak,
Our counting may tell us, its threescore and four,
But you know, as I do, you have life evermore.

john coldwell

On The River..

O! our joy, the Great, the River Ouse
Thou still retains thine ancient banks
And give us yet those age old views
Of field, and fen, and willowed ranks

Through all the years of industry,
And commerce's corrupting way,
Thou retains thy liquid purity,
Adorned with mallard, mute and Heron's prey.

Glad we are to cruise thy flow
And forget the troubled world of men
One fleeting week, and then we go
Back to the drear, the drudge, of work again

But still, thy sparkle and thy gleam
Lives, in more than just our memory
Time, thou ever rolling stream
We could wish thee, our eternity.

john coldwell

Peace

Let the children of your anxious mind,
In other arms their comfort find,
And come yourself away with me,
Beyond the palms and limpid sea.

To where the crystal drops of rain,
And wading birds in silent train,
Stir placid ponds of liquid balm,
To bathe your troubled soul in calm.

O, look beyond the daily dread,
O, seek out nature's joys instead,
Join the curlew in it's cry,
And in the purple heather lie.

Does the joyful coloured flower,
In troubled heart, both shrink and cower?
No, it faces God, and smiles for Him,
And sings for glory, a sweet victory Hymn!

john coldwell

Queue At The Piazza San Pietro

Buongiorno, Benvenuto!
At last to Rome you've come,
At last you paths have found it,
This in your heart is home.
Amongst it's ancient maestrie,
Let eyes and spirit stroll,
In shady Trastevere's
Cobbled alleyways of the soul.

'Tis I that stands on Trajan's Mount,
His ashes at my feet,
His victory column in death does show,
The Emperor's last defeat..
From here I see the slaughterhouse,
That drew the vagrant crowd,
To see my brothers tortured lives,
Played out in death unbowed.

Now who keeps the city Gate?
Now who holds the keys?
The glory that did once make Rome,
Was deaf to martyrs pleas.
But theirs is the Eternal City,
And this a bouldered ruin,
It's broken columns are rotten teeth,
It's pride is it's undoing.

Hard by stands our brother Paul,
In Marcus Aurelius's stead.
Who in this place at Nero's wish,
He did treacherously behead.
Now who holds the city gate?
And now who sets men free?
Nay not the Epaphroditus sword,
I, St Peter, hold the key.

Beneath Bernini's baldachin,
There they say I lie,

Thus all the pomp of Papacy,
Is gathered here on high.
Let all the earth make pilgrimage,
Let every soul pursue,
A path, to this, The Lord's House,
And never mind the queue..

john coldwell

Remarried

How many times we went to bed at night
Not daring to think what might...
We let the barren years unwind
Put out of time, put out of mind

Half a loaf, always wasted
Half a life, never tasted
Semi detached, but never homely
Always busy, always lonely

Until we slid on the soft vows of love
And they fitted like, well, a glove
As we knew they would, hand in hand
To pass to each a wedding band

At last at home and well respected
Now our lives can be inspected
Middle aged, with joys unlikely
The secret fires yet burning brightly

john coldwell

Rome

Buongiorno, Benvenuto!
At last to Rome you've come,
At last you paths have found it,
This in your heart is home.
Amongst it's ancient maestrie,
Let eyes and spirit stroll,
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john coldwell

Seasons

Beneath the autumn sky's cold clouds of metal,
Wind chased shadows evict a last clinging petal
From it's exhausted home.

To live on the streets,
With the wheeling wasted leaves.
Unemployed, old and thin,
Youth's lustre now a wrinkled skin,
Awaiting only its last gathering in,
To heap the fires of winter

Have you seen the way a pear dies?
It's once firm flesh, brown blotched and prised
First by wasps and then by flies.
It falls unto the ground and sinks,
Beneath the ground it's flaccid carcass stinks.
It's just the way a human dies,
Unless by shriving fires rise,
In empty ashes to the skies.
A more dissolving death.

And this before the deepening winter's black,
Like bones of the back, stiffening branches crack,
That age has made so brittle.
Now the darkness closes in,
Your suffocating's weaknesses begin
The endless night of loss.
Oblivion, like creeping moss,
The ageing gravestone's dross,
Inhumes even your stone carved name.

Think that you may roll back the time?
Or change the marching season's rhyme?
With some cosmetic skill
Or false elixirial pill?
That lilies may forever bloom,
At your half heard command,
Your drowning lost demand,
Your existence to expand,
Against the force of nature?

That force that makes the winter's chill,
And keeps the spheres a spinning still,
Or'whelms all mortal frame,
And cares not what your name.
Beyond our comprehension.
And would you yet deny,
The rainbow promise in the sky,
As the ageless years go by,
That seasons will continue?

And force the clod earths stone hard clasp,
Clenched frozen in deaths winter grasp,
To crumble 'neath the awakening bower,
Helpless against the snowdrops power,
And first wild flowers of Spring.
That sown in the ground to die,
It's lifeless end does thus belie,
The means by which it glorify.
And, so is the resurrection of the dead

john coldwell

Selection Box

It started with a flowerpot,
Moon Dust and an Oriental Star,
But then I saw a Bunker Shot,
Behind the smoke, all smouldering hot,
A Shock Wave Storm, a Loud Gunshot.

.
O light the Fire in the Sky!
Hydrogen Hailstorm colours, fly!
And sound the Sonic Horn.

More ominous now becomes the night,
Lucifer's Laughter, Devils Howl,
Wild Dragon cries, and Phantom Fright,
Magnetic Storms, intensely bright,
Shells Bursts making all as broad daylight.

O Heavy Bomber do your work,
In Volcanic Madness's molton murk,
And join the Desert Strike.

Throat that screams the Demon's Thirst,
Plasma Power's grand Powder plot.
The Tectonic Terror may do it's worst,
Those Gates of Hell, Inferno curst,
And quietly now a Palm Tree bursts.

O loose the Mighty Atomiser!
Unchain the straining Night Invader!
And sound the Sonic Horn. □

Fear all, now, the Terminator!
Howling Hellfires chilling thrill!
Mega Blast and Widow Maker,
Barrage Blitz, the Pavement Quaker,
Screaming Cyborg, Planet Breaker,

Now, at last, the Final Countdown,
Cosmic Chaos is the outcome,
On Oblivion's Birthday born.

Falling stars and vapours swirling,
Sear the nostrils of the crowd.
Acrid smells and paper burning,
Ringing ears for silence yearning,
Eyes that dread the sight of morning

For now, the embers smoulder on,
But with all the fireworks gone,
We await the foggy dawn.

john coldwell

Self Portrait

You fight your curiosity,
At every stranger's face it sees,
Their awkward shapes, eccentric gestures.
Ungainly gaits, peculiar postures
Each oddly familiar archetype.
It wants to look into their eyes,
But from that intimacy it shies
To touch their privately protected lives

What makes them so? They're not like us,
These self affirming caricatures.
With countenances dour or glad,
Expressions cold, hot, sometimes sad.
Wrinkled skins and double chins,
The occasional elusive impossible beauty
To something deep within their form is owed
Far deeper than genetic code

Living portraits, animated, lined.
That pencilled fate has so designed.
Etched, and sketched and coloured in,
With pigments mixed down deep within.
Their subtle tones both mock and shock,
With ruthless truth, all modesty, and paint
the soul for all to see, more forthright,
Than ever could a still-life be.

And so it's true that a broken heart,
Profoundly affects every other part.
It may be, you no longer cry,
It may be many years gone by.
Perhaps that longing, that deep regret,
You now have learned how to forget.
The emotional hurts at last have healed,
But outwardly are the wounds revealed.

So it is with me, ironically.
Because my heart will no longer hear,

One eye permanently sheds a tear.

john coldwell

Since You No Not The Whole Play..

You are not another common man,
A mere name upon a roll,
No, you are a universe,
An eternally expanding soul.
And thereon the master dramatist,
Writes your part in His great play,
Which is the sum of each of us,
To perform. Awake onto your day!

The womb's thick curtains open,
You are thrust upon the stage,
Unrehearsed, and unprepared,
Your script, an empty page,
Act one begins, now draw first breath,
And fear not what to say,
Your words shall write your history,
And the part you alone shall play.

Each life a drama, rich and deep,
Uniquely forged by fate.
Their twisting plots and tragic end,
Awash with loves and hate.
No thespian's art shall ever grasp,
Your bosom's grand array.
Those overtures of passion,
They are the part that you must play.

What will it be O Dramatist,
Of romance, tragedy and art?
And you there, watching scornfully,
Some actor's faltering part,
On you too the spotlight falls,
As you live out every day,
Judge not then another's final act,
Since you know not the whole play.

john coldwell

Sometimes

Sometimes I wish I were a tramp,
Worn boots along the road,
Taking in the hedgerow smells,
That plants themselves have sowed.□

Sometimes I wish I were a tramp,
A walking down the lane,
And when the daylight turns to dusk,
I'll sleep in a farmer's wain.

Sometimes I wish I were a tramp,
Better poor than rich,
Don't look for me when I am old,
I lie frozen in a ditch.

john coldwell

The Atheist

Of all the fools that I could list,
The greatest is the Atheist,
There may be others that you would choose,
But I have the Bible to support my views,

Like one blind that sees no light,
He concludes that it is always night,
Or one deaf, that has never heard,
He refuses to believe in the spoken word,

Only what is fact, "I'll believe in that."
So once he'd have thought the world was flat,
'Science and self is all' he said,
How can he be so misled?

He who dwells where there's dry rot,
Prefers to think what's there, is not,
And he who has a debt to pay
Thinks, by ignoring, it will go away.

Now would the rational mind accept,
A thesis that is so inept?
Well no, but sense is put aside,
For he let's his heart decide, .

john coldwell

The Common Man

You are not another common man,
A mere name upon a roll,
No, you are a universe,
An eternally expanding soul.
And thereon the master dramatist,
Writes your part in His great play,
Which is the sum of each of us,
To perform. Awake onto your day!

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john coldwell

john coldwell

The Countryside

Don't forgot the countryside,
With your computer, career and chores.
It goes on in spite of you,
With schemes greater, and more intricate, than yours.

Below, the sunlit dappled earth,
Patterns your willing feet.
Above, the green transparency of leaves,
Stirs the scent of Meadowsweet.

Butterbur, wild garlic and yellow water lily,
All weigh the syrup air,
And call your longing heart to join,
The river's sinuous love affair.

Hear the fish's footprint plop,
And see the silver sound waves roll,
Across the sky of mystery deep, that lids,
The alien's clammy fleshy soul.

Your dazzled glance at darting larks,
That cleave the endless blue,
Make an aerodynamic lie,
Of all you ever thought was true.

john coldwell

The Courts Of Heaven (Extract)

The courts of heaven and their hosts sublime,
Unbound of spatial form and passing time,
With eternal spirit raise symphonic chime,
To the glories of the Almighty One.
Who's force doth surge and flow in endless power,
This creation's glory a mere passing hour,
Among a myriad more in constant flower,
In those great halls of heaven.

Along this glorious astral strand,
The spirit, divine justice stands,
Or arching height, and mighty hand,
to hold the sword, two edged, at ready.
No works of man from him conceal,
Who's flaming eyes all truth reveal,
and in equity to all doth deal
Their final day of judgement.

And metre out the wage of recompense,
Heaven's bliss or of hellish penitence,
Regardless of their startled countenance,
And futile protestations.
Think not that he who he holds such gravity,
And who seals to each a last finality,
To which none can claim as travesty,
Knows not the frailty of their souls.

And so we see him lost in deep abstraction,
A pondering, a curious inaction,
from him who holds eternal sanction,
Can there be such hesitation?
But Justice thinks of the world of men,
Who's minds are set like children in a den,
who imagine nought exists besides,
Their childish imaginings and confides,
Their made up world of fantasy.

Forgetful they, who must obey,

The final call of judgement day!

john coldwell

The Haunting

Dare you, today, accompany me,
To the murky wells of memory,
It's said we can't remember pain,
We cannot, by recall, wince again,
But there are other hurts and lurking fears,
That return in full, their sobs and tears.

The lid that caps that caustic pot,
Ill fits, and spills at any jot,
Must it, it's porous prison, once more leave,
And make again the heart bereave?
O that time would fade the thing!
Or some sacred salve remove it's sting!

At night in dreams, you know when,
We're taken back to madness then,
Our smiling valet's waiting there,
With tailored suit of grey despair,
And misty mirror for me to see,
The reflection there is truly me!

john coldwell

The Humble Hymn Book

The Humble Hymn Book

I am the humble Hymn book,
You may have heard of me before.
You'd see me on the seat in front,
Or maybe on the floor.
But now I'm mostly not in Church,
No more beneath your feet.
Because, you see, the times have changed,
And now I'm obsolete

I can't seem to project myself,
In colours on the wall,
That clash with background graphics,
And words that are too small.
I don't know how to show a verse,
Out of order or upside down.
Or jump between the choruses,
Like some demented clown.

(Perhaps that's what they want these days,
And clearly I'm not 'with it'.
But it isn't what they used to call,
The moving of the Spirit)

I have no bulb or fuse to blow,
Just at the worship's height.
I'm not troubled by a power cut,
Except perhaps at night
I wish I had some software,
To confuse a hapless aide.
Or cables draped across the floor,
To trip up some old maid.

One time, any humble soul,
Could give out a book like me.
But now it needs a graduate,
To handle the technology.
My contents are an open book

An ever flowing stream
Not limited by the dictates
Of a pre programmed worship team

(When thieves break into Church you know,
No value they see in me,
As well as the collection
They take the laptop and PC.)

Do I have a future then?
My prospects may seem hopeless
Who cares this low tech book contains
A treasure trove of witness?
I'll sit here in this cupboard dark
With the years of gathering dust
But I'll be ready, at your call
When your novelties are bust

john coldwell

The Journey...

I've not been on this bus before
And I don't know where I'm bound
There's a driver somewhere up the front
But he never looks around.
I'm on it to the journey's end
Our terminus advances
I don't know where that end will be
I guess I'll take my chances

There's a Jag in the drive as I knock on the door
A polite man opens promptly
Will you come and hear the preacher man?
He refuses, firm but softly
But, only hear what he has to say
At my leaflet now he glances
Again no thanks, he smiles and says
I guess I'll take my chances

The people on the bus with me
I ask them where they go
Some shake their heads and turn away
Others seem to think they know
I wonder if they have been before
Some take such certain stances
I wish I could be as sure as them
I guess I'll take my chances

Elderly and sad but she opened her door
And the stranger began to speak
Will you come and hear the preacher man?
A tear falls on her cheek
I lost my husband only yesterday
Well, the preacher may have some answers
Thank you, but no young man
I'll just take my chances

I'm the last one on the bus it seems
I know I'm getting nearer
It's getting very dark outside

And the ending is no clearer
The doors are sliding open now
Outside it's cold and black
I turn, I hear the driver say
No, there's now no going back

Yes? He said angrily as he opened the door
I coughed and tried to be brave
Will you come and hear the preacher man?
No, nobody comes back from the grave!
O sorry to trouble you, have a nice day
And until somebody does, be gone!
I stood dumb and the door slammed shut in my face
Hey, just a minute, there's one!

john coldwell

The Shape Of The Wind...

The arctic blasts turn men into plaster casts,
They take the shape of the wind.
The ragged sails lashed by the gales,
Are full of the the shape of the wind.

The shrewd and wise, with half closed eyes,
Can guess the way of the wind.
They bend and bow, and go with the flow,
They take the shape of the wind.

The evening fires make crooked spires,
As they give way to the shape of the wind.
My ice cold breath meets it's sudden death,
As it takes the shape of the wind.

And all our life, with all it's strife,
Is nought but the shape of the wind.
So no longer resist, just desist,
And accept the shape of the wind.

john coldwell

The Supermarket Incident

Dear reader bear with me and I'll tell you a tale,
The full detail of which may take me a while,
Till now all the facts were know only to two,
The baddie, and goodie, who will confirm it is true.
Things in this world are not all that they seem,
And the injustice of life is entirely my theme.

It was early in April and a fine sunny day,
And to the supermarket, I was making my way.
Such shopping, I admit, I 'm inclined to despise,
But to disobey my dear wife I find is unwise.
The sight of the car park served to confirmed my dislike
All cars, trolleys, and pushchairs, and three kids on a bike.

Then, like a stab at the edge of my eye,
It caught my attention as I briskly walked by,
Alone, in a trolley, to some person's cost,
A fat, lady's purse, lay abandoned and lost.
I see from that last line you may mistake my intentions,
Note, I refer to the purse, not it's owner's dimensions.

Of which at that time I had no cause to remark,
But as it turned out was not far off the mark.
But now we digress, please let me press on,
One minute I saw it, and the next, it was gone!
Quick, like a hawk, a hand swooping low,
And into a pocket the treasure did go.

As if an illusion, the purse was no more,
and pocketed hand's owner walked away from the store.
But yes I had seen it, if for only a fraction,
And something inside me called me to action,
That some miscreant was making off with a packet,
Was clear from the size of the bulge in his jacket.

To you my dear reader, and to me, I might add,
The intentions of the finder will seem singularly bad,
It was clear to me that this threadbare old loner,
Had not the slightest intention of finding the owner.

So through narrowing eyes I sized up the quarry,
A scruffy, be-whiskered, old man in a hurry.

Weaving through cars on his clean getaway,
All the while thinking it was his lucky day,
But now I was on his tail, and soon alongside,
Walking beside him I kept stride for stride.
"Don't think it unnoticed what happened back there,
You know what you're doing is jolly unfair"

To this no reply, and no turn of the head,
My unscrupulous companion kept on looking ahead.
Now, looming before us in forbidding red brick,
Was our new police station, yes our local nick.
And to my surprise, and with a wave in the air,
He said, not too convincingly, " I'm taking it there".

Well, I had only to look at the set of his jaw,
To guess he was well known to arm of the law,
And perhaps his arrival might interest the Court,
A bit more than the lost property he had come to report,
And so calling his bluff, and to see if he dare,
I said "Certainly, yes, I'll accompany you there".

We proceeded in silence at decreasing pace,
I wish you had seen the look on his face.
A hopeless dilemma now grasped the poor mug,
As he saw for himself the deep hole he had dug,
And having decided which option was worse,
He spun on his heel and went into reverse.

I suppose he was thinking he'd shoulder the blame,
But at least we were heading back whence we came.
And now our tale's climax grows ever more near,
And the strange final outcome will be presently clear,
So picture us now as we enter the store,
He slightly in front through the wide sliding door.

There right before us at the customer desk,
Was a very large lady, perhaps almost grotesque,
And above all else her shrill voice could be heard,
I might venture hysterical as an appropriate word.

At such a commotion and voices so loud,
As you'd expect, she had gathered a crowd.

Things now moved swiftly as if fate took a hand,
Some strange intuition I don't understand,
Caused the lady to turn and to see my friend bring,
And hold up the purse like some peace offering.
She let out a shriek at this glorious encounter,
That, I gather, was heard at the bakery counter!

Her plump hand shot out, grasping fingers asplay,
But my wily old friend pulled the target away,
And in a pointless last gesture, entirely hopeless,
He demanded she prove her right to possess, □
His much coveted prize by describing a few,
Of the said object's contents, (of which he 'd no clue) .

She reeled off her claim and her obvious right,
And snatched up her purse with euphoric delight.
He was caught in an embrace like never before,
I will swear that she lifted his feet from the floor!
And her great lipsticky kiss on his cheek was so loud,
It brought spontaneous applause from the appreciative crowd.

Her largesse knew no bounds, her actions outlandish,
Opening her purse a ten pound note she did brandish,
And bestowed it on Scruffy with a benevolent air,
Who greedily took it, be it grossly unfair.
With that the lights dimmed and the drama concluded,
The characters faded, and normal service resum' ed.

And me? Some force made me invisible that day,
Stood on the sidelines with no part to play,
But to watch the fickle nature of fate there unfold,
My sense of injustice has ne're yet been told,
With only me knowing the full facts of the case,
Except for one other, who will not admit to his place.

So now, dear reader, there you have my sad song,
And I thank you for hearing me out for so long,
I tell you my friend that I'll eat my hat,
If the true nature of life is so cruel, and that,

When it's all over, At the end of all things,
The bad are rewarded, the good are ignore `ed,
And the fat lady sings!

john coldwell

The Well Of Memories

Dare you, today, accompany me,
To the murky wells of memory,
It's said we don't remember pain,
We cannot, by recall, wince again,
But there are other hurts and lurking fears,
That return in full, their sobs and tears.

The lid that caps that caustic pot,
Ill fits, and spills at any jot,
Must it, it'sporous prison, once more leave,
And make again the heart bereave?
O that time would fade the dreaded thing!
Or some sacred salve remove it's sting!

At night in dreams, you know when,
We're taken back to madness then,
Our smiling valet's waiting there,
With tailored suit of greydespair,
And misty mirror for me to see,
The reflection there is truly me!

john coldwell

The Wind

The arctic blasts turn men into plaster casts,
They take the shape of the wind.
The ragged sails lashed by the gales,
Are full of the the shape of the wind.

The shrewd and wise, with half closed eyes,
Can guess the way of the wind.
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The evening fires make crooked spires,
As they give way to the shape of the wind.
My ice cold breath meets it's sudden death,
As it takes the shape of the wind.

And all our life, with all it's strife,
Is nought but the shape of the wind.
So no longer resist, just desist,
And accept the shape of the wind.

john coldwell

There Is More..

The truth bites, and my mind rejects it's reality,
All that is in me is fled, leaving me empty.
Panic rises and grows into madness,
I stumble unseen, in my own wilderness.
Hearing only the howls of my loneliness.

Barren hills of despair rise everywhere,
Daily, I drag my life of un-care,
Becoming more ragged as I go.
Voices silently mouth the honesties of thieves
And their shrugging advices are dry,
Like dead leaves.

But it doesn't matter anyway,
All is consumed in heartbreak and loss.
Nothing left now,
No future,
No hope,
No purpose,
No good,
No bad,
No direction,
No joy,
No pleasure,
Only the twitching limbs of the last of life
Keep me moving.

Yet there is a distant regret
For principles once held,
For ideals, now sordid.
My wanderings bring me to the precipice, □
That I might decide to leap, a jarring peace.

There are those who urge me on,
And I would gladly go,
But for the love of those I leave behind.
They would see me fly,
But I expect I'll die.
And with me, their faith.

That is the leap... of faith

That fills up the heart, and firms up the flesh?

That powers my limbs, and restores my soul?

With words of life, and visions of hope.

It is from without, there was nothing within.

Die, to be born again.

john coldwell

Tracking Seabirds...

I am the screaming voice in the sky,
The wild echo on the ocean cliffs,
The surf rider, the wind catcher,
The untameable, unknowable,
Mystery of the unsearchable sea.

I sink with the sun,
And rise with the tides.
I am the wild's wild eyes,
It's voice, it's cries.
Where the wild is, there am I

Where you are, I am not.

john coldwell

Under The Tree

Beaten to death and worse
For the pittance she had in her purse
An elderly lady lay preacher
Who opened her door to this creature

The news came to us by phone
I went into the garden alone
Under the stark arms of a tree
Too angry to get down on my knee

I said, 'This is terrible God! '
It wasn't a question, But He answered me
'Yes it is terrible,
and it's happening everywhere, constantly,
This one is close to you,
They are all close to me
So now you know how I feel'

What can we do God?
How can it be stopped?
I was still looking up at the tree
At the stark arms stretched out on the Tree

john coldwell

Xmas

Bethlehem's star still marks the place,
Where an empty manger now holds stage.
We'll have no saviour for the human race,
No need for God, in our new age.
We unbundled the gift in swaddling clothes,
We cut it with a knife,
What is this gift so rudely wrapped?
O, 'tis only everlasting life.

Away, you child they call the Christ,
Who cheated Herod's sword,
Your gift it comes too highly priced,
Your presence brings discord.
We will not have this God made man,
That He, mankind, may damn.
We will not look on Calvary,
Away, you sacrificial Lamb!

Ox, ass and shepherds in woe depart,
From that fading angelic light,
Only gloom and emptiness in man's heart,
And winter's now far darker night.
Kings bring gifts, unwanted now,
For there is no-one to receive,
To the god of Gold we already bow,
This, and every Xmas eve.

The heaven sent gift we have declined,
For His cross we have put our own.
And for all the ills of humankind,
We must now ourselves atone.
No joy in our world this Winterville
Only grief to men on Earth
What now your echoing soul fulfil?
What now will be of worth?

john coldwell

You Are Not Another Common Man

You are not another common man,
A mere name upon a roll,
No, you are a universe,
An eternally expanding soul.
And thereon the master dramatist,
Writes your part in His great play,
Which is the sum of each of us,
To perform. Awake onto your day!

The womb's thick curtains open,
You are thrust upon the stage,
Unrehearsed, and unprepared,
Your script, an empty page,
Act one begins, now draw first breath,
And fear not what to say,
Your words shall write your history,
And the part you alone shall play.

Each life a drama, rich and deep,
Uniquely forged by fate.
Their twisting plots and tragic end,
Awash with loves and hate.
No thespian's art shall ever grasp,
Your bosom's grand array.
Those overtures of passion,
They are the part that you must play.

What will it be O Dramatist,
Of romance, tragedy and art?
And you there, watching scornfully,
Some actor's faltering part,
On you too the spotlight falls,
As you live out every day,
Judge not then another's final act,
Since you know not the whole play.

john coldwell