Geoffrey Grigson
- poems -

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Geoffrey Edward Harvey Grigson was a British writer. He was born in Pelynt, a village near Looe in Cornwall.

<b>Life</b>

Geoffrey Grigson was born in 1905, the youngest of seven sons of the Rev. Canon William Shuckforth Grigson (1845-1930), a Norfolk clergyman who had settled in Cornwall as vicar of Pelynt, and Mary Beatrice Boldero, herself the daughter of a clergyman. The inscription on his father's slate headstone in Pelynt churchyard is the work of Eric Gill, 1931. Five of Grigson's six brothers died serving in the first and second world wars, among them John Grigson. This was one of the highest prices paid by any British family during the conflicts of the twentieth century. Grigson's one surviving brother Wilfrid Grigson also died in an air accident in 1948, while serving as Commissioner for Refugees in Pakistan.

Grigson was educated at St John's School, Leatherhead and at St Edmund Hall, Oxford. He first came to prominence in the 1930s as a poet, then as editor from 1933 of the influential poetry magazine New Verse. Fiercely combative, he made many literary enemies for his dogmatic views.

At various times he was involved in teaching, journalism and broadcasting. During World War II he worked in the editorial department of the BBC Monitoring Service at Wood Norton near Evesham.

Later in life he was a noted critic, reviewer (for the New York Review of Books in particular), and compiler of numerous poetry anthologies. He published 13 collections of poetry, and wrote on travel, on art (notably works on Samuel Palmer, Wyndham Lewis and Henry Moore), on the English countryside, and on botany among other subjects.

Geoffrey Grigson in his later life lived partly in Wiltshire, England and partly in Trôo, a village in the Loir-et-Cher département in France which features in his poetry. He died in Wiltshire in 1985.

<b>Family</b>

Geoffrey Grigson's first wife was Frances Galt (who died in 1937 of tuberculosis). With her, he founded New Verse. They had one daughter, Caroline (who was married to the designer Colin Banks). His second marriage was to Berta
(Bertschy) Emma Kunert, who bore him two children, Anna and Lionel Grigson, the jazz musician and educator. Following their divorce, his third and last marriage was to Jane Grigson, née McIntire (1928-90), the writer on food and cookery. Their daughter is the cookery writer Sophie Grigson.
Before A Fall

And what was the big room he walked in?
*The big room he walked in,
*Over the smooth floor,
*Under the sky light,
*Was his own brain.

And what was it he admired there?
*He admired there
*The oval mirror.

And what was it the oval mirror showed him there?
*It showed him the roots
*Through the ceiling,
*The gross armchair, the bookcase
*Shuttered with glass,
*The Hymns bound in velvet,
*The porcelain oven,
*The giant egg cups,
*The hairy needles,
*And the silence

*And the smell of smouldering dung
*Hung between the walls
*(Which were yellow as dandelion).

And how did he leave?
*On the smooth floor
*His neat feet jarred
*And his teeth grew down
*To his heart, and he slipped
*On the white stairhead -

Which ended?
*Which ended in coldness
*And darkness,
*Through which he fell
*(So they tell)
*With little hope, and slowly.
Two Are Together

Two are together, I tell you,
A slope of a vowel, are a corner;
Grass short as a garden,
Bracken
Uncoiling,
Foxgloves, water
Descending,
Quartz in a stone.

This corner:
Mountain-ash (ferns
Up in air).
Then over an edge
This single
Blue wedge of a mountain;
This comfort, you tell me,
Contentment,
Compassion.

This wild-mint-scented scene
And wild roses
And wrinkle of water descending
Tending to laughter;
Together, then
After.

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