Poetry Series

Paddy J. P. Harris - poems -

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Paddy J. P. Harris(21st of July 1989)

Already The Tree On The Mountain

The fruits that the summer was growing Are picked from the bushes and fields. I wonder if the creatures were knowing, To us all their sweetness would yield?

The mists of the autumn are thickening, Though rank with dark fumes and smells. And all on the earth is near sickening. And it's us they are cursing for this hell.

Already the tree on the mountain Is torn from its leaves by the wind, They float down the waters of the fountain To us in the valley that sinned.

And Over His Sleeping Body She Bent

And over his sleeping body she bent, The old crone with the crooked smile, And to his sleeping mind she sent A shadow thought enwrought with lies.

He saw himself a mighty king Upon a tall and carven throne, Around him people in a ring, Though each one made of coldest stone, Without the will to laugh or sing. The ageing king is all alone.

Five hundred years he ruled in dream His rocky tribe that stood and stared. And more and more to him they seem But there for silent mock and glare. Until at last he stood up tall, His old and withered voice, it spoke. "I fear you not, come one, come all, You grey and dismal folk! "

They heard, but none replied in speech, Yet tall they grew and glowered down Until the empty eyes of each Was burning light that scorched his crown. He grabbed and threw it to the ground, "Your king I am, so stop! " he cried. And then at last they made a sound, A thunderous roar was their reply.

Through all that stood their sound did tear. Through him, through throne and through them all. They shattered to dust and left him there, In darkness to whimper and crawl.

At last he found his lowly bed, Awoke and saw the rising sun, But day long walked in stony dread. Though hag was gone, her work was done.

Comfort

The cold rain does trickle down his back And the dark night does seem so wet and grim, Yet rest the weary traveller shall not lack, For the warm glow of home does call him in.

And now he's sat upon his favourite chair With ale, supper and fire. His comforts found, Dark night forgot with dreams of days so fair, And then to slumber `til the morning sounds.

Do Not Tread Down That Tall And Golden Wheat

Do not tread down that tall and golden wheat To make a bower of reed beneath the stars, In which to laugh and drink the honeyed mead, Away from thoughts of fear and acts of harm. Though hours it seems you sit, and talk of fate, Whilst gods smile and bless your mortal dreams With sights of their most high and wondrous place, Where no one knows the cold morn's dewy beads. I say do not sit down amid that corn, For that night of vision will last ten thousand moons. And over your corpse will blow the raging storms, Until the muddy earth becomes your tomb. Do not reject our mortal hopes and fears, The gods envy man, see their crystal tears.

Earth Awake! And Pull This Body Down

Earth awake! And pull this body down Into your dank and muddy dungeon lair. Disfigure that lifeless face that used to frown On foul natured deeds, but smile upon the fair. Unknot those muscle sinews, tight and strong, Those were the arms and tools of a gentleman That kept us safe through troubles hard and long, With brave calm words that would all worries ban. His noble happy smile lives on still, Though sailed across the starlit sea, to peace. So keep this outworn frame, to us it's nill, Except a spring of grief that shall not cease. For now he keeps his watch upon us each, Whispering secrets that the angels teach.

Fairies

A strange folk, mysterious to behold, They dwell where earth remains as earth should be. So less they roam than in days of old, For man looks at the green unlovingly.

Fay Dreams

The shadow lies upon the western world And all is quiet, seeking pleasant rest. The sheep are huddled in their woolly fold, The mice and birds track down their cosy nests. So beast and man finds sleep where they find best; Their bodies sheltered from the rain and cold. And I asleep, asleep in deepest night, Dreaming of the stars and pale moonlight

When weary bodies heed their earthly course Between the setting and the rising sun, The soul shakes free and leaves the corpse, And can the pain and toil of daylight shun. To stalk with wolves, or with the white hart run, To chase these thoughts even unto their source. But if it hears the sound of elfin singing, To you this night shall be forever clinging.

And so it was, at twelve, when clock hands meet, The lowest hour of reasoning, but height Of fancy's wandering; when two realms greet. To see a fay, it is a perilous sight, I did become entwined in wondrous plight, And thus I strayed beyond the fields of wheat. Chained by their bardic chants. No human song, Could make me find those paths. And walk along.

I passed through leafy glades and over brooks Of rippling crystal water, cool to touch. And beasts I passed would give such longing looks, As if they thought their kin I was as much. And so those notes, so melodic, where such To lead me to a rath. And here there shook The dewy Earth. A door did open wide. The music welled up deep from that hillside. Onwards through passages, along I went, No nightlife, moonlight, starlight, was there here. Groping I followed distant sound, till bent And broken I emerged, I know not near. The forgotten realm, where few have dared to peer. And one I saw from whom the sound was sent, She was the fairest creature, none can tell, And there, upon a shore, she sung so well.

Upon a rock, beside a gentle sea I sat and gazed at her, and on those eyes. Turning she fixed her piercing sight on me, With ocean blues and greens, to laugh or cry, Those jewels could summon forth both highs Of love and grief. With speech both stern and free, She bade me lay upon that pebbled shore, And care for mortal sun and warmth no more.

The dooms of me and her are not the same, And in some different clime, a colder land, The morning star arose and chill dawn came. My soul, at peace, was dragged from off the sand By waking man's both cruel and living hand Taken back to the body, broken and lame. Because I heard the sound of elfin singing To me that night shall be forever clinging.

Hair Cut

My hair is long and thick and curly, So twisted that each inch seems less. Not like some locks that are just whirly. A tight and independent mess.

Short hair does show conformity, And I am not against such things, I am no careless, stupid hippy, But this hair clearly to me clings.

If Milton were alive today, Or Blake, though mad he may have been. Would they take a blade and cut away? Would they brush and pluck and preen?

Half-Cut Through The Fields At Night

Alone I trudge over leaves and sludge, In the dead lone cold of night. Each noise I make, my heart does quake Amidst this shadow realm of fright. And from my thoughts all memories flee Of this fair land once drench in light, When one could walk for a mile or more And think of naught but the daily chore. Gone such idle fancies free, I dare not turn my head. The world's a haunt of untamed thoughts, Within each shadow and sighing tree, Awaits a wight to frighten me.

Норе

For here there's no where left to sink this staff Of weary hope, now bent and rotten. Earth with all its filth and grime will take That thing, and all shall be forgotten.

Instead I plant my staff on shrouded isles Across the western seas unbending, Or better yet above the rainy clouds, To stand with stars for time unending.

If Freedom Be The Stuff Of Dreams

If freedom be the stuff of dreams, Forever let me sleep. For waking in a world that seems Mired in vanity that keeps The free man's soul so tightly wound His devils' too be bound. Forever let me sleep.

In The Woods Of The Oak, And The Ash, And The Thorn

In the woods of the oak, and the ash, and the thorn, Is the home of my ghost from the dusk till the dawn. I am hearing the scream of the fox to her mate. I am nestled with the mice, in the cracks of the trees. I am stalking with owl, the wayfaring shrew. I am swaying with the wind and the rain on my leaves, And the moon that looks down on the whole sylvan crew.

Leannan Sidhe

O take me Leannan Sidhe, * I am waiting here for thee, Up on the damp hill side And the cold night mist does chide.

Upon what shrouded mount Springs forth thy inky fount? Or in which sacred grove Known not to balmy Jove?

Dwelst thou in moony starry night When my rude verse puts thee to flight? Or by a summer stream by day Singing the dreary clouds away?

Wast thou that fair Nimue, Or the Belle Dame sans Merci? If so I wish for thy beguiling smiles To take me where sweet Vesper smiles.

*pronounced 'shee'

Let Loose The Bonds

For one night, just one earthly night, Bind our hearts to the happy twilight. Let the ever chained stars roam free, And cast into chaos the banners of East and West. Remove the bounds of Earth and Air and Sea, And let the Iron tyrant Reason rest.

Lost Mariner

The rain falls down and lulls me to my sleep, And as I lay enchanted by the sound, A tale it murmurs of the salty deep.

It tells of an isle all hemmed around By crashing waves and ghastly monsters wild, But where a grey and lonely man is found.

Left upon the land when but a child, They say, now gone a thousand years ago. Lost to men, the fates have darkly smiled.

For he is cursed to ever older grow, Forbidden death, the doom he used to know.

My Old Robin Friend

Young Alan in the bushes there! How are you? How does your father fare? He always was a merry fellow Back in spring when all turned green, But now when all is turning yellow, He's not on tree or table seen.

We used to be good mates back then, We'd tease and mock the little wren. You look like him but slightly thinner. Not so round and ruddy cheeked, More pale, and more in need of dinner. Like him if all his fat had leaked!

I saw him when he made your nest, The twigs he found were always the best. I remember his red breast proudly heaving! But I fear your silence says it all. I wish he'd told me he was leaving, Or simply given me a call!

My Verse Is Strained

My verse is strained, My muse is hidden, No poetry is gained, I'm prose ridden.

Night Out At Nineteen

Though he be big and I be small, Though they be many and we be few, I've never met those ones so tall Could stand against us bold and true. A thump, a whack, we'll smash their nose! A twist, a crack, we'll snap their bones! No fear, no flight, we'll fight tonight! No fear, no flight, we'll fight them right!

No Fealty To Reason

There is no space within these spheres Where poetry's soul can abide, Except the storm of a madman's mind Where the rule of reason Does not direct each daily act.

In these regions ungovernable A kingdom can each thought possess, No fealty to tyrant law Curbs the policy of each state, And that vagabond poetry, As such lives free and happily.

No Paean For Him

No paean or pageant, no doleful rhyme, No fey divination or light hearted jibe. No verse should ever be sung of Him. A wraith, a shadow, a tasteless wind. So let us forget Him. He's not worth a thought From men that are loved and whose hearts are warm.

Do we mourn each weed that withers and dies Under the black shade of the leaden sky? It grew in the dark. Was of use to none, And those who it touched were usually stung.

A petty sting, not really a pain, Just enough to make us turn away And tend the plot that provides the fruit, Or the flowers that smile in the summer noon.

So its green turned to grey, and it shrivelled to the Earth, With a falling sigh that was never heard. With a gloved hand and a tut we threw it in flame, And let its dust be lost in the wind and the rain. A nuisance that lived without a use or cause That any ought to care for or to mourn.

But He was a man, not a weed in the waste. No wind, no shadow, no wraith. A Man.

Old English Lament

No song or saga | is dare sung of them That wearily warred | against William the cruel In days of old | such deeds would be known And glory given | to great men as those For mighty men | would remember the faces That fiercely fought | and defied them well And when home in the hall | would heap on them praise But now there is naught | that the newcomers sing They sit and they sneer | at new subjects they rule Though careful to control | that most kingly of folk For we were mighty and many | without malice or hate And in fighting our foemen | would freely meet death But our lands and our lords | they are lost to us now And we are bound to the bounty | of these butchers of men

Pale Lady Moon

I trust not this night, it has no restful peace. The searching gusts of unquiet spirits roam, Pawing the skins of dream sleeping beasts And making a fire in hunting eyes to glow, Unquenched until on throbbing flesh they feast. And who is it that drives those souls? I know. It's her on high, that pale lady moon. She fools me not, though hid behind thin clouds. Her whispers are what make the wind to croon And trees to hiss, chilling the blood of the proud.

Potatoes

Sustainer of the western world, Usurper of the grain! From deep amongst the Andes hurled By butcher men of Spain.

Potato, potato. Food of the Earth, Grown in the mud and the wet; For those who keep a proper girth And shun cruel Atkins yet!

Pride

Pride is as an angry lion, Cowering those caught in its stare. It is the great oppressive one, That will lay all weaknesses bare. Though not an ally in your fight, To bring your enemies low. It is ourselves that fear his sight And appease his mighty show.

Prose

Reality is the prose of life By her divine pen writ We all within her novel sit Bound with all her mortal strife

From out this prose's languid plot We characters will come to know Of our own static lot But great we'll begin to grow

We'll tare the page We'll cast it in the fire We'll write anew With immortal poetry we'll sire

Returning To Syria

We must depart ere break of day To seek the East. Though I have long forgot the way, Once there I shall tell you of the least Ruined temple or Bedouin's hut Where to us the door is never shut.

Those lands that are twisted and scorched to dust By its flaming heart. And there is never a sword with rust, For quickly another conflict starts. Though what they fight for seems so blest, Where passions overflow there is no rest.

Yet we must depart across the seas And leave our isle, Where we have sat and thought in ease. We go to the land of the golden smile, That lights the darkest desert cave, And dreams of the cool oasis' wave.

Scribblings

I searched and strained for where I'd find that guide, As I lay turning in my lowly bed, For verses long since buried deep inside That melon shaped protrusion called my head. Where strange and twisted paths have oft times led To places that do rightly make me rave With fancy's beasts and beauties, till I'm dead, And gone beyond that mythic old ninth wave, The place that boring people call the grave.

Sleep

Sleep trees, sleep bushes, sleep a restful sleep And wait for spring, or sleep for evermore For who's to know if summer will return. River sleep a swollen winter sleep. Let deepest currents form a dreaming flow Of thoughts that knew a simple summer joy. Just give those memories a taste, then with Those leaves you carry on your back, Release them in the ever wakeful sea, Or drown with them and never wake again. For who's to know if summer will return.

Stonehenge

Why stand you there proud megaliths? So stony faced and grim. All back to back and looking out Hiding the truth within.

Your folded arms and old grey eyes, And deeply rooted feet, So long defied your enemies You have no friendly greet.

We all walk round out of your reach, Except those trained few Who you allow to come inside, 'Cause they're as grey as you

I wonder if you have forgot? You are so very old. If time has supped your memories, And your story stays untold.

Summer Solstice At Stonehenge

Do not expect to see Apollo here, Though its writ that every nineteen years The god does leave Olympus and appear In this round temple, though in Brittonic shape, Amid a throng of priests who bow and scrape, Surrendering to him the Sun their fate. Instead his half brother steals the show, The loud and dizzy Bacchus that we know, With Pan as well, they let the revels flow.

The Cherry Tree

There is a tree upon my garden lawn, Where I have played since bleary time began. Forever have we dwelt within one bourne Of growth and blooming seasons, our weary span. Not like the yearly sown and cutted corn. Now you a tree so strong, and me a man. But cracks along your boughs have started, I fear our doom should You or I be parted.

The Danaan's Return

He stood upon a seaward hill And gave a whistle, long and piercing, Then without care lay down a sleeping. And when he woke he found his stead, Proud Enbarr, pale and gleaming.

He rose from off the dewy earth And climbed upon the snow white horse, While whispering in his ears their course. Not through gentle fields their way, Or over wild mountains, covered in gorse.

He goes to the lands beyond the sun, When gone to bed into the west. The realm where all our dreams are blest, Without fears or nightmares looming. These are the lands where sleep is rest.

But this is no inhuman heaven Built with cold marble and cloud, Where fake insensible smiles are found, The heaven of those who hate the Earth. His is a place more lowly, less proud.

The pleasures are the joys of the world, When warmth rises from the beating heart And fills each distant body part, Till vented by sighs and gentle smiles, And not by rude mortal darts.

There is a winter on these isles too, It lasts as long as pies and stews, The tongue and mind desire to chew. And when we tire of cosy cold The buds burst with a greener hue.

And storms blow over, loud and strong, To quicken the heart and keep the sun A great pleasure, never to shun And craggy mountains, windy and bare, So on the lush plains we laugh and run.

And her with stars within her eyes, Leans on a gate with a beaming smile, As she hasn't seen him for a while; He left to give the world a myth, And sailed across the salty miles

So he spurs the horse upon its way, Not through bogs or rotten trees, But galloping across the swollen seas, Along the path of the ninth wave, To that land of gentle ease.

The Dark Ages

I write of age and place forgot When tribe and race did cast their lot. Some freedom gained, or slaves were made, And some from hist'ry were erased.

The times were war and anarchy, They were the times that men were free. To say and do what they thought true, To live as men as best they knew.

Nowhere more so than on these isles Where sisters three do wryly smile On rocky shores and grassy hills, Where nobly sleep the heroes still.

It was a time when from the west Some did return from islands blest, To echo through the ages long The sighing sound of faerie song.

For realm was formed by Merlin mage, Command at Arthur's feet was laid, And spirit fey through veins did flow, As we from all the legends know.

The Dawn

What is the dawn but a greying and a chill Of damp and frost that, like a sullen ghost, Passes through the body and the Earth? They feel it not; they were here before the dawn, Whining, clanging and droning is all they know For morning hymn. To them the day is just a light That shows the dust upon their faces and rot Upon their hands; that shows the trees and grass, The passing cars and hanging clouds above, And all the things they wish to join again.

The Distant Spring

You've failed. Life remains unslain. So brew your darkling clouds and rain, Or even more snow, if you think that you can. Can't you hear that underground? That deep and distant whispered sound. Your rule of this land is drawing to a close As that gentle whisper grows. The frost clothed tree has heard it, And though its rigid boughs are mute, I hear its slowly waking roots.

The Dragon Headed Bark

When will we see the dragon headed bark, From out the twilit land of Vesper bright, Some surging over the dark and stormy sea And strike upon these dying shores at night?

I know your folk have long these lands forsook, And hope in distant kinship is unwise, But now the hour is full for your return. Come and calm our shrill and piercing cries.

I know you do not love our foolish ways, I hear the lamentations that you sigh. Return before the end of days, I see the pity in your eyes.

The Fallen Leaves

Though now we see a dead and fallen leaf, Within its mould there lies a seed of spring That waits and hides within this present grief, Until it hears the quiet west wind sing A gentle song that speaks of life and light. And all the land shall sing that murmured song, And day shall rise from out the fearful night, And we shall dance and sing all summer long. And though the fallen leaves we loved are gone, They are the hidden soul of all that shines, That grows, that laughs, that cries, and still lives on. And though for them we must forever pine, Look to the stars and hear their singing sound, Not seek the silence of the sodden ground.

The Haggard Yew Tree

Old Yew that on the river bank is stood, What have you seen and heard since first you rose Between that grim and wild shadow wood, And the gentle river that sparkles as it flows? You saw the youths dance in those glimmering pools In summer time. But when the night winds blow, You hear the wail of dying prey as its blood cools. You can not move, you must endure the two, Horror and mirth, you are the haggard Yew.

The Land Of The Beating Heart

Remember the land where the beating heart Of each hill and stream and tree; Would thump to the tune Of the sun and the moon, And break our human hearts free?

The Lord Of Willow Stream

I am the reedy river prince, The lord of willow stream. Below the water is my home, Where silver fishes team.

From here I watch the leaves above Float past like summer cloud, And listen to the distant wier That makes a splashing sound.

You're welcome to come down and join My gurgling minnow throng. We'll feast on heaps of berries and nuts, And sing a babbling song!

Fear not the hidden stalking fish, With me they dare not fight. The cunning pike is kept away, He knows this monarch's might!

And when the sun has fled the sky, The moon and stars appear And shimmer a silver sheen To us that dwell down here.

Or better yet come in my house Of twisted alder root, To drink the finest river brew, Made by the friendly coot.

Such a happy time we'll have, We'll laugh and sing and dream, And wish to never leave again, The realm of willow stream.

The Lost Dream

Last night I dreamt a dream that stirred my heart, The sort that grips the spirit and the soul. Crept forth from out some quiet hidden part Of minds most deep and guarded mixing bowl. But curse you Lethe, for of your stream I drank, For once I woke from out that faerie place, Like proud Atlantis, all my memories sank. I lost the shape of that most lovely face! Now all I know, and trust, is that I pine With sighs and longings that I shall not shake, Because no place or person seems as fine, I think, as that which sleepy mind did make. How shall I end this slowly gnawing strife? When sun is set, and dreams are true as life?

The Old Man

I walked upon a rural path by night, I came across an aged and withered man. He had a long grey beard and strange attire, I said I'd try to help him if I can.

But then he gave a mighty booming laugh And up he sprang and held me by the arm, He had me in his spell, I dared not stir. None can fight the power of wizard charm.

The moon was full within the still night sky, And all the beasts, they gave a sigh. They knew The fate to which this deadly ghoul did take Those few he oft times thought to try.

The Sea

Let me sit upon timeless rocks And watch for hours the heaving sea. Have the sun rise and set and still remain As steadfast as the Earth on which I sit. To brood forever in some wild place And only leave when answers have been got To questions that had been forgot

The Sea Urge

I hear the echo of the sea Within my mind and soul, The constant murmur from afar Unconquered ebb and flow. Tended by nights pale sovereign Beckoning from on high, But subject to the lesser powers Of Earth's chaotic moods.

I close my eyes and leave but find The sound comes from within. I need not travel to the deep To muse away the hours, My blood does through me surge with force, But cup your ears to know, And with each sighing breath I hear Lapping upon the shore.

The Tree's Comfort

Entangled in my twisted roots, Below this grassy lea, There lies a man whose soul has sailed Across the moonlit sea.

Yet sometimes in my treeish sleep, Entwined with stars and streams, A whisper of the west-wind weaves A vision through my dreams.

I am walking in the wood beyond the field, In the bluebell time of Spring. The sun is warm upon my leaves, And on my boughs the birds sing.

Or I am rooted in meadow grass, Below me people lie, Eating good food, drinking fine wine And breathing contented sighs.

But then I wake. The vision goes, And I am left alone. The leaden clouds above me float; The bodies sleep below.

Yet, through the winters cruellest frost I feel that summer breeze, That wanders over the western wave, And whispers through my leaves.

The Winds Of Dream

When the darkling winds of dream Are blown across the shadow meads, And beat upon the window pain With strength that none but gods can tame; Do not draw the curtains shut, Afraid until the sun comes up. Go stand upon some mountain's prow And let those winds around you growl. Let them hiss and beat and moan, And make you in their power clothed, With robes of strength and will and thought, Tightly bound with diamond cord. A gust of Earth may whip the seas, Or tear away a dying leaf; But surging winds of dream enrage The soul into a dazzling flame. So do not draw the curtains shut Afraid until the sun comes up.

To Dwell Amid These Woven Words

The world is cold, just like the wind that blows Laden with icy rain from cruellest north, That strikes the trees and hills, yet still it flows Until no creature dares to venture forth. So why not dwell amid these woven words? Where stars are shining with a constant light, And on the boughs of twisted trees are birds That softly sing through dream heavy nights. And in the morn we'll drink the silver dew That falls from leaves to fill our golden bowls. We'll roam through land reforged anew With mingled memory and thought made whole. For here there shall be glory in our toil, And then, in peace, we'll lie upon the soil.

Tomorrow

Tomorrow an iron bell may ring And a new quest from the heavens spring, So let us wander while we may And find the beauty of this passing day.

Walking Song

We'll walk through weal and woe, Until our feet do glow. We'll follow every corner round, Until farthest north is found. We'll fear not what comes our way, Until all hope has gone astray.