Quod Ronald McCuaig

I se that makaris amang the laif
Playis heir thair padyanis, syne gois to graif;
Sparit is nocht thair facultie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

—QUOD DUMBAR quhen he wes seik
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CONTENTS

### Songs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SYDNEY, A FINE TOWN</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADRIGALS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSIC AND KISSES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVE ME AND NEVER LEAVE ME</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIOLETS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WANTON GOLDFISH</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANTY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS LOVE NOT EVERLASTING</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE HUNGRY MOTHS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRACIOUS GARDENS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Vaudeville

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaudeville</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PORTRAIT OF A LADY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PASSIONATE CLERK TO HIS LOVE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRETTY KID</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PROPOSAL</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN THE BANK</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE RAZOR</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SURFER</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE CHEQUE</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ART OF LOVE</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEY ALSO SERVE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SYDNEY, A FINE TOWN

Sydney is a fine town
And that's quite true,
And I love Sydney
Because I love you;

I love the long, crooked streets
The city through;
I've walked them all, side by side,
At all times, with you;

I love all the ferry-boats
That dance on the blue,
For I've gone a-voyaging
In ferries with you;

I love all the theatres
And picture-shows, too;
You've kissed me in most of them
When I've kissed you;

But I don't love Shakespeare's
Bronze statue;
It was there that you left me
And I left you;

But I do love the alleyway
Where, in the 'Loo,
We both felt sorry,
As often we do.
MADRIGALS

I
Have you sighed for flowers that are
Fallen with the falling years,
Or despaired that grieving tears
Could not weep for grief's despair?
From the air
I'll distil
Scents that were,
Tears that fell.
To a draught, when drunken deep,
Soothes the saddened dust to sleep.

II
From darkest nights I rise
Into darker day,
Where brightest heavens are clouded grey
With the rain in my eyes,
Nor all the winds in the skies
Can drive these tears away,
Nor will they melt today
Nor on any morrow,
But, frozen, they
Therein preserve my sorrow.
TRIOLETS

I
Always, my pretty one,
You will remain
In Youth's dominion,
Always my pretty one;
And when the dance is done
And beauties wane,
Always, my pretty one,
You will remain.

II
Many happy returns of the day
That gave such joy to me;
We used to kiss and say
"Many happy returns of the day";
But now it's blown away
Only in dreams I see
Many happy returns of the day
That gave such joy to me.

III
To love but one
And she the best;
To stay with none
To love but one:
New love begun
To leave the rest
To love but one
And she the best.

IV
Still looking steadily in the face of life
I see my face, grown grey with coming grief,
With harrowing wrinkles rife,
Still looking steadily in the face of life;
Through mother, mistress and wife,
Kindness, hope and belief,
Still looking steadily in the face of life
I see my face grown grey with coming grief:

I see my face, grown grey with coming grief,
Still looking steadily in the face of life,
Smile, when, with relief
I see my face, grown grey with coming grief,
Proud, yet, that in brief
Peace wrought from strife
I see my face, grown grey with coming grief,
Still looking steadily in the face of life.
THE WANTON GOLDFISH

A fish of flaming gold
   Sliding sleepy-sly
In shining shallows rolled
   His bold lascivious eye

At pretty female fish
   Waving inveigling tails,
And always had his wish,
   And paid in golden scales:

Such were his goings-on,
   And prices rose so high,
That soon his scales were gone,
   And he decided to die,

And poked his nose in the air
   And breathed the bloating doom,
Floating bleached and bare
   Where the fountain spume,

Thieving a golden sigh
   From the air it sprinkled,
Splashed his blinkless eye
   Till it winked and twinkled.
CHANTY

When rain falls, I say
Blow, blow away, sorrow,
It's a foul day today,
But it won't be tomorrow;
Blow away, blow away,
Blow, blow away, sorrow;
It's a foul day today,
But it won't be tomorrow.

As I walked in a glade
Blow, blow away, sorrow,
I met with a maid,
But she won't be tomorrow:
Blow away, blow away,
Blow, blow away, sorrow;
It's a foul day today,
But it won't be tomorrow.

And kiss whom you may,
Blow, blow away, sorrow,
She is yours for today,
But she won't be tomorrow:
Blow away, blow away,
Blow, blow away, sorrow;
It's a foul day today,
But it won't be tomorrow.

So all sing with me
Blow, blow away, sorrow,
And be happy to be,
For we won't be tomorrow;
Blow away, blow away,
Blow, blow away, sorrow;
It's a foul day today,
But it won't be tomorrow.

IS LOVE NOT EVERLASTING

Is love not everlasting,
And have I worn her lips away
With the hours' wasting,
That their sweetness should decay
In the tasting?

O love's a sun still burning,
And sweet as ever are her lips
For the shades yearning
Of moving worlds to this eclipse
Not returning.
GRACIOUS GARDENS

Gracious gardens wide
Of dead men's making
Have justified
Their painstaking;
When you smiled, walking through,
The grave trees bowed to you.

But in the chill night,
While you were sleeping,
In the moon's light
I saw the fountains weeping
Still tears for you,
Laughing and walking through.

VAUDEVILLE

To Mr Godfrey Blunden

"Originally a vaudeville was a satirical Paris street song . . . A fifteenth-century handicraftsman (Oliver Basselin) was celebrated for writing satirical songs; he lived in the Valley, or 'Vau', de Vire, in Normandy, whence his songs became known as 'Vaux de Vire'; when such songs came to be popular in Paris the name changed to 'Vaux de Ville'. Another derivation, quite as plausible, is from 'Voix de Ville' ('Voices of the Town')"
—Percy A. Scholes, in "The Oxford Companion to Music"
PORTRAIT OF A LADY

As her swift body can confer
Desire on rags, so time wears he
Until her creaseless days are past
And she, like her own clothes, is cast;
She has no eyes, no hair, no face,
But as the dial marks their place
Yet is a clock with motionless hands,
A swaying field that, reaped, still stands
Yet, reaped, she is forever gone;
She is a million; she is the one
Alone of all, who can destroy
Our peace, or consecrate our joy
Yet, take the one, the million pool
Into a dream, crying, “You fool!”
THE PASSIONATE CLERK TO
HIS LOVE

Live with me; be my wife;
We'll end flirtations;
You'll find it a slow life,
But with compensations.

And we'll get a flat
Of two witty
Rooms, a bath and kitchenette,
High over the city,

Where, in the evening
When dinner's over,
We'll wash up everything
And I'll be your lover,

And tie knot after knot
Of flesh aching,
Then cut the lot,
And without waking

You'll sleep till sunrise,
And we'll rise early,
And through each other's eyes
We'll see things clearly,

And never be dismayed
To find them shoddy,
And never be afraid
Of anybody;

And on Sunday afternoon
About three or four
I'll play the gramophone
While you pour

Afternoon tea
Into my soul,
And bending to me
With the sugar bowl

You'll be a priestess
Swaying the sheathing
Of a flower-stained dress
With even breathing

And in this atmosphere
Charmed from your breast
Half we shall hear
And feel the rest

As we talk scandal and
A kind of wit
We alone understand,
Or maybe just sit

Quiet while the clock chimes
Patient tomorrows,
And smile sometimes
At old sorrows.
PRETTY KID

Framed by a plate of postered glass
She sits and sees the people pass
Through eyes that, great and golden brown,
Roll into joy the visible town;
But her young breasts comprise her main
Business asset; of these you gain
A private view when, bending bare
Of any restrictive underwear,
She fiddles about and hesitates
Deep in her piles of cigarettes:
And lonely smokers, blowing rings,
Dream that they see those exquisite things
Dangling desire from wavering wreaths,
Which soon more sage reflection breathes
Away with hope; that base erosion
Ever should trade on sales-promotion
No good customer dares expect;
One feels it would not seem correct;
Besides, her husband might object.

THE PROPOSAL

Unsuccessfully, I fear,
A rake, and harried,
I entertained the idea
Of getting married.

Pure-faced, in coat and skirt,
The virgin visit,
Hesitantly inert,
Allowed me to kiss it.

I explained about my income,
Went into the question
Of woman's place in the home
And my chronic indigestion;

Which could not but appear
Insufficiently affable;
The Answer to the Maiden's Prayer
Should be more congenial,

I suppose. I had before
Considered this aspect,
And to prove I was not a boor
In any respect

I showed it my books,
Contrived amusing conversation,
Gave it flattering looks,
And with mute persuasion
Took off its hat and coat,
    Unbuttoned a shoe,
Loosened the lace at its throat

    Skirts easily undo

And many other things
    In dreaming quandary
Which falsifies fastenings
    And forgets lingerie:

Thus removing the bandages
    Of beauty's wounds
I, gasping their ravages
    In my heart's bounds,

Saw naked, like a deft
    "I told you so",
The quivering-lipped love I left
    Two years ago.

THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER

She told a friend of mine last Spring
She found me very int'resting,
Meaning she deigned to feel inclined
To keep me in her beautiful mind
Maybe a minute, maybe a day,
Until the interest wore away
Its principal to normal blank:
But I preferred a safer bank.
IN THE BANK

Here in the bank
She is a typist
Open and frank
And easily kissed;

Which seems in the end
Hardly worth while;
She’s a good friend,
But he owns her smile

Who can dictate
Her daily type-rites:
He goes on to state
In bed of nights.

They have a good time;
She keeps him steady;
I believe she loves him;
He’s married already

She feels, in any case,
She must not marry,
Seeing she has
Her people to carry.

He’s a nice chap,
But he’ll get tired;
It will break up;
She won’t be required.

Boarding and bored,
Sure that the grave
Only is assured,
This girl will have

No art
To charm grief,
And no heart,
And no belief.

Entranced, watching,
I am struck through;
I find it touching;
I feel I should do

Something. With dull claws
And vague pangs
My conscience gnaws.
Outside a door bangs.

The altruistic mouse
Startled, scurries
Out of my mind’s house:
I’ve my own worries.
THE RAZOR

Edged with incuriosity
Whom it cuts, or if, or why,
Her beauty is a lazy razor
Drawn across the brain that has her;
Death so alive is mere illusion
So is her beauty, which, being gone,
Stays as a razor, cold and jagged,
Lazily over the brain is dragg’d.

THE SURFER

The breakers crash on the sands
   In a white line of roar
Over the mumble of thousands
   Stretched on the shore:

A cliff reared at the sky
   Southwards, holds on its back
Little red roofs that defy
   The wind’s wrack:

In and out of the sea run
   Boys cutting capers;
Young girls lie down for the sun;
   Old men read newspapers;
THE CHEQUE

Her age is young enough in wives,
But very old in virgins' lives:
With shrivelling hands, and shrivelling neck,
And shrivelling heart, she writes a cheque;
And, as her wrinkles love and think,
So is her blood congealed in ink,
Which the Assurance Company
Will melt, when she is fifty-three,
Into five hundred pounds, and so,
For a while longer, she may go
On Sundays, to her grim thanksgiving
For the continuance of living.

THE ART OF LOVE

I met a new one
The other night;
I says, "Come for a run;
The moon's about right,
And the beach is good fun
In the moonlight."

She just sneers;
Up goes her nose;
Says she prefers
Picture-shows,
And up she steers
For the five-shilling rows.

"Here, let me talk."
I says, "I'm doing this;
Wait on the side-walk";
I go to the office;
I pretend to talk;
I says, "Thank you, Miss";

And back with a long face:
"There's no room
Anywhere," I says;
"But along you come;
I know a place;
We can't go home."
We go on a bus
Up a few streets
To a real cheap house;
We missed the gazettes;
The bugs chased us
Across the seats;

And did she curse me!
They're all the same,
Two out of three;
I go up to them;
I says, “Let me see;
I forget your name”;

I says, “Didn’t we go
To school together?”
She says “No”.
I says, “Up Merewether?”
She says “No”.
We didn’t, neither.

I says, “No relations, no
Cousins there?”
She says “No”.
I says, “Going anywhere?”
She says “No;
Nowhere particular.”

“How about coming down
The beach,” I says; “you don’t
Want to stew in town,”
I says; but they won’t;
Most I’ve known;
Pictures, they want.

Pictures. They all
Want pictures; “Pictures
Are all very well,”
I says; “but there’s
Nothing like natural
Pictures.”

I says to them straight,
“You must have a lover;
You’ll leave it too late;
It’s now or never.”
I says; “why wait?
We’re not young forever.”

“You know what I want”, I says;
“Right or wrong,
We haven’t got always;
We haven’t long
To live,” I says:
We haven’t, long.
THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY
STAND AND WAIT

In flats, on streets, behind the bar,
Her eyes are neither near nor far;
They are as quiet, calm and cool
As a beslimed, stagnating pool
Charged to a dense putridity
With things a lady shouldn't see;
Her days, bruised to the neutral squalor
That stains her body's natural pallor,
Are sometimes brightened-up in streaks,
Like her red, poster-painted cheeks,
With haemorrhage of brains unbarred
And roses charming wives discard:
The labourer, the artisan,
The guzzle-gutted business man,
Find her a cheap, convenient sewer
For any good turn they care to do her;
Sometimes abuse her, sometimes pet her,
And having used her well, forget her.

THE ARTIST'S MODEL

Well; what have you got to say
For yourself, now? Say what you can.
We're out of the way.
We're not in the street, now.
Speak like a man
If you can; you're not a man,
Rushing me out of a picture-show
Because you're ashamed; that's why;
Don't lie;
Because you're ashamed.
Oh, no;
I know you're not to be blamed:
You're the great artist, of course;
The mental child;
Absolutely no sense of responsibility;
Meek and mild;
You must avoid notoriety
Without remorse;
It would be worse
Than a society divorce;
God knows you can't divorce
Me. Well, be quick;
Aren't you going to speak?

No.

Oh.

What's the use?
I'm pleased you make no excuse,
Rushing me out of there;
I could see the people stare;
John, I was amazed;
Rushing me out like an arrest;
The way the people gazed.
Was it hurrying home to its little love-nest?

Yes, dear.

Swine; you're not a man, not even
A gentleman. I've known
Gentlemen; I've had
Gentlemen, do you hear?
But you're the only one
Utterly bad.
You don't even try to be forgiven.
You're a snob;
I won't deceive you;
Just a mean little snob;
I think I'll leave you;
It'd be a good job.

Perhaps

Well?

Nothing.

Is that all?

Well, I know I'm a snob. That's all.

You're a snob all right, and what's more
You don't care.
It runs off you

Like water off a duck's back.

You're a swine

I'm a duck

You're a swine

I'm a duck

You're a swine trying to be Lord Muck.
Don't try
To laugh it off; it's no good;
I'm no whore, John; you can't buy
What I give you; you don't even pay for my
food.
I thought you really loved me, and now I find
You have a reputation to consider.
We won't argue about mine; it would be better
If we could; we should have, before.
I begin to see you'd like me to be a whore,
And I can't just pretend to be blind;
So you've got to get this in your mind:
If you have me all night, you must love me all
day;
If you have me all night—

All right; all right;
For Godsake tone it down.
Do you want to wake the whole town?
I'm a snob; I'm sorry; what more can I say?
I'm made that way;
I'm a pig; I'm only a fool—

And you've been to boarding-school;
So exclusive, wasn't it, John?
I wish to God you hadn't have gone,
If that's how they teach you to treat women,
Like pigs,
Inhuman

I know; I've got no excuse.
It's no use.
Only vulgar abuse.
What can I do?

That's up to you.

But what can I do?
I've said I'm sorry.
What do you want?

I should worry.

I'm sorry; I can't
Say any more.
I'm a snob; I've said I'm sorry;
I'm sorry as I can be;
That's a good deal, for me;
I know it sounds a bit cold,
But what can I do?

Do you
Need to be told?

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Tonight the stars are broken glass,
The moon's a sovereign made of brass,
And stars, glass, brass and moon and money
Strike me as being not even funny;
And though the glass should join into
A palace window with a view
Of Sleeping Beauty in a swoon
Lit by a beaming bawd of a moon,
And though the brass were bolts of courage
To break the window of love's cage
And though the stars were diamond strings
Piled high with sovereigns' glitterings
To change her wakening chastity,
All this would cut no ice with me
On whom the moon shines with the wan
Wavering smile of a plain woman
Who feels that love is not enough
And knows she has no more than Love.
I'm living with a commercial traveller;
He's away, most of the time;
Most I see of him's his wife; as for her:
I'm just home from a show,
And there I am undressing, in my shirt;
I hear midnight chime,
And up flares the curtain at the window;
The door's opened; it's Gert,
That's the wife; her hair's hanging down;
She's only got her nightgown
Blowing up against her in the wind;
She's fat, and getting fatter;
I said, "What's the matter?"
"Jack," she said, "now's your chance";
"What chance?" I said. "You out of your mind?"
She goes over to the bed;
I grab my pants;
"That's enough of that," I said. "Now, go on; you get out."
"But, Jack," she said, "don't you love me?"
"I don't know what you're talking about," I said; "besides, Jim—
What about him?"
"Yes; Jim," she said; "there's always Jim, but he's Always away; and you don't know
What it's like. I can't stand it. And anyhow,
Jack, don't you want me?" "Oh, don't be an ass," I said; "look at yourself in the glass."

She faced the mirror where she stood
And sort of stiffened there;
Her eyes went still as knots in a bit of wood,
And it all seemed to sigh out of her;
"All right," she said; "all right, all right, goodnight."
As though she didn't know if I heard,
And shuffled out without another word.

Well, I was tired; I went to bed and slept.
In the morning
I thought I'd dreamt the whole thing;
But at breakfast, I could have wept;
Poor Gert, clattering the dishes
With a dead sort of face
Like a fish's.
I'll have to get a new place.
I'm going out today to have a look.
Trouble is, she's a marvellous cook.
BETTY BY THE SEA

Her drooping flowers dabble upon
Drooping breasts of crisp cretonne;
The thirsty sun has drained her breasts
Of milk of human interests
In babies, clothing, recipes,
Husband's pleasing leuderies
And gossip over the kitchen fence,
And left this earthy innocence;
The kindly sun has drained away
Her life, like suds on washing day,
And left her in this chair on the sands,
Clasping her flowers with laundered hands:
As though a storm of breeding pains
And work and worry, which scoured her veins,
Had passed, she opens her tired eyes,
Like still seas, to vacant skies.
A MEDITATION

I was annoyed with myself for
Saying I loved her, because
What I wanted, then, was
Less, or more.

And it was no fun
Putting her head in a whirl;
She was such a quiet girl;
It's not done.

Anyhow, I didn't do it;
I just kissed her, and then
Tried not to see her again,
Feeling rather a brute.

Perhaps I should have gone
Through with it; she'd have had
One sin, when she was old and sad,
To congratulate herself on.

But I remember, I thought at the time:
You'd better not;
They hang on to what they've got
Like birdlime.

You eat the fruit and sing;
When you've had enough,
They talk all about love,
And you're caught there, twittering;

Afraid to look her in the face,
Afraid of what people may say,
Afraid of her relations all day,
And at night, of an imagined disgrace;

Or you have her tagged on to you
For the term of your natural life,
And have to say, “This is my wife;
This is the best I could do”;

And somehow in the end you find
She sits like an over-ripe tomato,
Or walks like a scarecrow,
Because of her beautiful mind:

Like something or other; like a red crystal
Dropped into the pellucid cup
Of a man's life; time melts it up,
And the lying purple permeates all.

I have seen how many a match
Has gone this way; how an honest man
With a clear mind, can
Turn slowly to a lovely purple patch.

Sometimes I wish I could myself; but
I should not easily come to heel,
I feel, and I feel
I should feel I was getting into a rut.

So perhaps it's all in the best interest
Of girls in general; for their part
They take heart;
Indeed, they seem singularly unimpressed
While I sit wearily in my sitting room
And watch the virtuous hands of the clock
Turning the afternoon into a lock
On shadows coinciding with my gloom.

It's the way I'm made,
Probably. God knows.
As the twig's bent, it grows,
I'm afraid.

THE LETTER

Dear, as I write and think of you,
And several other people too,
The flooring of the flat above,
Creaking with aged, illicit love,
Reminds me, when I was trying to write
These very words the other night,
He spoke from three till half past four
Merely repeating she was a whore;
The boy below has just begun
To find it not precisely fun;
The trouble is, as he explained
The Thursday evening when it rained
To a judicial prig of a friend
(I thought their talk would never end)
The girl is really not the kind
Of girl he really had in mind;
But still he keeps her on, for fear
Of hurting her; and now I hear
The lovely girl who loves to dwell,
MUSIC IN THE AIR

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When Jack had his girl
On Friday night.

He closed his desk
At the close of day.
As he passed the counter
They gave him his pay:

They went to a café;
The soup was cold;
The beef was scraggy,
The prunes full of mould:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they ate their dinner
On Friday night:

They sat very still
In the rattle and hum.
Jack said, “Mary,
I want to go home”;

They went to a café;
The soup was cold;
The beef was scraggy,
The prunes full of mould:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they ate their dinner
On Friday night:

“I want to go home
And go to bed;
Besides, you remember
What you said”;

They went to a café;
The soup was cold;
The beef was scraggy,
The prunes full of mould:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they ate their dinner
On Friday night:

She picked up her bag,
Made not reply;
She pushed back her chair
With a quiet sigh:

She was a typist
Down at the bank;
Her mother was religious;
Her father drank:

She was a typist
Down at the bank;
Her mother was religious;
Her father drank:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they drank and prayed
On Friday night:

She picked up her bag,
Made not reply;
She pushed back her chair
With a quiet sigh:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they drank and prayed
On Friday night:

She picked up her bag,
Made not reply;
She pushed back her chair
With a quiet sigh:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they drank and prayed
On Friday night:
He took her arm
Through a traffic jam;
They stood on the corner
To wait for a tram:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they stood on the corner
On Friday night:

Their faces were pale
In the crimson spite
Of the shop-signs' whorish
Beckoning light:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When the tram crawled by
On Friday night:

They got in the tram
It jolted them down
To the end of the section
On the edge of town:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As they crossed the road
On Friday night:

Jack had a room
On the second floor;
They climbed the stairs
And opened the door:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
Through the open door
On Friday night:

They closed the door;
Mary hung
Lax in his arms;
His fierce lips stung:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When they closed the door
On Friday night:

His fierce lips stung
At her throat like a bee;
Like a snake, like a sleek
Lithe leopard was he:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When his fierce lips stung
On Friday night:

Like a leopard, and she
Was placid prey;
She'd dreamed it for months
All night and day:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When her dreams came true
On Friday night:

He loosened her blouse
And mad waist bands;
She tried to help
His clumsy hands:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When he loosened her blouse
On Friday night:
She loved his hands;
She said "Oh, mind;
I'll do it myself";
He drew the blind:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As he drew the blind
On Friday night:

The whore next door
Had a radio set,
And she was seeing
What she could get:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As she screwed at the dial
On Friday night:

A loud voice sang
From Heaven above
With a screeching scratch
Of the joys of love:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
As the loud voice sang
On Friday night:

Of the joys of love;
Pale in the gloom
She was deaf to the world
In her wild blood's boom:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
Through her booming blood
On Friday night:

Like the boom of trams
Outside, and the squeal
Of nerves on the curves
Of shrieking steel:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
In curving nerves
On Friday night:

Like shrieking steel
In his shaking embrace
Through a slit in the blind
Light streamed on her face:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
Through a slit in the blind
On Friday night:

On her anguished face
And tight-shut eyes;
Jack won't forget it
Until he dies:

There was music in the air
And the moon shone bright
When Jack had his girl
On Friday night:
Squeaking with age, she dragged a neat
Gown to me across the street;
Her red eyes burned the summer air,
The sun shone yellow in grey hair
Tightly screwed around her head
To keep her brains in, and she said:
"They've come today; they've come today;
Say you won't let them take me away;
I'm a respectable woman, sir;
My only daughter—no, it's not her;
My son-in-law it is; he's put
My girl against me—now they've got
People in to say I'm mad
And take me off; I'm not that bad;
I'm a respectable woman; I
Worked all my life; I want to die
In my own home"; "I'm very sorry
Madam," I said, "but please don't worry;
Of course, I have no influence here,
But try those people over there:
They'll fix you up"; and when she'd gone
I went vituperating on,
Cursing the blood that mixed this just
Decision with such ancient dust
So to refuse its lawful bin
And soil my faith in hygiene.
THE CRITIC

The world is a disreputable theatre;
I am a critic of it
On bad terms with the manager
Because of my wit.

For I was born to describe the
Poor farce precisely;
He cannot take me in, bribe me,
Or chastise me.

I shall go on speaking my mind,
Forcing him to the vague:
“Miss Jones, try to be kind
To Mr McCuaig”;

She will dance for him who has bought her
With the strained mechanical grace
Her dear mother taught her,
And a smile smeared on her face,

To the blurring of an obscene orchestra
Tearing her childlike body in its rage
She will melt her legs in the glare
Of the white heat of the stage,

Twisting her lips as the nerves twist
Into a smiling scar
Like a wincing contortionist
On an inhuman cross-bar;

And, seduced by her weary agility,
I shall grow into a grin;
I shall sign my name to futility,
And be taken in.
We found them in town;
By strange coincidence
He had his pants down:
We drew an inference.

He protected her,
Demanded a Royal Commission,
Said his accounts were
In perfect condition:

"Step up and take a look;
I stand my ground,
My life an open book,
My word my bond;

"As for the woman,
Well, it's like this:
I'm only human.  
That's how it is."

We thought every word of it
Was Bible.
He issued a writ,
Ten thousand for libel.

Then we knew there must be
Something funny;
He'd been caught; probably
Needed the money.

So the market dropped,
And we all sold, 
And when it stopped
He was left cold.

And some say his sister
Is being kept, 
But others infer
She just overslept;

She went late, they say;
She came home in the dark;
She felt a bit gay;
She slept in the park.

Anyhow, what's it matter?
I said I didn't care;
But he said the butter
Was poor everywhere:

"This season," he said, 
"You can't get it nohow. 
Some say it's the feed;  
Some say it's the cow":

Some say it's politics, 
Some anthropology,  
Some blame a plague of ticks, 
Others, psychology:

Also the Press: 
Popular romances  
Aren't a bad guess 
In the circumstances.
NO SALE

All this year we've hardly turned a wheel. Trading's as slow as a funeral.
Talk about funerals: chap came in this morning; Jew: you could tell by his nose flying out of his face like a spinnaker;
Looks over the stock.
"Tell you what I want," he said; "car with a long chassis;
Don't see anything here very suitable."
"Long chassis?" I said. I showed him the Studebaker. You don't want anything longer than that," I said, "Surely," I said. "Well," he said, "it don't look long enough to me."
"Don't want to seem curious," I said; "but what do you want it for?"
"Funeral director," he said, "and I want a long chassis To build a new hearse on; but that don't look long enough."
"Now look here," I said; "you ever see a hearse With a longer chassis than that Studebaker? Cut her off at the front seat and look at all the space you've got."
"Can't see it," he said; "but listen, I'll tell you what: You: you're as long in the legs as anyone I ever dealt with;
Just lie along her yourself, and let's see how she looks."
"Time enough for that," I said; "time enough for that; I'm no Grecian statue, I know, but I don't have to take on Posing for stiffs, yet." I just couldn't do it. I'm not superstitious.

Or am I? The Jews, now: they bury them head to the west, Don't they? Or head to the east, is it? Do they put them head-first in the hearses? I forget. I suppose it don't matter. The hearse is the same size, in any case. Perhaps he'll come back in the morning. There's no longer cars in the city at present that I've seen.
ODE TO MR GEORGE FINEY ON HIS EXHIBITION OF COLLAGE*

PerPhidias mirrormile of the age's hideols,
   Caricatural aristocrat, ignawing eye's vitals,
Your juggernautomobilious scissors and pen
   Deflatterate the bossiness abdoMen;

And art-of-pocket artists you have lent
   More meaning than their mean advertisement.
Adding to ads. the gaiety of damNations
   That bust the gutter-perky reputerations:

O Georgeous Finey, what unfinnicking finesse,
   That, at your sun-and-mooniversal address,
Can walk a Milky Way of marbleous collage,
   Yet dip the great reGretta out of Garbage!

THE DAILY ROUND

The manager's desk revolves in business circles,
   Circled by desks in constant revolution,
Enveloped by the fetor of the workless
   The menace of whose painful destitution

Crawls through the house-phone saying "Yes, sir";
   "No, sir";
   Or grates across a mile of city streets:
   "I thought we'd get our order by September . . . ?"
   And the desk fountain-pen scrawls and repeats:

   "J. Jones J. Jones J. Jones J. Jones J. Jones J. Jones J.
   Subscribing to his destiny; and plangent
   Buzzers bar-off the conferential drones.
   The evening kicks him on his homing tangent.

* Mr Finey had a gallery of black-and-white caricatures of business men. Pasting together cuts from newspaper advertisements, he caricatured moving-picture actors of the day. I remember a caricature of William Powell in which the chassis of an advertised car was his cap. The verses refer to Greta Garbo, a popular actress of that time, and to "The Milky Way," a board thickly covered in paint, on which streaky glass marbles did duty as stars.
FLAT SONG

I have been down the Domain
Again, and heard the loud
Red-haired Irish hellion
Spitting rebellion
Upon the Sunday faces of the crowd;
And now, as I tie up my laundry,
I wonder how collars would last
If I did not have to send them to a laundry,
And how long she and I would last,
And feel I should approve
Dreams of all mankind in choiring harmonies of
love . . .
If only I had the time . . .!
But it's just a continual laundry,
Not very sublime.