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bibliographic and critical study in two volumes*

Maureen Elizabeth Harris

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The Drama, Poetry and Hymns of Fred Pratt Green:
a bibliographic and critical study
in two volumes.

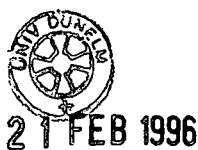
VOLUME ONE : DRAMA AND POETRY

Maureen Elizabeth Harris

A thesis submitted in partial requirement for the degree of Ph.D
in the University of Durham

Department of English Literature
1995

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The Drama, Poetry and Hymns of Fred Pratt Green:
a bibliographic and critical study

Maureen Elizabeth Harris

Abstract:

This thesis, which is presented in two volumes, gives a detailed description of nearly all plays, poems and hymns written by Fred Pratt Green.

In the first volume bibliographic detail of all extant plays is given. There is also a synopsis of several plays and a discussion particularly of the late plays. Most of the thirteen plays referred to have been discovered during this research. Copies of some of these plays are not generally available: two are in the British Library, two are at the Pratt Green collection at the University of Durham and the others are personal copies which I obtained from various sources.

The poetry section lists all known poems and many of these have been dated as a result of my research findings. Their original place of publication is given. There is a critical commentary on the four main collections: This Unlikely Earth, The Skating Parson, The Old Couple and The Last Lap. A short discussion is included here focussing on poetry ranging from 1929-1960s which was not included in a main collection and which was discovered during this research.

Volume One concludes with variations in poetry texts, from their first publication to their later inclusion in the above four main collections or later anthologies.

The second volume contains a complete listing of hymns to date and hymnals in which they appear where relevant. The section starts with a detailed evaluation of Pratt Green's contribution to hymnody and examines some characteristics of his hymns. Considerable comparison of textual variation in published hymnals has been undertaken as part of this research and this is included in this section. Volume Two concludes with a discussion of the significance of the variations noted.

Declaration

The research presented in this thesis has been carried out between 1990-1995 under the supervision of Professor J. R. Watson at the University of Durham. It is the original work of the author unless stated otherwise. None of this work has been submitted for any other degree.

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FRED PRATT GREEN:

Chronology

- 1903 Born at Roby, near Liverpool
- 1914-17 Wallasey Grammar School
- 1917-20 Rydal School, Colwyn Bay
- 1920-24 Worked in Liverpool in father's firm.
- 1924 One year appointment as lay pastoral worker, in the Severn Valley Circuit.
- 1925-28 Began training as a Methodist minister at Didsbury Theological College.
- 1927 Farley Goes Out written, published by Cargate Press, London.
- 1928 Ordained as Methodist minister.
- 1928 Appointed as Chaplain to Hunmanby Hall School, near Scarborough, Yorkshire.
Emancipation written? Published by Cargate Press, London.
- 1931 Married Marjorie Dowsett.
- 1931 Appointed as Minister, Poole in Wharfedale, Otley Circuit, Yorks.
- 1934 Appointment as Minister, Girdlington Circuit, Bradford.
Time of writing The House at Arrow Ghyll, The Skyfarer, Left Luggage, The Tree of Peace, The Night Is Dark, Nursery Farm
All published by B.Wade, (Lampas Press, Bradford).
- 1939 Appointment as Minister, Gant's Hill, Ilford, Essex.
- 1944 Appointment as Minister, Church in the Orchard, Finsbury Park Circuit, London.
Here he met Fallon Web - an important influence on his poetry.
- 1946 Plane From Basra written, published by the Methodist Youth Department.

- 1947 Appointed Superintendent Minister at The Dome Mission, Brighton.
Here he joined a Poetry Circle which led to his poems being brought to the attention of Erica Marx followed by the publication of:
- 1952 Poets in Pamphlet (Hand & Flower Press)
- 1952 Appointed as Minister, Shirley, Surrey.
This was a time of prolific poetry publication with contributions to: The Tablet, Outposts, New Yorker Listener, Poetry Review, Countryman
- 1957 Appointed as Chairman of the York & Hull District of the Methodist Church.
- 1963 The Skating Parson published (Epworth Press).
- 1964 Awarded The Greenwood Prize for poetry for his poem 'Head And Shoulders'.
- 1964 Appointed as Minister, at Trinity Church, Sutton, Surrey, his last appointment.
The Star of Peace was written for this church
- 1967 Co-opted to the Working Party for the Methodist Hymn Book Supplement, 'Hymns and Songs'.
This brought him into contact with John Wilson- a further influence on hymn writing.
- 1969 Retired to Norwich.
Plays written here for a local group, The Helm Players, Norwich:
A Kind Of Resurrection
Red Is For Danger
Both plays unpublished but performed.
- 1971 Twenty-Six Hymns published (Epworth Press).
- 1976 The Old Couple published by Harry Chambers:
Peterloo Poets.
- 1977 Partners in Praise ed. Bernard Braley & Pratt Green published (Stainer & Bell).

- 1982 Galliard Book of Carols published (Stainer & Bell).
Hymns & Ballads of Fred Pratt Green published
(Stainer & Bell)
The Pratt Greens' visit to U.S.A. for the Award of
Honorary Doctor in Humane Letters by Emory
University, Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1982-3 Links with Ron Watson, a composer in Norwich, lead
to further hymn writing.
- 1983-7 This is a period of hymn writing and translations for
hymnals worldwide.
- 1987 The Pratt Green Collection established at Durham
University.
- 1989 Later Hymns & Ballads and Fifty Poems published
(Stainer & Bell).
- 1990 The Pratt Green's move to Cromwell House,
Methodist Homes for the Aged, Norwich.
- 1991 The Last Lap published (Stainer & Bell).
- 1992-3 Miscellaneous poems and hymns written.
- 1993 Pratt Green's Ninetieth birthday.
- 1994 The award of an M.B.E. for services to hymnody.
The Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk conferred the honour
at Cromwell House in Norwich.

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to present as complete a record of the work of Fred Pratt Green as possible. It is a bibliography with some introductory commentary to each section, providing as comprehensive a guide as possible to the reader or student of Pratt Green's work.

Fred Pratt Green (born 1903) is a retired Methodist minister. He is internationally known as a hymn writer, but he has also published poems and plays. I have attempted to identify as many as possible of each of these, and have succeeded in recovering work that was thought to have been lost, or which was not included in the bibliography published in The Later Hymns and Ballads of Fred Pratt Green (1989). This bibliography is incomplete, and I have supplemented it in a number of places: the result is a comprehensive list of his work, with details of publication, together with a guide to the prospective reader.

In compiling this bibliography, I have benefited greatly from numerous conversations with the author, who has been extremely helpful. He has been able to suggest places where forgotten poems may be found (with a great deal of searching, for his references were sometimes imprecise) in periodicals and magazines such as The Countryman, the New Yorker, John O'London's Weekly, English, The Hibbert Journal, and The Tablet. In addition, the author kindly supplied copies of some of his later plays (unpublished). He also gave me copies of some sonnets recently written to friends, and of some unpublished verses written to a fellow-poet, Peter Dunn, in the 1950s (returned to him in 1993). He has also kept me informed of any new writing since I began work on this project in 1990.

Among the major sources of information about Pratt Green's work are the scrapbooks which he has kept since the 1960s about his hymn writing. There are now more than fifty of these, in the hands of the Trustees of the

Pratt Green Trust prior to their deposit in the Pitts Library of the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (from which Pratt Green received an honorary Degree in 1982). I have been permitted to consult these, and I am grateful to the Trustees, and especially to Mr. Bernard Braley of Stainer and Bell, for this facility. In addition to these scrapbooks, there are two others devoted to Pratt Green's poetry which I have been able to consult, and I have also been allowed to copy the unpublished poetry held in Stainer and Bell's archives.

Unfortunately, on moving from his last house in Norwich to the Methodist Home for the Aged, Cromwell House, Norwich, in 1990, Pratt Green destroyed or lost many papers relating to his poetry which might have been valuable.

I have also been helped by many people who either knew Pratt Green or who had some contact with his work - old friends, editors of newspapers in towns where he lived, church members, old girls from the school where he was chaplain from 1928 to 1931 (Hunmanby Hall, a Methodist Girls' school near Scarborough, closed in 1991) I have therefore spent a good deal of time in the search for personal contacts, and even more time in the perusal of unindexed decades of periodicals. Some of these periodicals became defunct during the last twenty years, and back numbers have been found with difficulty, some in local libraries in places such as Gloucester and Glasgow.

The plays fall into two distinct groups, those published in the 1920s and 30s, and those written, performed, but not published in the 1960s and 70s. The publishers of some of the early plays, Cargate Press of London, and Lampas Press of Bradford, went out of business many years ago, and I have been unable to recover all of them. Two of the plays, Farley Goes Out and Plane From Basra, are in the British Library; another, Emancipation, was kindly presented by Miss Joan M. Senior together with a copy of Farley Goes Out to the Pratt Green Collection in the Library of the University of Durham.

It is partly limitation on the length of a thesis that has resulted in the drama section receiving less analysis and discussion than the poetry and hymn sections. Also Pratt Green, with whom I have discussed this work, does not wish emphasis to be placed on the early plays – nine out of the thirteen were written in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus the drama section is primarily of interest firstly because it displays the playwright's ability from the start of his literary career to produce literature for given situations (which is how he turned to hymn writing in the 1960s). Secondly, the ideas expressed in these early plays portray a writer with an unusual awareness, so early in this century, of the necessity of understanding and co-existence between different religions, depicted in Farley Goes Out; and thirdly, it demonstrates how drama can be used as a vehicle to help people to recognize and confront contemporary issues.

Most of the poems have appeared in four published collections: This Unlikely Earth (1952), The Skating Parson (1963), The Old Couple (1976) and The Last Lap (1991). I have attempted to trace the poems in each collection to their first appearance in a magazine or periodical.

During this research I have discovered poems ranging from 1929 onwards which were never re-published and had been forgotten; these texts are included and discussed briefly in the poetry section in 2.6.

I have also recorded textual variants, and where possible supplied alternative lines, additions and corrections found in the scrapbooks or, more often, in the original publication.

The hymns have appeared in numerous hymn books throughout the world. I have endeavoured, partly by using the scrapbooks, to record the successive appearances of the hymns, details of commissioning (where relevant) and the circumstances of their composition, together with variant readings and alterations by editorial committees or by the hymn writer himself. I have also included recent hymns obtained from Fred Pratt Green in the last two years.

The result is as complete a bibliography as possible in the present

circumstances. It is to be hoped that copies of the missing plays will turn up, and it is possible that other poems and hymns may be found, but exhaustive searches and continued enquiries have failed to produce any more examples of Pratt Green's work, and it is improbable that many new texts will be discovered. This bibliography, therefore, is as accurate and full as it can be : it contains many items which are not found in The Later Hymns and Ballads of Fred Pratt Green, and may fairly claim to have superseded it.

I would like to record my gratitude and thanks to Fred Pratt Green for his continued interest and support, to Bernard Braley for his permission to quote material from both the Stainer & Bell Archives and from poetry where the copyright is held by that publisher, to The Tablet, The Countryman and the New Yorker where editors have shown interest in this research and provided copies of some poems and titles of others, to the University of Durham Palace Green library staff, and to my supervisor, Professor J.R.Watson, for his inspiration and for allowing me the privilege of being one of his research students.

Finally, I acknowledge the great debt I owe to my husband who has made it possible for me to pursue this research despite my domestic commitments.

1.1

The plays of Pratt Green form a distinct part of his writings. They stretch from 1927 to the early seventies, thus covering a far wider period than either the poetry or hymns which have been concentrated mainly into intense periods of activity - the poetry 1945 - 1965; the hymns 1960 - 1990s.

Early Period (1927 - 1939)

Publisher:

1920s

Farley Goes Out	3 acts	Cargate Press
Emancipation	3 acts	Cargate Press
Sons of Daybreak	?	untraced

1930s

The Skyfarer	3 acts	Lampas Press
The House At Arrow Ghyll	3 acts	Lampas Press
The Night is Dark	1 act	Lampas Press
Left Luggage	1 act	Lampas Press
Nursery Farm	a play in three scenes	Lampas Press
The Tree of Peace	?	Lampas Press?

Middle Period 1945

Plane From Basra	3 acts	Methodist Youth Dept.
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Late Plays 1960 - 1970

The Star of Peace	a play in four episodes	unpublished
Red Is For Danger	a play in seven episodes	unpublished
A Kind Of Resurrection	a three act play	unpublished



Early plays:

F.P.G. dismisses the early plays as juvenilia. Perhaps it is the reason why he has kept no copies of them. In order to study the text of Farley Goes Out during research it was necessary to obtain a photocopy from the British Library.

F.P.G. seems to remember the early plays for their performance rather than their content. His recollection of 'Soper' ruining an act by his "ad libbing", and not knowing his part, is one of the memories he has of his first play, Farley Goes Out, which was written in 1927 whilst Pratt Green was at Didsbury Theological College, training for the Methodist ministry. He recounts how his parents when touring the West Indies in the mid 1930s attended a performance of 'Farley' which had a successful reception in Methodism. This popularity is slightly amusing because when the play was performed at Didsbury the college authorities would not allow the word 'play' to be used in advertising the performance of Farley Goes Out, considering that word unsuitable for a ministerial training college.

The play is concerned with missionary work and attitudes towards it. This was a time when the dramatist was preparing himself for possible placement in the mission field and the play indicates his awareness of problems facing missionaries. Just as young Farley must leave his family and his successful father, a local businessman, so Pratt Green was preparing to sever similar ties. His own father, a successful leather merchant, had looked for continued support from his younger son. Like Mr. Farley in the play, he now faced relinquishing his son - and possibly the future of his firm - as the call to serve overseas took precedence.

Although Pratt Green offered himself as a missionary overseas, his college principal directed him elsewhere, saying (according to Pratt Green) that he would be dead within a year if he went to Africa.

Nevertheless, the very act of preparing himself for work overseas explains Pratt Green's consideration of issues voiced in the early plays.

Farley Goes Out is linked through its first act with John Wesley and the physical dangers he was exposed to. It is almost as if Pratt Green, by using the example of Wesley, is focussing on the founder of Methodism to make his audience reconsider what commitment to Christ really means. In the third act this personal commitment is further emphasised by a character, Dranath, who in preaching to his fellow Indians who are Hindus, meets his death at their hands. The introduction of a Hindu to this cast is worth comment because it is he who asks 'innocent' questions that are core questions in consideration of Christianity. For example, when told by Lesley Farley that he should not judge the country but the church in Britain, Dranath asks 'Which church?'.- a critical question at a time before union of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism. As Dranath leaves the affluent home of the Farleys he turns to the butler and asks him if *he* would leave everything for Christ's service; the butler is dumbfounded. Again, in an earlier conversation between Dranath and the Farley family, Dranath's support and exposition of Brahma and the caste system portray a dramatist who presents a considered appraisal of two co-existing faiths. There are quotations from Hindu Scriptures to counterbalance Farley's quotations from the Bible.

Dranath's later conversion to Christ follows his continued observation of Leslie Farley's personal 'sacrifice' of family, friends and comfortable life style in Britain in order to go to India as a missionary. This convinces Dranath that a faith which inspires such actions, an 'imitation' of Christ's great sacrifice, must be worth following.

Against this portrayal of sacrifice are the words of a trader, Westman, in the last act, in criticism of missionary work, 'I call it a waste of money, brains and time'. [Perhaps it was precisely this criticism that Pratt Green met with at home from his father and this play is an attempt to come to terms with a difficult conflict.]

What the play shows is that Dranath's sacrifice is far greater than Farley's because Dranath alienates himself irrevocably from his own culture, society and family. Also it is Dranath who gives his life, murdered by his own countrymen. In the 1920s it was perhaps unusual for a missionary play to present this point of view.

The second play of this period, Emancipation, was written to contrast two different periods of missionary work: the twentieth-century scenes set against the early nineteenth century. A conversation between two missionaries, which starts the play, indicates that Pratt Green has moved from consideration of personal relationships and physical dangers as they affect missionaries, to realisation of the long-term commitment the Church must make when it sends out such people.

In act two the original missionary arriving at the beginning of the 1800s works towards the Day of Emancipation in 1834. The idea of this great day is developed, to be seen as the start of a long process of education and learning self-control – in fact like conversion to Christianity, the beginning of a new life. Here, as elsewhere, the choice in the West Indies is between real, living Christianity and materialism. [There seems a parallel here with current society.] This play shows a Christian trying to convince his own countrymen of the importance of freedom for the negroes and there is an interesting paternalistic attitude shown towards them as the missionary suggests that a century will be needed to equip them for self-sufficiency.

The present day missionaries depicted in act three show the result of such work after a century of evangelism: the job is still unfinished.

Emancipation was the beginning, not the end. So this play seems to indicate that Pratt Green sees his own ministry as a link in the chain of an ongoing ministry.

Until very recently the third play could not even be dated. Sons of Daybreak Street was only known as a result of a conversation with F.P.G. However, in their school magazine there is a reference to this play being acted on 11 March 1930 at Hunmanby Hall Methodist Girls' School (it was from this source that a copy of Emancipation was obtained) This was F.P.G.'s first appointment, as school chaplain. The previous year the school had performed Farley Goes Out. This seems to suggest that Sons of Daybreak Street is the third in the series of missionary plays and not, as previously thought, one of the 1930s plays written in Bradford.

1930s sacred and secular plays

The move to the Bradford circuit in the 1930s and the existence there of a local dramatic society combined to induce Pratt Green to write several plays. He was writing for a particular cast; he had in mind certain people who would play certain parts and so his writing was partly influenced by a deliberate attempt at meeting the needs of the drama group.

Only three texts from this period are available, of which the earliest dated is The Skyfarer, 1938. This is the date it was published by the Lampas Press but it was almost certainly written some time before that year because the play's cover advertises other plays by Pratt Green including The House At Arrow Ghyll, which was not published by Lampas until 1939 but obviously existed prior to publication of The Skyfarer. It is reasonable to conclude that most of the plays were published in 1938 - 39, having been written in the early thirties and later collected by Lampas for publication.

The plays of this period consider wider issues than the religious plays of the twenties. The Skyfarer considers the ethical implications of making money from the manufacture of arms and of surreptitiously evading arms embargoes. Roger, the skyfarer, is termed 'an idealist who does not know when to keep his mouth shut'. In an ever-increasing anxiety over developments in Europe, the dichotomy of idealism and realism was obviously topical in the 1930s and Pratt Green is again seen to be using the drama form not only as a means of entertainment but as an indication of the need to see the truth of one's actions. It is a play on similar lines to Shaw's Major Barbara, written at a time when materialism threatened to overwhelm moral standards.

The House At Arrow Ghyll is concerned with personal identity. It is set in the Lake District and the characters involved are climbers and hikers on holiday. By removing them from their normal environment the dramatist allows them to discover things about themselves that will help them to

live fuller lives. Each of the characters has a problem – social, moral, personal – and each comes to understand him or herself better as a result of this time away. The catalyst is a climbing accident which brings to the surface the real characteristics of all concerned. The play emphasises the need for self-knowledge.

This theme is continued in The Night Is Dark, a one-act play published in 1938. The setting of an isolated chapel and adjoining cottage suggests the scene is based on Pratt Green's personal experience and his time in the Bradford circuit. An estranged wife is brought to the caretaker's cottage when her car breaks down (an incident a 1930s audience would appreciate in the early days of motoring). Her wealth and title have not saved her from guilt and pain of separation and she realizes her true feelings for her husband only when he is very ill and an SOS is broadcast for her to go to him. The caretaker and the woman eventually go into the chapel service, united by their need of Divine help.

This play makes no apology for being a religious play. It has a cast of four women and was written specifically 'for women only' which suggests Pratt Green was meeting a need for a church-based group, perhaps a women's meeting in his own church. This is further reinforced by the setting of a simple living room and a cast of middle-aged women. Furthermore, there is the singing of a Wesley hymn as background.

Both The Night Is Dark and The House At Arrow Ghyll advertise on their back covers two other plays, one text which is not extant. Left Luggage, a one act comedy. The other is Nursery Farm, a play in three scenes for children, the only mention of any play written for children by Pratt Green. This play came to light very recently.

However, the front cover of The Skyfarer contains the only reference to another play, The Tree Of Peace.

These plays form the body of Pratt Green's major play-writing period, plays which he refers to as 'juvenilia' produced to meet a 'need. It is this

'need' which makes these plays significant forerunners of the hymns that follow thirty years later; these also were written to meet a need.

1.4

Middle Period

This period of drama marks an advance. In construction the play written in this period is more complex with a wider cast; it deals with wider issues looking not to the mission field but to the Middle East and the political situation.

Plane From Basra stands alone in the mid 1940s. Firstly, it is different from previous plays because it was not written for a drama group personally known to Pratt Green. This meant he had no particular cast in mind and thus was not concerned to include 'character' parts. Rather this play is aimed generally at:

"Church Youth Clubs, Guilds, Dramatic Societies. It is not a religious play but it is intended to give audiences something to think about as well as an evening's entertainment"

(author's preface).

One of the things the post-war era had to come to terms with was the changed position of women, following their role nationally in the war years. Alongside this was the displacing of Christianity as a main and central faith, while the events of war had led to a keener consideration of the qualities a leader needed in a fast-changing world. Altogether, the stable society which had entered the war five years earlier found itself almost outdated by ideas which the war had given birth to. Such issues are raised in the opening scene between a British missionary awaiting his wife's arrival from England and Hamid, the secretary to the ruler of Modhpur. Hamid's words to the missionary: 'Eve fulfils herself in many ways - Mahomet and Jesus Christ are outnumbered - Karl Marx is God' are facts that a postwar society could no longer ignore. The two characters talk of revolutions which are 'not made by noble-minded idealists whose code of honour forbids them to plot in secret and to practise subterfuge' - an apt comment as one remembers the war in Europe. Later in the play a conversation between an engineer and the missionary, Tennant, focusses on the price paid for progress, and the fact that the local people suffer as

a result. Again, one of the characters, the daughter of a dominant mother, stands firmly against her mother's decision for the first time ever: 'For years you've compelled me to do everything you wanted.....I should like to decide my own fate.'

So the dramatist continues to confront his audience with unassailable issues that eventually they will have to think about. There is, later in the play, a discussion between Christians, a Hindu and a Muslim, with the latter maintaining 'man to obey Allah, woman to obey man' foreshadowing the struggle that would eventually face Muslim society as it mingled and absorbed ideas from other cultures. It is interesting that Pratt Green gives the following comment to a Hindu: 'There is truth and error in all religions'. [This relates interestingly to the hymn 'Christ is the world's light, he and none other'.]

Throughout the play we are aware of the understanding of a keen intellect, of a writer who has interpreted his surroundings accurately. Having understood the post war scene he is using the medium of the play to mirror this. In its considerations of several key societal issues the play is removed from the level of the earlier plays and forms a bridge to the late plays - particularly Red Is For Danger.

1.5

THE LAST PLAYS:

A KIND OF RESURRECTION; THE STAR OF PEACE;
RED IS FOR DANGER

The three plays discussed here are late plays, written in 1960-1970s; two of them were written in the retirement period in Norwich, for a local church, Heartsease Methodist Church. All three plays are unpublished and copies were obtained from Pratt Green, in a photocopied form.

The Last Plays 1960s-1970s

It may seem strange to devote so much more comment to the three last unpublished plays but they are very different from what went before. Before discussing them in detail some preliminary comments may serve to explain the full discussion that is accorded them.

A Kind Of Resurrection has an unexpected resonance for us today because the hostages, Keenan, McCarthy and Waite, and others, have made us all aware of the physical and mental pain endured under such restraints. Thus it has affinities with realistic drama of Rattigan.

The Star Of Peace is a liturgical and symbolic play while Red Is For Danger is less human, more schematized into a Christianized versus Godless state. Although it is perhaps overtly Christian there is also an Orwellian feel about it which is appealing. The play restates some central truths of Christianity in a contemporary dramatic form; it raises the problem of how much force should be used against force. In the play we assume the war against the general is a just one but some of the Christians seem to have little to do with it. So the question of pacificism is implicit. The plays adopt different styles and techniques in a way that the earlier plays did not. The earlier three-act plays did not experiment with visual

effects as The Star Of Peace did. Whereas Plane From Basra dealt with contemporary issues, Red For Danger seems to be looking towards the future, with warning of what might be. A Kind Of Resurrection deals partly with the effect of physical confinement on the individual's mental health and his subsequent rehabilitation, something not previously considered. It is for these reasons that I have dealt fairly fully with the late plays. The structure of these plays is interesting. What is immediately obvious on reading A Kind Of Resurrection is the firm framework on which it is built. The play deals with three days, Good Friday to Easter Day. The opening scene introduces the audience to a prisoner in South America awaiting execution, which is to take place on Easter Day. The rest of the play is set in an English rectory where family and friends are spending a meditative Good Friday which culminates in a joyous Easter. Into this close circle comes a stranger suffering from amnesia. His odd behaviour in church attracts the rector's attention and hospitality, resulting in an invitation to stay at the Rectory while the family and friends try to find out his identity. It is, of course, the prisoner of scene 1 who escaped execution.

Characters are developed, subplots added, with tension raised by this but the real message of the play seems to be a consideration of the death and resurrection of Christ and its impact on present-day society. This is partly achieved by the use of parallel situations.

The prisoner in the opening scene is innocent; caught up in a political melee, he is used as a pawn for international blackmail. He is condemned to death because his captors are 'making a statement' of their independence. The condemned man came to the country to bring financial aid - philanthropy misjudged, misunderstood and rejected. He is well-born, an eminent government official, but his position cannot save him from suspicion and capture by a band of rebels. He adopts a reasoned approach, uses his captivity to teach his guard English and generally behaves in an exemplary fashion, apparently to no avail.

The audience is left to draw a possible parallel with the first Passiontide

as the play moves forward to the country setting and 'normality' of an English rectory. The scene is set in the 1970s. There are few at the Good Friday service. The Rector's wife has no flowers in the house on that day but in contrast, the son listens to his jazz music, does not attend the service, and generally displays a disregard for Good Friday, indicating a conflict within the family over attitudes towards Holy Week. Instead of spending three hours at the church service, Grandma is weeding the garden, so it is not a new generation rejecting the values of their parents; rather, it indicates a freedom to follow one's own ideas. The son, for whom the crucifixion is irrelevant, is a supporter of Help The Aged and ever ready to assist grandma, thus displaying a humanitarian and Christian concern in an agnostic mind. All the characters in this scene appear to represent different twentieth-century attitudes towards Christianity.

The use of symbols is also effective. Church bells are man-made sounds that help to convey different messages to people. Here the first bells are heard celebrating Easter Day. As the captive was taken to execution at the end of scene one, the bells were heard proclaiming not just joy at remembrance of Christ's victory over death but also reminding today's church that that victory over death is theirs too, particularly apt as the captive faces execution. We learn that the local church bells need restoration, a project queried by the Rector's son who does not want to spend money on something which he feels is superfluous to today's lifestyle. While the church bells' restoration is a symbol of a return to the faith, the bells are also part of the church tower and a reason for a garden fete in their own right.

Bells are heard at significant moments in the play. At the end of the play the church bells are summoning people to prayer. The Easter bells with their message of victory over sin are also bells of recollection for the stranger, bells of happiness (approaching marriage) for another. So the bells are an important part of the play.

Again, the panelled cupboard is not only a dark recess in a room; it is a symbol of death, of the tomb of Christ, of the dark unknown of a disturbed

mind. Yet the stranger's search for this concealed cupboard can stand on its own as a part of the play. Thus symbolism underlines and deepens the action without becoming obtrusive.

There are also levels of meaning. Superficially, the play portrays a twentieth-century family at Easter; but the family represents attitudes, the questioning of beliefs, unnecessary rigidity in faith, humanism rather than Christian elitism, customary acceptance rather than personal experience of Christ. The stranger questions Christ's attitude and pain at His Passion, while linking His suffering with the twentieth century. The story emphasises the difference between appearance and reality by the stranger's inability to distinguish between them. He thinks the rectory is a hotel; in reality, it had been; figuratively, it should be, offering service to all who come. Other characters, like the son with his discordant jazz music, appear unchristian but in reality are Christ-like in compassion. The Rector's wife gives hospitality but unwillingly - apparent virtue but in reality not generous in spirit.

There is little development of character. They exist to carry along the plot. Most are stereotyped, like the titled lady, the Rector, the son and grandma. This does not matter because the dramatist is using them as a medium. We find the stranger is a musician - only because music is used by Pratt Green to underline its use as a means of translating and transcending human nature and at the same time as a device to help the plot to unfold. The captive wanted a piano to pass the time, the erring son needed jazz to identify with, the stranger found peace through playing the Rectory piano and his music has its place on the concert programme, to provide a means by which to restrain the stranger from leaving the scene. The play deals with the rediscovery both of self and others. In some ways the characters are secondary to the message the dramatist has to deliver. The play is based on a well-organised and well-structured society; the three generations live in harmony, secure from South American revolutions but not immune to them, aware of third world starvation and the less privileged, like the aged. In different degrees, they react compassionately,

as humans should; human love perhaps mirroring incompletely the supreme example of Christ's love which is what the Easter story is all about. The stranger's amnesia is abnormal and a source of anguish to others because he does not recognise human love because of illness.

The dramatist's intentions are crystallized in half a dozen questions uttered by the characters: Do you think Christ really lived? Do you believe Christ rose from the dead? Had God forsaken him? Why did he have to suffer like that - such cruelty - so undeserved? The final question 'Why are they ringing the bells?' leads the individual to realize, remember and rejoice that the resurrection is the key to Christian belief.

This is a religious drama and the questions posed by characters are those the Christian asks himself when considering the story of the Passion. This is Pratt Green's Easter message in dramatic form.

The Star of Peace is a nativity play. It is subtitled 'A Fantasy on the Three Kings'. On the title page there is a note stating it was written for presentation in a church with an open chancel. The dramatist also appends notes on production, indicating his interest in an accurate and precise presentation of his work.

There are five episodes and twelve characters. Each of the Magi has a page and a drummer boy. Much use is made of a three-level stage and the play is accompanied by choral singing, the drummers, a recorder and an organ.

'These are no embellishments but an integral part of the drama' writes the dramatist. Again, this time concerning the characters, the dramatist writes: 'This is not a children's play'.

The production of this piece seems to have been of paramount importance to Pratt Green for reasons which become obvious as the play proceeds. The three kings each follow the star but portray emotions of hostility and fear which the pages underline by drawing their swords. Each page carries a flag - of a lion, an eagle and a dragon respectively - ironic symbols for masters following a star of peace. The kings carry daggers. So their very appearance conveys to the audience some of the dramatist's message.

Episode two opens with the pages and drummer boys at odds. They play at being kings and end up fighting, explaining their actions by 'We were pretending to be kings'.

Later in the quest for the star, the kings' retinue grow disheartened; the star leading them fades as the kings begin to quarrel. When they pray to their god, the star shines again and they proceed towards Bethlehem.

Episode four introduces Herod, who acts out the deception related in the gospels. He looks for the star but cannot see it (just as the kings could not when they started to quarrel). The play ends with a tableau of the Virgin and Child, placed above the other characters by means of the three-level stage. Again the dramatist's instructions are revealing... 'On no account must the play be allowed to end with the conventional manger scene'.

Perhaps Pratt Green sees this play as firmly based in reality, whereas many nativity tableaux are contrived, concentrating on visual effect only. Further effect is obtained by contrasting the familiar content with the unfamiliar.

The play is also remarkable for its meticulous attention to production. Not only do the words convey the dramatist's ideas to the audience but the behaviour of the characters contrasting and copying each other in a schematic way underline the element of spectacle. The use of contrasting sound is further example of attention to non-verbal stage effects. The drum sounds at times of hostility. The drum's noise is described as 'a din'- in contrast to the choir singing sweetly at other times, reminiscent of:

And man at war with man hears not
The love song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

The title is a symbol of hope for mankind; the kings symbolise leadership and their loss of kingly qualities results in their temporarily losing sight of the star, and of hope.

The title of the third play is Red is for Danger. It is a play written in seven episodes with fourteen characters. All the action is centred on a meeting room of a Christian Cell. The time is 2280 A.D.

Practising Christianity is forbidden and the group has a warning red light to indicate imminent discovery by the law. The group is not immediately accessible to would-be members, reminding us of the early church with its secret meeting in the catacombs - and of the persecuted church in other countries during the cold war? Tension is sustained by the sound of knocking on the door and admittance of members as the meeting convenes. The Regulations poster demanded by the government is displayed. On the reverse is the symbol of the Cross. Also displayed is the Director's portrait, required by law; reversed, it displays the face of Christ. When the meeting starts these reversals are made. Without comment, the dramatist, by use of these contrasts, reinforces the paradoxical : Christ whose service is perfect freedom demands complete submission, a dictator but of a different kind; the Cross is the 'regulation' by which Christianity exists. Also there is the normal meaning of Christianity as opposed to the godless state as displayed by the reversal of the portrait.

A question posed by a young group member is 'Why shouldn't Christians fight for freedom?' The audience is drawn into this Christian quandary as they watch officials inspect the meeting room, arrest one of the group and impose further regulation on worshippers who cannot resist without fear of punishment. The fourth episode acts out a communion service which is surprised by guards who arrest all participants, after the Elements and Church plate have been desecrated. The fifth episode shows the group's coming to realize they were betrayed by one of their own members. It is Giles who has done this. The parallel with Judas is discounted as Giles' betrayal was made to save his own life, not for reasons attributed to Judas. Giles is offered forgiveness instantly. Later the tyrannical Inspector is offered protection by the group. The Bishop says:

We mustn't hedge forgiveness round with reservations.

These three plays are written fifty years later than Farley Goes Out and Emancipation. How different are they? Two things emerge in considering these late plays. Farley Goes Out was a religious drama, very much confronting the thinking of the Twenties about missionaries and overseas work. Such early plays were aimed at helping audiences to realize their prejudices and illogical attitudes over specific issues. Similarly, Plane From Basra, written in 1946, deals with attitudes of Christians to other religions, and to the fast-changing world picture. So Pratt Green's drama has previously been used to confront current concerns.

The first difference found in the late plays is that they are concerned not with helping people to sort out attitudes to society but in leading them in their worship of God. The late plays make much use of symbolism. The Easter and Christmas plays seek to direct Christians in their attempt to live a Christian life in the twentieth century. A Kind Of Resurrection portrays an on-going concern for Christians: to identify closely with the Passion of Christ two thousand years after it happened.

Similarly, The Star Of Peace, whilst retelling the story of the Magi, portrays the eternal problem of blemished humanity, from the kings onwards, in its search for the Messiah, and the utter humility of Divine love - a humility which humanity finds hard to copy.

Red Is For Danger reminds the Christian that the persecuted church produces a sharpened sense of worship because at such times worship becomes a danger. It is a warning for all times, to protect the right to practise the faith.

The focus has changed in the last plays. Pratt Green is concerned with spiritual rather than contemporary issues. The Star Of Peace uses as its source one of the birth stories from the Gospels. A Kind Of Resurrection is based on the death and resurrection of Christ; the dramatist is using a story familiar to his audience because he is concerned with forcing his audience to look again at, and think afresh about, Christianity. Just as the star disappeared from the kings' vision when they erred, so sin separates Christians today from finding Christ. Similarly, by dwelling on the physical and mental torture of today's prisoners and considering the

physical aspects of crucifixion, the dramatist is trying to make his audience realize the depth of love that willingly experienced such pain.

Another difference is in the production. In early plays there was inclusion of only brief notes about staging but the late plays indicate the importance the dramatist places on the staging and his awareness of effective use of visual communication.

The use of music in the construction of The Star Of Peace indicates the dramatist's ability to use what the church has long used - music and ritual - to fullest effect. Why does the playwright concern himself so keenly with production? The answer is that the plays are living sermons, thus for instruction as well as entertainment.

This is a critical difference. Although God and the gospels are mentioned in early drama and early preachers and missionaries are portrayed, full of faith and overcoming obstacles, there is not the content of Christian worship quoted such as is found in Red Is For Danger. In this play the cast gathers for meetings at which prayers, exhortations and the form for reception of new church members is rehearsed. Only a raid by government officials forces the abandonment of observation of the Sacrament. The scenery is an altar, Adrian wears a surplice, the Chalice is a prop, the Bible centreplace. It is overtly a Christian play as are Farley and Emancipation but whereas these two early plays use the missionary situation as a backcloth to the ideas expressed by characters, here the audience is made aware of the physical immediacy of church services by the scenery and action unfurling through a communion service.

FARLEY GOES OUT

Title page:

FARLEY GOES OUT / A MISSIONARY PLAY / BY / F.PRATT GREEN / LONDON /
 THE CARGATE PRESS / 7 CARLISLE AVENUE, E.C.3 /
 24 BISHOPSGATE, E.C. 2

Collation & size: pp.63 [3]. 19.5 x 13cms.

Contents : p.[1] Title page p.[2] verso blank p.[3] Dedication /TO MY MOTHER
 / 'WHOSE HEART IS ALWAYS DOING / LOVELY THINGS' p.[4] List of
 Characters pp.5 - 62 text p. [63] verso blank

Cover : Stiffened paper Front cover : title, price '8d.' Back cover: blank

Note : No copyright registered or recorded in edition. A photocopy of the
 original text was obtained from the British Museum.

Synopsis: In the first scene we see a British family, the Farleys, preparing
 to part from their highly-qualified son who is going to the mission field,
 leaving the family business without an heir and leaving behind the
 prospect of sharing his father's material gain.

This is contrasted with John Wesley's sacrifice of personal freedom in a
 scene set in the eighteenth century where the mob tries to stone him. He
 is saved from harm by an ancestor of the Farley family, whose action
 serves as a reminder to his descendants of the demands Christianity can
 make on one. One of Farley's friends from college, an Indian called Dranath,
 turns from Hinduism to Christianity and meets his death at the mob's
 hands during a Hindu festival, thus highlighting the sacrifice that
 Christians must be prepared to make. At the end of the play the onlookers,
 both at home and on the mission-field, are persuaded by the actions of
 others of the worth of the sacrifice.

EMANCIPATION

Title page:

Inset black and white picture – palm trees and solitary figure against skyline, 5.1 x 3 cms.

EMANCIPATION / A MISSIONARY PLAY / ABOUT / THE WEST INDIES / by / F.PRATT GREEN / London / THE CARGATE PRESS / 7 Carlisle Avenue, E.C. 3 / and / 24 Bishopsgate, E.C.2 /

Collation & size: 55pp.; 19 x 13cms.

Contents: p.[1]: Title page p.[2]: blank p.[3]: dedication: / TO MRS.ALFRED SHIPLEY / (of Bridlington) / p.[4]: blank p.[5]: List of characters and scenes p.[6]: blank pp.7 - 54 text; pp.55 -[56] 'NOTES ON THE PRODUCTION OF / "EMANCIPATION" / p.]56]: Published by the "Cargate Press" of the / Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 7 Carlisle Avenue, / London, E.C.3 / p.[57]: blank

Cover: Brown stiffened board. Front cover: inset picture, price "EIGHTPENCE", title, Back cover: blank

Synopsis: Prologue and Epilogue are conversations between a retiring and a newly-appointed missionary in the West Indies in the 1930s. The central story, divided into three scenes, shows the difficulties encountered by the grandfather of the retiring man, Clulow, a missionary there in the 1820s - 1830s, and events leading to the Day of Emancipation in 1834. The play emphasises the length of time necessary for completing the process of emancipation and that: 'religion is not just emotion but putting Christianity into practice.'

Note: This play was kindly donated by Miss J. Senior to the Pratt Green Collection, at the University of Durham, in 1993.

THE SKYFARER

Title page:

"THE / SKYFARER" / A THREE ACT PLAY / BY / F.PRATT GREEN / (Author of
"Farley Goes Out", "The Tree of / Peace", "The House at Arrow Ghyll", /etc,
etc.) / THE LAMPAS PRESS / (B.M.WADE) / 29 SMITH LANE / BRADFORD

Collation & size: pp.81 [3]; 20.1 x 13.5cms.

Contents: p.[1]: Title page p.[2]: Blank p.3: List of characters p.4: List of
scenes, copyright statement ("Copyright, 1938, by The Lampas Press"), and
note on performance fees (The Fee for the first and second representation
of this play / is One Guinea for each performance, subsequently Half a
Guinea for the third and each additional performance..") pp.5-80: Text
p.81: Note on production. 3 final pages blank.

Cover: Blue marbled paper. Front cover: title, price "1/3d.1/4d. post free";
at foot, white label with imprint. Back cover: "PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
/ by / PERCY E. ADDY (PRINTERS) LTD / BRADFORD / FOR / THE / LAMPAS
PRESS

Synopsis. Set in the early days of flying, the play portrays a local
prejudice against airports, and conflicts of personality and morality
between an employer and the young pilot, Roger. Love and honesty emerge
triumphant.

Note: The text was sent to M.E.H. by the publisher in 1989, one of two
copies she had kept since 1938.

THE NIGHT IS DARK

Title page:

THE NIGHT / IS DARK / A ONE ACT PLAY / (FOR WOMEN ONLY) / BY /
F.PRATT GREEN / Author of "Farley Goes Out", "The House at Arrow Ghyll" /
"The Skyfarer", "Left Luggage", / "Nursery Farm,"etc. / THE LAMPAS PRESS /
(B.M.WADE) / 29 SMITH LANE / BRADFORD

Collation & size: pp.15 [1] 20.1 x 13.5cms.

Contents: p.[1]: Title page p.[2]: Blank p.3: List of characters p.4: Scene,
copyright statement ("Copyright, 1938, by The Lampas Press") and note on
performance fees ("The Fee for each and every representation of this play
is / Five Shillings.") pp.5-15 text p.15: Note on production. 1 final page
blank

Cover : Inside front cover: OTHER PLAYS by F.PRATT GREEN / Published by /
THE LAMPAS PRESS / THE SKYFARER / A Three act play / ' A fine play rich
in humour, on a theme of great interest: a young airman's rise to fame, his
exposure / of an illegal trade in arms and a final triumph. Why pay high
royalties when a play as good as this is / available at a third of the cost?'
/ 1/4d.per copy, post free / NURSERY FARM / A Play in Three Scenes for
Children / A delightful and very original play for children,in / which
brilliant use is made of Nursery Rhymes and / Folk-Songs. This is the
"something different" you / need for the Children's Concert / 1/1d.per
copy, post free / LEFT LUGGAGE / A One Act Comedy / The left luggage is a
sinister-looking trunk! A / play to keep your audience laughing, guessing -
and / shuddering. / 10d.per copy, post free / All the plays published by The
Lampas Press are / licensed by the Lord Chamberlain.

Synopsis: The action takes place within the time of a Sunday evening
church service in an isolated moorland area. A titled lady needing
transport desperately is obliged to wait for the preacher to finish his

service before he can give her a lift. The simple faith and devotion to Christianity that she observes brings a change of heart to her.

Note: The reference on the inside front cover to 'Left Luggage' is all we know about this play, there being no known surviving copies.

The text of this play was photocopied for private use from a copy loaned by Miss B.Wade. Unfortunately, the outside cover was not photocopied but is believed to have had the same format as 'The House at Arrow Ghyll' (see below).

NURSERY FARM

Title page: NURSERY FARM / A PLAY IN THREE SCENES / FOR CHILDREN /
(OR EVEN ADULTS) / F.PRATT GREEN / Author of / "Farley Goes Out," " The
House At Arrow Ghyll," / "The Skyfarer," "The Night is Dark," / "Left
Luggage," etc. / THE LAMPAS PRESS / (B.M.WADE) / 29 SMITH LANE /
BRADFORD /

Collation & size: pp. 29 [1] 20.x 13.2 cms.

Contents: p.[1] Title page p.2 title, author, list of characters p.3 list of
scenes, 'Copyright, 1939, by the Lampas Press' / and note on performance
fee (The Fee for each and every representation of this Play is / Seven
Shillings and Sixpence, which is payable in advance to : - / THE LAMPAS
PRESS, / 29, SMITH LANE, BRADFORD, who will issue permission for the
performance to take / place. No performance may be given unless this
written authority / has first been obtained, and no reduction on this fee
can be made.) FOREWARD / p.4 detailed description of the Farmyard and
opening scene pp.5 - 27 text p.28 NOTES ON PRODUCTION

Cover: stiffened paper Front cover : title, price 1/- net 1/1d. Post free
B.M.Wade / THE LAMPAS PRESS / 29 SMITH LANE BRADFORD / Back cover:
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN / BY PERCY E ADDY (PRINTERS) LTD /
BRADFORD / FOR / THE LAMPAS PRESS /

Inside front cover: OTHER PLAYS by F.PRATT GREEN / Published by / THE
LAMPAS PRESS / THE SKYFARER/ A Three Act PLay / A fine play, rich in
humour, on a theme of great interest: a young airman's rise to fame, his
exposure of an illegal trade in arms, and final triumph. Why pay high
royalties when a play as good as this is available at a third of the
cost?/1/4d. per copy, post free / LEFT LUGGAGE / A One Act Comedy / The
left luggage is a sinister-looking trunk! A play to keep your audience

laughing, guessing - and shuddering./ 10d. per copy, post free./

THE NIGHT IS DARK / A short One Act Play for Women / A moving little play, which makes a perfect epilogue / to an evening's entertainment / 7d. post free /

Synopsis:(given in the Foreward by the author)'The tunes are the loveliest tunes of all, the songs that the children of England sang when England was young. As for the story, it was intended to be the romance of Little Boy Blue and Little Bo-Peep, but other people crept in when we weren't looking. A moral? - well, there may be one somewhere, only we haven't worried about it.'

THE HOUSE AT ARROW GHYLL

Title page:

THE HOUSE / AT ARROW GHYLL / A PLAY IN THREE ACTS / by / F.PRATT GREEN / Author of 'Farley Goes Out', 'The Skyfarer', 'The Night is Dark,' / 'Left Luggage', 'Nursery Farm' / etc / THE LAMPAS PRESS / (B.M.WADE) / 29 SMITH LANE / BRADFORD.

Collation & size : pp.68 [1] 20.1 x 13.5cms.

Contents: p.[1]: Title page p.[2]: blank p.3: list of characters. p.4: list of scenes, copyright statement ("Copyright, 1939, by The Lampas Press") and note on performance fees ("The Fee for the first and second representation of this play / is One Guinea for each performance, subsequently Half a Guinea / for the third and each additional performance"): pp.5 - 67 text, p.68 Notes on production.

Cover : paper. Front cover : title, price '1/10d.net. 2/0d. post free.' THE LAMPAS PRESS / (B.M.WADE) / 29, SMITH LANE / BRADFORD.

Inside front cover : OTHER PLAYS by F.PRATT GREEN : 'The Skyfarer', 'Nursery Farm' & 'Left Luggage'. Back cover : 'PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN / BY / PERCY E. ADDY (PRINTERS) LTD BRADFORD / FOR / THE LAMPAS PRESS

Back inside cover: TWO PLAYS FOR WOMEN ONLY /. 'The Night is Dark' / by F.PRATT GREEN / A moving little play which makes a perfect epilogue / to an evening's entertainment / 10d.per copy, post free."

Synopsis: A group of holidaymakers meet overnight at a guesthouse. The fall of one of them at a nearby rockface brings greater self-knowledge to all and each sees his or her different problems in its true perspective.

Note: This play was photocopied for private use. The original was loaned by Mrs. Wade, the publisher, in 1989.

PLANE FROM BASRA

Title page:

PLANE FROM BASRA / A PLAY IN THREE ACTS / by / F.PRATT GREEN /
Author of 'Farley Goes Out', 'The House at Arrow Ghyll', etc. / LUDGATE
CIRCUS HOUSE / 2, 3 & 4 Ludgate Circus Buildings, London, E.C.4

Collation & size: pp.63 [2]. 12 x 18.2 cms.

Contents: p.[1] Title page p.[2] 'Printed by Fletcher & Son, Ltd, Norwich.'
p.3 Dedication ('To my wife') Author's note: 'This play was written for
CHURCH YOUTH CLUBS, GUILDS, DRAMATIC SOCIETIES, etc. It is not a
religious / play, but it is intended to give audiences something to think
about as well as an evening's entertainment'. p.4 List of characters &
scenes pp 5 - (64) text.

Cover : paper. Front cover : title, price written on : '1/6d.' No. 1 in Drama
Series of Methodist Youth Department

Synopsis: A missionary is caught up with revolution and counter -
revolution. The plane passengers arriving in Basra at this critical time
contribute contrasting attitudes to the place of religion in the social
framework of an emerging nation. The qualities of a leader best suited to
guide such a nation are portrayed by the different attitudes of two local
characters aspiring to leadership in Basra.

Note: The play is one of a group bound in one volume by Methodist Youth
Department and was obtained with their permission as a photocopy from
the British Museum.

THE STAR OF PEACE

(An unpublished play photocopied on A 4 paper.)

Title page:

THE STAR OF PEACE / A FANTASY ON THE THREE KINGS / by / F.PRATT
GREEN / 'This Nativity Play was written for presentation / in a church
with an open chancel. Particular / attention should be given to the notes
on / Production. The play lasts about 45 minutes.'

Collation & size: pp.15. 29.5 x 20.7cms

Contents: p.[i] title List of episodes. List of characters p.1 - 14 text
p.15 Notes on production

Synopsis: (as written by the author on the contents page):

'Three kings meet - by chance?- in hostility and discover a common
purpose. Their pages, mistaking the object of the journey, indulge in a
battle of their own and learn the truth. The Kings, pursuing their
prejudices, lose heart and the star, and come to a new understanding of
their mission. The treachery of Herod who sees no star but takes no risks
in the defence of his crown.'

A KIND OF RESURRECTION

(An unpublished play photocopied on A 4 paper)

Title page:

A Kind of / Resurrection / a play in three acts / by / F.Pratt Green /

Collation & size: pp. 35[2]. 29.5 x 20.7cms.

Contents: p.[i] title page p.[ii] title, scenes and list of characters
pp.1 - 33 text.

Synopsis: A hostage in South America about to be executed at Easter escapes but suffers from amnesia as a result of his captivity. He is taken care of by an English rector's family who all portray different attitudes towards celebrating Easter in the twentieth century. During the Easter time the hostage regains his memory. Throughout the play the first Passiontide with its physical cruelty and the tremendous sacrifice involved is contrasted with the experiences of today's society.

RED IS FOR DANGER

(An unpublished play photocopied on A 4 paper)

Title page:

RED IS FOR DANGER / A PLAY IN SEVEN EPISODES / by / FRED PRATT GREEN
/ 'written for the HELM PLAYERS / under the direction of / REG
BATCHELOR'.

Collation & size: pp. 46 [2]. 29.5 x 20.7cms.

Contents: p. [i] title page p.[ii] scenes, list of episodes and characters pp.1
- 42 text.

Synopsis: The play depicts the practising of Christianity in a totalitarian state where weak members betray the group, leading some to guerilla-type physical resistance. Others show calm acceptance of possible death (thus raising the question of the place of pacificism in such a society).The play relies much on meaningful gestures and, by the portrayal of the different attitudes of the characters, questions what the Church's attitude to persecution should be under such circumstances.

Part Two: Poetry

Contents:

2.1 Introduction	p. 32
2.2 This Unlikely Earth	p. 39
2.3 The Skating Parson	p. 66
2.4 The Old Couple	p. 103
2.5 The Last Lap	p. 142
2.6 A Treasury of Rediscovered Verse	p. 165
2.7 Variations	p. 193

2.1

Introduction

Part Two is divided into seven sections. After the Introduction there are four sections devoted to the four main collections. This is followed by a section on the verse that has escaped general notice simply because its whereabouts is not generally known. A final section lists variations found in poems, often where the first publication is some years before a reprinting in a collection; also here are amendments made by the poet and noted in his Poetry Scrapbooks.

The four collections of poetry are discussed separately in chronological order. Each collection is preceded by a bibliography of the poems included in that section, with details of those poems previously published elsewhere. Where there is no note after a poem it indicates that, to the best of my knowledge, the poem has not appeared elsewhere prior to the date of the collection.

This part of the thesis has been arranged so that the diversity in the poetry of F.Pratt Green can be appreciated fully. Each of the four collections not only represents four different decades in the poet's life but demonstrates the change in focus that accompanies this passing of time. Yet throughout there is one distinctive trait; to use Coleridge's words, it is : 'the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination' (Biographia Literaria, ch. XIV)

This Unlikely Earth, published when the poet was 48, is concerned with coming to terms with the unfathomable questions of life - birth, death, pain, good and evil. The poems portray the moving through these questions to an understanding of God's place in man's life and an

acceptance of His essential role in it, if we are to live with any purpose.

The second collection, The Skating Parson, later continues this awareness of God in the world. The poems here consider the portrayal of faith and religion by not only the 'skating parson', bystanders and 'backsliders' but even by buildings. Some poems discuss events in the life of Christ, presenting them from a new angle - defamiliarising them for the reader. The general ethos of the collection is religious.

This seems to lead on naturally to the third collection, The Old Couple. As the title suggests, the collection is concerned with people. The poems are compassionate, presenting situations where people are portrayed sympathetically and with understanding. The poems are written from the situations of the people concerned, as well as from a viewpoint which reverses expectations (as in 'The Victim Died of Stab Wounds'). Though compassionate, the poet remains detached throughout; he does this in various ways - for example, in 'After Reading A Book on Ferns', the use of Latin distances the poet from the old woman he describes.

The place of caring in life is fully developed in the last collection, The Last Lap, which deals with the limitations and problems of old age. This is a very brave collection of poems which face the facts of physical deterioration and death in a way that no other poet has attempted in such a detailed and matter-of-fact way. The setting for all the poems is a Methodist Home for the Aged which the poet seems to present as a waiting room for eternity.

F.P.G.'s move to Brighton was more than a ministerial move. Once established in Brighton in 1949 he joined a poetry group and, having encountered the Ramseys (who were leading figures in the Poetry Society), and Erica Marx (who published poetry), he started to submit his poetry to magazines, to enter poetry competitions and generally become an active figure in the poetry world. Here he became the president of the local poetry group, meeting poets like Fallon Webb and Peter Dunn both of whom exchanged verse with him in the following years. It was while he was here that he joined, and later became the president of, 'The Scribblers' Club'; this brought him into contact with many poets who participated in this exchange of verse and criticism of each other's poetry.

In the 1950s F.P.G. was known as well as a distinguished poet. This led to his being elected to the editorial board of The Poetry Review from 1955-1960 during which time he acted as an adjudicator for Poetry Society awards. What is not generally known is that his reputation as a poet was even then sufficiently respected for him to be also acting as a reviewer for this periodical. There are many reviews of his to be found in the Poetry Review in the 1950s and 1960s. Later, in Outposts in 1970s, we find his reviews of works like Jon Stallworthy's 'The Apple Barrel', Patric Dickinson's 'More Than Time' and Dannie Abse's 'Funland and Other Poems'.

There are some significant poems that are omitted from the collections but no work on F.Pratt Green would be complete without reference to them as they achieved distinction in poetical circles.

Having been an adjudicator in 1958 of the prestigious Greenwood Prize for poetry awarded annually by the Poetry Society, in 1964 F.P.G. submitted an entry. He describes the award:

'It leaves the poet singularly free to do what he likes within its generous limit of 250 lines'

[Poetry Review, volume L, no.1, 1959, p. 56]

When he was awarded the prize by Dannie Abse, his winning poem was 'one of thousands'. Abse wrote, in his decision to recommend F.P.G. for the award :

The Greenwood Prize should be given to F.P.G. for his long poem 'Head And Shoulders' despite its too prosaic tone, and its occasional banalities. For, finally, it was far superior and altogether more firmly handled than any other poem submitted.

[Poetry Review, vol.55, no.4, 1964, p.258]

Despite its superiority its very length not only excluded it from immediate publication in the Poetry Review but has probably been a contributory factor in its omission by Braley in Later Hymns and Ballads and Fifty Poems By Fred Pratt Green (1989).

The poem is written in six 'Sittings' and after the First F.P.G. has written: 'I was never happy about this ambitious piece - and always failed to revise it'. He did revise it - twenty five years later, in 1989.

'Head And Shoulders' concerns the relationship between a painter and his subject. The Sittings portray the sitter's apprehension later

projected onto the artist, his discernment of the ploys used to keep the sitter happy and his contrast of parallel situations concerning famous painters like Holbein. The Fifth Sitting is different; it is philosophical, (rising far above Abse's criticism of 'occasional banalities').

The poet, speaking as the sitter, considers the effect of clothes:

In this black silken gown
I assume a self-importance
I would otherwise disown

and considers later:

Perhaps truth is nakedness

The last 'Sitting' leaves the painter 'thoughtful' and the sitter 'melancholy'.

The revision of this poem is marked by the ruthless omission of some verses, particularly 'Sitting Three' which becomes 'Sitting Four' and is reduced to two verses. The 'Sixth Sitting' is changed in content from describing the sitter's reaction to his portrait to considering the relationship established between painter and sitter in this situation. The final lines remind the reader of the tentative, philosophical poet of the 80s and 90s:

I ponder
 how truth awaits
Whatever passes for the Last Judgement.

Another poem which is in danger of being overlooked is 'Poem For Ralph Lawrence On His Ordination To The Priesthood'. It was written in 1965 and published that April in the London Quarterly and Holborn Review. There is an Author's Note appended which sums it all up:

This poem is even more ambitious than the long poem, 'Head And Shoulders' since it tackles ecclesiastical and theological problems, but at least it was motivated by a very real concern for a friend. The prosody is not an accident. I deliberately attempted a fairly loose structure, with long rhythms, because I wanted to invite a meditative approach to the poem. Probably it is a better statement of our Free Churchmanship than as a poem. More than once I have considered rewriting it, but each time felt I could not improve on the original.

(Archives: Stainer & Bell)

With its 108 lines each of 16 syllables it has not been printed in any of the later collections but perhaps it is not just its length but the nature of the subject matter which is particular not general.

Finally, Braley in Later Hymns and Ballads And Fifty Poems of Fred Pratt Green publishes a more recent poem of note, 'The Poet and the Musician'. It was written in 1989 and described by the poet as a pastiche; in an amusing way it shows the uneasy relationship between author and composer. The final lines:

Music and Poetry are one -
As all my folk must be.

resolves the discord in which Queen Elizabeth 1 is called on to give :

A firm and just decision

The tone is playful and at times whimsical, a characteristic of this poet.

Because of his pre-eminence as a hymnwriter much of F.P.G.'s poetry has been largely overlooked, particularly since the first two collections have been out of print for some years now. Later Hymns And Ballads and Fifty Poems of Fred Pratt Green attempts to redress this. The publication of The Last Lap in 1991 has brought awareness of F.P.G.'s poetry to the attention of readers.

The section I have entitled 'The Treasury of Rediscovered Verse' is included here as an example of poetry, published outside the collections, which was almost lost through ignorance of its whereabouts.

In an attempt to aid would-be readers of his poetry this section concludes with a list of all known poetry outside the four main collections.

2.2

THIS UNLIKELY EARTH

Title page:

F.PRATT GREEN / THIS UNLIKELY EARTH / Poems 1946-1951/

Collation & size: pp.32 [p.2]; 18.75 x 12.75cms.

Contents: p. [1]: title page p. [2]: dedication, 'To T.W. & G.R.Ramsey' / (President of the Poetry Society) pp. 3-32 text

Cover:

Front cover: stiff buff paper. Printed in black: POEMS | IN | PAMPHLET / 1952 /

Printed in green: 1 / F.PRATT GREEN /

Printed in black: THE HAND AND FLOWER PRESS / ALDINGTON: KENT /

Inside front cover: Printed in Great Britain / at the Ditchling Press | Sussex |

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Back cover: green logo of an outstretched hand, with tulip and two leaves superimposed on palm. Positioned centre.

Inside back cover, printed in black : 'POEMS IN PAMPHLET *appears monthly. The publications are all in this format and are priced at 1s. Each pamphlet is devoted to the work of a writer hitherto not published in book form in England. They may be obtained in single numbers from booksellers, or by subscription through booksellers or direct from the Hand and Flower Press. Annual subscription, including postage, is 14s. 6d.* | 1s. net. |

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This Unlikely Earth

This is a collection of poems written between 1946–1951. In his poetry scrapbooks the poet describes how they came to be published:

When I moved to Brighton in September 1947 I joined a Poetry Group. A moving spirit was Mrs. Ramsey, wife of an important member of the national Poetry Society....her husband showed them (my poems) to Erica Marx who was then editing and producing most of these early poems under the title This Unlikely Earth as No.1 in her 1952 series.¹

The collection, which is dedicated to the Ramseys, includes some poetry addressed to Fallon Webb, a fellow poet. This will not be discussed as this verse is not concerned with an 'unlikely earth' but with the poet and his craft (it is also a personal correspondence in poetry). However, it should be noted that the title of the collection takes its name from one of those poems.

The first ten poems stand together as an autobiographical group. The first, 'Biography', which begins:

Bless the babe who was safe and snug
as a barque in a sea-green bottle

is a general rather than a particular biography. The poem seems to be tracing life from birth to manhood. The imagery used in the line above suggests not only the child in the womb cushioned from danger by surrounding fluid but with the use of 'sea-green' suggests an attractive tinge of colour rather than a clear vision ; the barque is the ship and life the voyage. The second half of the verse uses the image of honour and a battle. The bright-eyed babe represents the unsullied life before one embarks upon the battlefield of life. 'before the battle' is a short line to end the verse, slightly ominous.

The images of a voyage and a battle are developed in v.2 where the babe has become the child and the 'barque in a sea-green bottle' has broken out of its confines as the child emerges from the womb:

Bless the child who shattered the glass,
wounding his hands and his heart sorely;

'Shattered the glass' suggests an element of necessary destruction in order for the babe to become the child - a reference not only to childbirth but to the loss of innocence as the babe becomes the boy. The second image of the first verse is further developed in lines 3 and 4 of verse 2 -

'he sold honour at the first pass' -

where the idea of early corruption is suggested by 'first', as is the battle being fought among hills, hence 'the pass'. The change of rhythm in this verse emphasises the wound is not just physical:

Bless the child who shattered the glass,
wounding his hands and his heart sorely;
he sold honour at the first pass,
and so early.

'his heart sorely' lengthens out and slows the line to indicate the inner hurt. Again, 'and so early' positioned at the verse end is used to emphasise, with its slower, regretful tone, this time the tragedy of early corruption. The repetition of 'Bless', although 'he sold honour', indicates compassion and acknowledgement of human failure. The poet is conscious of honour (here it is involved with wrong-doing) and is concerned with morals. Each verse, except the last, starts with 'bless'. Words like 'shattered', 'wounded', 'sorely' make the 'bless' of each verse more necessary as life progresses.

In v.3 the blessed child has become the boy, described as brother and nurse 'to the cornered mouse, the crushed worm' - both insignificant things, considered cowardly, indicating the boy is to be seen as the champion of the weak. The boy is described as bearing 'the curse of love's unwisdom',

the poet suggesting that love is often unwise (but nobly so). The use of 'curse', a hard-sounding word like 'crushed' and 'cornered', makes blessing more necessary. Here is the reminder that from Eve's betrayal to twentieth-century situations there is a price to pay and the boy seems to become the innocent victim, who having cared for 'the cornered mouse' and 'crushed worm' becomes as one of them.

The youth in v.4 needs blessing in his attempt to impose spiritual discipline on human failing. The striving of the young for ideals and their hiding of personal feeling till they forget their real identity are all suggested here. The youth in v.4 is described as 'wearing the mask' but forgetting 'he wore it' - a mask concealing compassion and love. There is balance in the line :

little of flesh and much of spirit;

which contrasts the last line of the verse:

forgot he wore it.

- almost a throwaway line showing the mask has become unnoticeable. The poet does not ask for blessing but for forgiveness, indicating that the blessing (caring for) needed during growth from birth is now replaced by the need for forgiving the mature man who, despite his previous blessings:

is much to blame
that the years are lost, the times crooked;

The poem moves from blessing to forgiveness, for this is the man who earlier did not stand for honour and truth and love but instead has fallen short of what was expected by his creator, although he has tried hard, neglecting the flesh and asking much of the spirit. Nevertheless, the lines:

who throws his cloak over others' shame
is happier naked.

suggest the man has learnt compassion, care for others and a disregard for the materialistic things of life. Thus the poet seems to portray the man who conceals his godliness, but does good, aware of the purpose of life and ready to accept responsibility for the condition of the society in which he lives:

Forgive the man who is much to blame
that the years are lost, the times crooked;
who throws his cloak over others' shame
is happier naked.

This last verse, suggesting time and opportunity man has wasted alongside his willingness to protect others and shoulder their burdens, portrays the complexity of living – failure and goodness coexisting, leaving man torn between his guilt and godliness. There is also a change of tone in this verse; whereas 'bless' is a request, 'forgive' is almost a plea. It is possible to trace a development of tone from the confident 'safe and snug' tone in v. 1 to the vulnerability of 'naked' in v.5.

Also, this last verse makes us wonder at the identity of the babe, child, boy and youth who has been blessed through life and who, arriving at manhood, is aware of his need for forgiveness and would rather cover the mistakes of others than protect himself whilst they suffer. There is a feeling that the poet blames himself for the years lost, times crooked when he did not do more. It almost seems as if the poet is looking back at stages in life, aware of past blessing and conscious of present shortcoming.

Yet the first poem is called 'Biography', a highly ambiguous title – whose biography? 'Autobiography' would have been a much more limiting title, because the poem expresses general experience. The poet's own spiritual insight allows him to write as a representative human being, while leaving the reader to consider his personal response to the poem.

This biographical strain is seen in subsequent poems; in the second one

the poet remembers the room and home of childhood. Entitled 'Rhyme in Middle Age', this poem is linked with the first in its return to origins of human life.

It is an example of complex intertextuality relating to previous texts by Thomas Hood and the Bible. The first line, 'Climb to the room where you were born', suggests that a physical effort is required but by whom? Also a mental effort is necessary to return to thoughts and memories of early life. (In the New Testament, St.John 3, v.4, Nicodemus asked Christ if it was possible to re-enact the birth process: it is not.)

The poet repeats four words - 'cry', 'say', 'hush' and 'sigh' - one in each verse, placed in the same position each time to attract attention to their deliberate use. The infant's cry is linked with 'rock the cradle' of v.1; the 'sigh' in v.4 with age. The actual room where the original wallpaper contained rosebuds (with raindrops on them which appeared to weep) has now been papered over; similarly, life's experiences since living in that house have forced early memories far back into his mind. The rosebuds are weeping at their loss of freedom under restraints of patterns superimposed, just as the adult is aware that innocence is changed by worldly pressures which impose their standards on all.

V.2 like v.1 has its keyword, 'say'. In each verse attention is drawn to these words both by repetition and rhyme within the line. There is a note of vigilance; 'Say, say, watch and pray'. This is a reference firstly to Matthew 26 :41, and Christ's words in the Garden of Gethsemane to his disciples. It is also the recurring line in a hymn by Charlotte Elliott (1789-1871) 'Christian, seek not yet repose' where each verse ends with the caution: 'Watch and pray'. These are words of warning and imply the need for a spiritual strength outside man. V.2 ends with:

angels shall guard you framed in plush

which again suggests materialism surrounding spirituality.

In v.3 there is an echo of Thomas Hood's poem 'I remember, I remember,'²

The last verse of Hood's poem is:

I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy.

Pratt Green writes:

Twelve poplars are brushing the stars,
how they have grown since you were young;

Like them, the poet has grown to maturity physically but not spiritually. The same regretful tone of contrasting the growth of trees with the maturing of the poet is seen here in both poets; yet it is a stronger contrast because here the trees brush the stars, with the suggestion that the trees in reaching heaven outgrow the poet's spiritual reach. There is also the sad awareness of both poets that this is so:

'I'm farther off from Heaven' ³

'Hush, hush - count your cash!' suggests the worldly worth of what one has achieved by adulthood, not just money (and continues the thought of the scene of Gethsemane with Judas and the pieces of silver). Counting cash is checking one's assets, in all ways, even morally. 'One sold his soul for an old song' implies temptation is timeless and also regret that one has given so much for so little. It links with the selling of honour in v.1 and again suggests the inevitability of the compromise that accompanies maturity. This emphasis on materialism contrasts with the previous verse with its

stress on spiritual strength.

While v.1 urged 'climb', v.4 urges 'go', a harder-sounding short word, almost a banishment as:

'the moon sets and the wind is blowing;

The setting moon heralds a new day; the blowing wind a wind of change. It seems to be recalling the poet to the present but with a sigh:

'Sigh, sigh - was it I?
to a sad dawn and a cock crowing.'

Here are also memories of Judas⁴ and Peter⁵ alongside sighs of regret for things we have all done. Old age is partly composed of regrets. The dawn is sad because it is no longer new and fresh but with the cock crowing, it is a reminder of failure in life and denial of the good. Although it is a new dawn and there is yet time to be better, the poet here is engulfed in a time of realisation of things not well done, as in 'Biography', but this time without the redeeming features of the man able to give away a cloak to the needy.

At first some of the phrases used seem contradictory:

'hush, hush - count your cash' is an example; clinking coins disturb.

'Hush, hush' is a term associated with deceit and concealment. This is deliberate - to assert the force of materialism. Peter's 'sigh' links his saving his own skin with all mankind - the inevitability of the compromise of morality to accommodate the world's demands. The experience of the world has made the poet's invitation to :

'Climb to the room where you were born,'

an impossibility.

The poem ends with just this realisation.

'Mortality' considers the effect of love on life. Regardless of one's capacity to love in this life, at death love ends and bodies return to dust. This idea is expressed in Andrew Marvell's poem 'To his coy mistress'⁶ when he writes:

And your quaint honour turned to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

while Shakespeare in Cymbeline⁷ writes:

...all lovers must
Consign to thee and come to dust.

Pratt Green does not stop at this idea but builds on it. In 'Mortality' the poet considers how bitter life would be if loveless:

Yet if we should love the less
Breath would turn to bitterness,
Wearied dust in dust discover
A last and unreluctant lover.

But if we shall love the more,
Shall not self with self explore
Regions beyond the far cry
Or echo of mortality?

The verses contrast the dramatic change love can have on life. The 'wearied' has become active in the word 'explore'; the idea of renewed energy to go beyond 'dust' suggests the force of love that can help us to understand humanity and move beyond 'mortality' to gain glimpses of

Similarly, 'of bells', 'blue peter', 'delight and despair' are phrases highlighted by each being placed on a separate line, at the line end. So in reading the poem the voice lifts and stresses these phrases. The word 'Living' at the start of the poem gives a positive tone; 'dancing' is active. In contrast, other lines start with words like :

'broken', 'shaken', 'banished', 'vanishing'

so that hail and farewell are shown as positive, forward-looking good things that come after bad. 'Morning light' suggests starting afresh, while autumn leaves indicate approaching decay. Breath is broken, love is shaken, suggesting their frailty. Leaves 'dancing their dying' recalls the image of life being a dance and :

.. bells

gustily ringing for a saint's
festival

remind us of celebrating the past in the present, joyfully, not regretfully. Again, 'blue peter' suggests adventure and a 'floating city' movement, not just of a boat but of civilisation, moving steadily forward, progressing. 'Lands of tomorrow' further develops the idea of a future and hope. Despair has been banished to the stern, thus dismissing past failure. There is positive pleasure – delight – at the chance of a better future. Just as the boat contains a stern and a prow so life faces both directions but only moves forward; back and forward are inseparable because both are part of the whole; both are needed in a boat and in life. Because the future is unknown the images here indicate the indistinct vision, yet there is a feeling of joy :

O everywhere

in the world and in us

delight

stands in the spray looking for

lands of tomorrow

and despair, banished to the stern, can only watch the retreating landmarks. The point is made of watching (something we can see) what is behind but seeking ahead for the unknown.

Poems 8-10 are concerned with illness and death, very probably the death of the poet's mother. Entitled 'You were not there', 'Tribute' and 'Elegiac Stanzas' (the Wordsworth title re-used¹²) these poems trace the experience of watching with the helplessness of the onlookers, the elderly with their failing faculties and the sense of loss experienced after the familiar presence of a loved one is removed. The poem relives the last hours of someone's life from the viewpoint of a mourning relative. The poet moves naturally towards a consideration of death, not of others but of self.

'Elegiac Stanzas' seems to be the bridge between poetry of personal memories and poetry of religious affirmation as it contains both, with its acceptance of death in Christ's care. The poet starts with the waiting in a religious hospital, waiting for the inevitable death of a relative. Nuns run the hospital; this is important because they are seen as removed from human anxiety by their calm acceptance of the subordinate position of death in their own lives, as their faith lifts them above its threats. So the nun referred to becomes an example to the poet in the end. The hospital walls and windows are white, the windows curtainless, suggesting sterility but also purity and simplicity; probably also undisguised reality. Even the familiar scenery outside seems both strange yet transitory, because it is permanent in the poet's world of transience but passing as the seasons do. Yet it is 'remote' because the poet is caught up with Death inside and cannot identify with Nature outside; autumn is moving towards winter but at first the poet does not relate to the eternal cycle, being overcome with desolation. The only movement he is aware of is a nurse's footfall which to him is Death walking about the wards as it touches people; the hospital to him is a place of death. He seeks comfort from his surroundings, fearful of his companion, Death:

White walls, comfort me! I am companioned by Death.

His isolation is felt by this use of 'companioned'; Death alone which has no hope to offer him is all he can feel. The immediate surroundings cannot comfort him...'white walls'. Outside, Nature cannot comfort him because, it being October, he sees only dying flowers in gardens:

What has October to bequeath
us but dahlias blackened to the ground,

where there is a suggestion of spoiled beauty, as Death spoils life, giving a feeling of despair.

As he surveys the white walls he turns in his need to the Crucifix in the alcove. Below it is a vase of single asters, spared before frost kills the rest of the flowers:

Hungry for comfort I turn to the white alcove
where the Crucified hangs above
a handful of single asters, the last
to be spared the sharp spears of the frost.

A nun, coming off duty, gathered them in the dawn
for the Beloved to look upon.

The hospital is run by nuns; the flowers are single asters, unspoilt, not speared by frost. The word 'spears' is suggested by the lancing of Christ's side during the crucifixion, portrayed in the alcove above. The poet describes how the asters were gathered by the nun for Christ, the Beloved, and he thinks of how her fingers, so often joined in prayer and submission to God, tried to 'tame their unruliness' as she put the flowers into a vase. The flowers, white and single, need to be tamed as the nun has been. As she is Christ's flower and disciplined by love so must these asters become Christ's flowers and be disciplined. The poet thinks of the nun as 'quiet-

faced' suggesting calm, repose, qualities which he does not possess in his present situation but there is a feeling of his awareness of her having achieved these qualities he still lacks.

The image of the Crucifixion brings mention of myrrh and the poet likens the asters to this - a more conventional religious image; beautiful flowers bring balm to his inner wounds; the asters are dying and he sees:

these already dying flowers
share in His doom who shared in ours.

So Death is emphasised for him by both the Crucifix and the flowers. Flowers, being part of Nature, must die, as humans must.

The poem now changes direction:

It is the loneliness of Death daunts my heart,
No longer is the poet awaiting news of the loved relative's death. Now he is analysing Death as it faces all. These are human senses and feelings we share. For the poet the isolation Death brings is accentuated by thoughts of falling leaves in autumn, leaves which must fall eventually, despite each leaf clinging to the bough as long as it is able to, unaided. For the poet death is a curt and cruel dismissal; it is abrupt, harsh and physically final, and the 'crude, meaningless wastage of sap and blood' which signifies the end of life. When a person has died, the poet reflects on memories each one leaves:

the hundred things that rouse
memory from its sleep,

He realizes that Mary suffered the loss of Christ in the same way. As he gazes at the crucifix in the alcove it reminds the poet not only of Christ's death and Mary's heartache but the end of the story: resurrection. Yet the poet knows for humans there is to be no denial of death:

'when no angels startle us in the garden'¹³

for many people there is no resurrection belief. Therefore the poet needs more comfort for the loss of loved ones and turns to the 'Son of Mary' for this solace.

The mood changes at the end; the nun is described as 'quiet-voiced', suggesting peace; she is seen as being like the October sun which is gentle. October is not a month that kills summer flowers with scorching heat; the idea of it bequeathing nothing but 'blackened dahlias' has been replaced by its giving out gentle heat. The poet is now prepared for what the nun has to say. He is no longer afraid of death for others he loves, or even himself. He looks to Christ 'Son of Mary' for comfort and by so doing shows he realizes he can not be self-reliant in all phases. He looks towards the nun's serenity and her loss of sensuality, so opposite to his sense of life, and realizes he is prepared to give up the things he had thought so important: 'I am ready'¹⁴. Here again in this sentence is a revisionary writing of a significant moment in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Previous poems discussed have been the poet's thoughts on looking back. This final poem is his anxiety as he thinks of the inevitable eventuality that awaits him. The imagery has previously been secular but in this poem it centres on the Crucifixion when, for example, asters become myrrh to his wounds. The death and resurrection of Christ is uppermost in his mind. No longer is man hopeless and falling short of what he should have attained, for death and resurrection of Christ are the Christian's hope, and the poet's recollection of Christ's death and Mary's grief brings him comfort and hope.

In this poem the use of a nun to lead the poet's thoughts towards an understanding of God is similar to Gerald Manley Hopkins' use of the nuns in 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'¹⁵. The title, 'Elegiac Stanzas', is reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon elegiac stanzas where poems like 'The Wanderer'¹⁶ are sorrowful in mood and where the speakers are looking back to former, happier times. These poems end, as they start, in sadness, but this is not true with 'Elegiac Stanzas', where the poet's thoughts are turned by death from the transitory to the eternal. The poet is moving slowly towards religiously-inspired poetry - such poems include

'Revelation', 'Without Image' and 'Gulls'.

In 'Revelation' the poet is thinking of the seals against apostasy, referred to in Revelation 6. These seals depict dreadful judgement. This is not dwelt on by the poet; unlike the retribution in Revelation, for him kindness speaks through steel and 'the Lamb and Dove shall prevail'. The seven wounds referred to include the lancing on the cross, an indication of God's love for man; these wounds 'shall heal' as man is reconciled to God:

and the light of a man's self
shine through his finger-nail.

These lines indicate that man will be seen for what he really is, even from an 'edge' of him, a nail. The idea here is both almost terrifying but also celebratory in man's inability to hide even his inmost thoughts from God.

The passage from Revelation occupies the poet's thoughts further but in a poem that at first seems much removed from the apocalyptic, 'Gulls....'. The poet's observation of the gulls is conveyed to the reader not only by the use of a particular framework and vocabulary, suggestive of the movements associated with gulls but also by the way the title is printed in italics (the only example of this in the whole collection). It is followed by dots which join the title and the first line, which is preceded by dots, so that the title is almost not a title.

Three-line verses and five six-syllable lines reinforce the description of rapid movement: 'Screaming, circling and swooping' suggests speed, while order and pattern in movement is emphasised by lines such as:

proposing a pattern
so vital it shocks

and

describing parabolas
of ingenuous beauty.

The choice of words helps create the structure, as does the word-play; 'possessing Polperro', 'describing parabolae', 'piratically screaming' gives the caesura, the balance and assonance that are highlights of this poem. The noise and movement of most gulls is in contrast to those who are elegantly posing 'in trappist silence' :

so that I could swear
this is the half-hour
of which John speaks

between breaking of seals
and blowing of blasts
in the Apocalypse.

and we are reminded of Revelation and silence, a silence which is partly implied in the verse form : the short lines and the brevity of the verses encourage an awareness of what lies beyond words. The dots also imply sense drifting into silence.

In 'Without Image' the poet considers God's place in the world. God is not an outsider but the 'mind's wonder, heart's delight'.

He is centred in the world, not beyond it, and is the root of man's life, the reason man exists. God's giving of eternity is the gain that death brings: 'Gain that I count loss'.

a line which brings to mind Philippians 3:8: 'I count all things loss' and from Galatians 6.14, Isaac Watts' : 'My richest gain I count but loss'¹⁷.

A god who looks in from outside this world is either a tyrant or uninvolved (as in Hardy's 'God-forgotten'¹⁸) but for the poet his God is ever-present; he is confident of God's presence, expressed in words like :

not Other than, is This:
mind's wonder, heart's delight.

Not Otherwhere, is Here
sphering my hemisphere,...

Not Otherwise, is Thus
root of my blessedness,...

Whilst this is metaphysical language, reminiscent of W.Habington's 'When I survey the bright coelestiall spheare'¹⁹, the image here of completion of the sphere leaves the reader fully aware of the marvel and assurance that the poet finds in God.

The last line of the poem in its repetition gives a feeling of the poet's delight at God's omnipotency:

my God laughs at His image,
having none, having none.

He sees God as laughing at attempts at His image because man is incapable of mirroring God accurately. The poet allows no image because he sees man as incapable of it; images are God made in the image of man. This reminds the reader of the sense of falling short of God expressed in the opening poems.

'Fossil' and 'That World And This' are placed together in the collection. Both are in sonnet form; both are concerned with aspects of the same theme. The chain of being is considered; the first part is considering the fossil's existence in its original state and the second part the poet's realisation that what he holds in his hand is:

this ancestor, I grope to understand
not the past only, but where the process tends,
by what mutations man himself ascends,

as he faces all that history in the present moment. The marvel of creation

is thus implied. The poet wonders if man is a finished creation - is he the final product?

and whether we are Nature's means or ends;

where human understanding of the divine must always be incomplete.

Whereas this poem finishes with the assurance that :

Alpha and Omega knows

the following poem, 'That World And This', questions this point:

Or did He know that world would father this?

In 'That World And This' the creator is termed the Dreamer and creation the Dream. The poet considers the chaos:

Before the Dreamer tossed a casual spark
on tinder of flesh-to-be and lit the fire
that burns us,

The poet thinks about the ice ages, the earliest forms on earth - seas,
rocks -and that the world was empty save for

tumultuous rain
pelting a waste of sea through millenia
barren of meaning, innocent of pain,

There seems to be a suggestion that the creation of the world has brought with it pain and misery and the poet is questioning whether the Dreamer realised completely what He was creating, in terms of feeling, what the result of not personally interfering with His handiwork would mean to all life. However, by considering the words used here another facet of the

poem becomes apparent. For example:

the world, my loved, was ignorant of desire.
nothing lusted or loved in it, nothing slept,
nothing cried out in rapture or remorse;

innocent of...
.....the lover's kiss.

Or did He know that world would father this?

where the last line seems to be suggesting that creation of life on earth results in love and passion. The title then seems to be contrasting 'That World' of geological creation with 'This' (World) of human passion with the joy and pain that brings.

The idea of good and evil is further explored, and to some degree answered, in 'Question And Answer'. Here the plum tree's crop is 'heavy as grief', an ominous simile; the present harvest is prolific but the sinister use of 'but' which follows, after the use of 'grief', prepares the reader for its disease and its being cut off in its prime.

In v.2 the bird is beautiful, musical, an embodiment of the good things in creation but it is also destroyed before its natural time. V.3 describes the brother in full manhood taken from life, not by God but by the body's frailty. The poet wonders why. All three subjects, the tree, the bird and the man were creative. Each had more to offer life but was removed unnecessarily, as the poet sees it. He can see no reason for their destruction. In each verse the question - is there a purpose? - is emphasised by means of the structure. Each question is answered identically:

The purpose is to be a tree (bird/ man)

What other purpose could there be?

The presence of evil is indicated in the fifth line of the first three verses:

I watched it sicken.....

I saw no mercy...

When they called..... he did not come.

In the last verse the structure appears to be identical but is not:

I asked the Hidden One: is there a purpose?

Dear and doomed in brother and bird and tree,

He answered, 'The purpose is creativity.

What other purpose could there be?

Am I not creating you - and you Me?'

In contrast to the previous verse endings the last line is not a statement but a question - of creativity. The contrast between destruction and creativity is thus highlighted by the structure.

Most of the poems here are mystical in that the poet is trying to probe the unfathomable. In 'Question And Answer' the poet's thoughts do not lead him to frustration but to some insight into man's relationship with God.

What man does and achieves or discovers and how he lives, whether saintly and in purity, caring for others, or selfishly, all help to create an idea of what godliness comprises; man's life is capable of extolling God, though there can never be an accurate image of God, particularly if based on the evidence of the diseased plum-tree here, because that is not a perfect image. Man's power comes from God and its use illustrates an aspect of Him.

A reflection on the passing of time is found in 'Snail'. There is a relentless movement forward of Nature - 'the thrush be as the snail'. All things pass and this leads the poet to ponder whether people who pass are remembered. 'Incantation In Honour Of The Dead' reflects on all who have

died through suffering, rather than as in 'Snail' where time alone has brought death to the thrush.

They perished in fire, falling, between cloud and stubble
They mingled their blood freely with all tides that flow

and memories of all who have suffered and died in past centuries flood the poet's mind:

'Here in these ruins I remember them, I greet them'.

(similar to T.S.Eliot's The Waste Land line 69 ²⁰ :

Then I saw one I knew and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!)

The poet has moved from reflecting on personal experience to considering the creation of the world as part of God's plan, a plan that the poet cannot comprehend. Yet he is able to appreciate the marvel of creation and its wonder as he considers the ageless plan, the continuing cycle of life in different forms.

He deals with the past generations in 'Wiltshire Lane', and with the future ones in 'This Is The House', where there is a strong warning not to attempt to know what is to come. In 'The End Of The Season' the poet realises we cannot know or attempt to penetrate the future:

What fortune is ours
who sit gazing into the crystal morning,
self - absorbed,
uncommunicative, clairvoyant?'

This poem shows a sceptical, self-critical tone in these lines. The poem has also a tone of disillusionment expressed in 'cardboard pavillions', 'a sceptical sun', 'a happidrome ... and a room of yawns' as people tell their own fortunes - an introspective pastime. In the last verse the poet links

himself with these people by the use of 'self-absorbed'.

The whole collection portrays a poet with a rich store of literary heritage which brings a deeper understanding of each poem, so that the reader's appreciation is heightened. Although there is a tense quality to these poems, conveying a searching and uncertain feeling at times, there is a steady progression in the collection, from the early poems which focus on human relationships and the relentless transitoriness of life, through the unanswerable problems confronting humanity - pain, suffering, evil, death - to an appreciation of an ordered wholeness in the concept of creation and the acceptance of an omnipotent Creator. This concept is only imperfectly understood but the poet speaks with the trust and assurance that:

..none but the Alpha and Omega knows
the ultimate universe and the last rose.

and that God is in charge of ' this unlikely earth '21.

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2.3

THE SKATING PARSON

Title page:

THE SKATING / PARSON / AND OTHER POEMS / BY / F.PRATT GREEN /
LONDON / THE EPWORTH PRESS /

Collation & Size: pp.72 [pp.11]; 19 x12.50 cms.

Contents: p.[1] THE SKATING PARSON p.[2] blank Frontispiece

photograph: 'The Rev. Robert Walker skating on Duddingston Loch' /
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Flower Press for permission / to reprint one poem from *This Unlikely*
Earth

{ Poems / in Pamphlets, 1952}' p. [8] blank pp. 9-69 text pp. [70-2]
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The Skating Parson F.Pratt Green / Epworth on spine. Inside covers
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Dust cover: blue with black block, 8 x 9.25cms., of Rev. Robert Walker
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DUDDINGSTON LOCH | from a painting by Raeburn, and is used by |
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Inside back dust cover blank.

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THE SKATING PARSON

The poems here are a collection both of new poetry and of poems previously published in various periodicals and magazines with the addition of one poem from the earlier collection, This Unlikely Earth. A selection has been made of poems from The Skating Parson which particularly portray the religious concerns to be found in this collection.

Each of the poems discussed here portrays a different approach to Christianity, ranging from positive belief to apparent near atheism but throughout, there are traces of the poet's fragile hold on his faith which is never vanquished .

In The Skating Parson the poet reflects on the living out of religion in different times ; he considers its changing place in a changing society and the different challenges and threats which are faced by faith.

The poem which gives its name to the collection was occasioned by the arrival of a Christmas card bearing a picture of Raeburn's 'The Revd. Robert Walker skating on Duddingston Loch'. The poet muses on a card which is a reproduction of a painting which is itself a representation of real life. So he is confronted with art representing life brought to him through a picture on a Christmas card.

'Your parson skating in his Sabbath black'

in the opening line is in conversational tone to the sender, with the

'Your parson'; the depiction of a parson dressed in clerical garb, complete with his high hat, whilst skating, is comical, as is the actual word 'parson' which is now a slightly old-fashioned word. The skating parson is as incongruous in his clerical garb as is the portrayal of a Madonna as 'drab and untidy'. The point is made by the poet in the relaxed informal-sounding lines:

....I put him near
the drab Madonna with untidy hair
Who broke convention (not that Raeburn's art
Upset the smallest apple-cart):
My favourite cards this unlamented year.
He skates on solid ice and I on thin

The setting of the skating scene was a Scottish loch and the artist painted it conventionally. The tone conveyed in verse one is of pleasure and gentle humour at the receiving of a card which 'excited me'. Later in the poem, when a further reference to Wordsworth is made, the use of 'excited me' is remembered by the reader; in The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads this is precisely the word Wordsworth used about the effect of poetry.¹

The italicised last line of the verse comes as a surprise to the reader: the atmosphere of a jovial and intimate Christmas scene is broken because the metaphor of thin ice is one of danger and is sinister. Furthermore, the italicised line has no punctuation at its end, indicating the action in the statement is incomplete. Verse two continues to discuss the picture while the poet describes the skater as 'my skating brother', so identifying himself as a 'parson'.

Again, this is slightly comical. With the reference to 'my brother's skill' we have the poet speaking personally.

The poet admires the 'skill' :

The picture, as a picture, pleases me,
But most my skating brother's skill,
His elegance and zest.

In the original painting the skating parson is balanced on his left leg with right leg raised behind him, making a line carried through from heel to head so that the skater's bodyline creates a balanced diagonal. With his arms folded, the stance is elegant; so is the skater's clothing. His knee breeches and black frock coat are contrasted with a white cravat and the black wide-brimmed high hat completes the 'elegance' - more suited to a dignified occasion than a sporting one.

The word 'zest' suggests vitality and enthusiasm for living. The skating is physical exercise but the poet seems to widen this zest to an attitude to living generally. He contrasts not only the skating parson's skill, elegance and zest on ice but links the skating scene with another poet who, like the skating parson, is also divided from us by two centuries:

At once I thought
Of a more famous skater, shod with steel,
Reclining back and stopping short
As cliffs went wheeling by though he was still.

Here he takes over words and phrases from Wordsworth:

In Bk One of The Prelude (1850 text) we find the following:

All shod with steel
.....reclining back upon my heels
stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me,²

It is as if F.P.G. is 'reading the painting' he sees and adding
Wordsworth's text to this reading.

F.P.G.'s thoughts return to the skating parson. Yet there is still the
uneasy feeling conveyed by the last line, repeated from verse one. The
fact that it comes back again is what disturbs the reader.

In verse three 'His elegance misled me' leads the poet to consider that
the skating parson must have been:

Surely an Episcopalian Sassenach
Skating alone on Duddingston's wee loch
(Raeburn exalted it)

The poet is having fun with words here which continues the fine
contrast. There is a hint of an isolated man in a small social circle but:

Research

And reverie have proved he wasn't that!

In the painting the loch is portrayed as grander than 'wee loch'

- perhaps as a fitting place for the elegant parson to be skating.

(The poet later in conversation recalled how he read and researched both the Revd. Robert Walker and the art of skating before writing this poem)³.

This verse ends with the same uneasiness as verses one and two, as the sinister last line is repeated.

The opening lines of verse four revert to the conversational style with 'bless my English soul'. Here the reverie and research are elaborated: there are memories of :

Auld Reekie's grand Athenian hour,
When the arts flourished and the Kirk unfroze,

The use of the word 'unfroze' links with the ice on which the parson skated but this 'Kirk unfroze' led to liberation of thought (in stark contrast to the annihilation under the ice and 'dark as water under ice' expressions found in the last verse).

And Robert Walker, Don and Minister,
Jumped his three hats without a fall
And ended with a perfect 'Dutchman's Roll'

The parson is seen as moving freely from academic and clerical circles to the loch where he is the proficient skater, performing zestful and complicated figures or jumps. This apparent freedom of movement and liberation of thought with flourishing arts enjoyed by the skating parson is again followed by the same unease:

'He skates on solid ice and I on thin'

still with no end stop.

In verse five the poet reflects on the social conditions of the earlier time:

Had they no cares in that Athenian Age?
I juggle with familiar dates
And catch my breath. In spite of Robespierres,
And endless, tough Napoleonic wars,
Spectators gather on the braes.
The ice is firm. The men put on their skates...

This seems to be saying that despite dreadful happenings in the world the spectators, both local Duddingston and universal, participated in the normal activities of their time. 'The men' skate, a pastime requiring equilibrium, on solid ice (a firm foundation). In contrast :

They skate on solid ice and we on thin

The change of pronoun here extends the danger from the individual to his society - the implied contrast is of that generation and our generation. However, throughout the poem there is no comment on the present - no explicit contrasting of 'then' and 'now'. It is all implied. In the final verse the poet returns to considering the card:

Your card outlasts the season of goodwill.
Its simple charm communicates
A meaning dark as water under ice.

The picture has more than a passing greeting, as the poet sees the picture as a comment on life. In contrast to the skill, 'elegance and zest' of the skating parson, in today's world:

On Holy Lochs the skaters match their skill.

The ice is thinner than they guess.

Under the ice annihilation waits.

Whereas the skating parson was skating alone, these skaters are competing with each other, for the 'Holy Lochs' indicate different areas all similarly designated, rather than unity on one loch. The line suggests rivalry rather than co-operation.

As the poet contemplates the different skaters competing in different places he utters the dreadful warning of the last two lines.

This is a vivid contrast with the general tone of the poem.

Throughout there has been a certain charm of the bygone age of skating parsons. These last two lines show a dark nihilism threatening the present age. The whole concept of skating with its reliance on balance, skill, co-ordination and confidence is very important in this poem because those qualities that the skating parson possessed are highlighted by their absence in a portrayal of modern skaters. There is a Larkin-like spirit here. The poet ponders the search for religious truth, for meaning in life, aware of the darkness never far away.

The poet moves from a particular reproduction of a picture to an indeterminate situation. There is unease at the end. It is certainly not a poem of underlying Christian conviction but expresses rather a Christian existentialism. The line 'A meaning dark as water under ice' suggests the unfathomability of life today but also that here is a sense

of impending disaster. Are the skaters on Holy Lochs in search of religious truth or are they perilously near to darkness 'under the ice'?

'Hawkshead Chapel' is a different kind of poetic exercise, lacking both the humour and the dark seriousness of 'The Skating Parson'. It is a poem about a Methodist chapel, small and undistinguished, which, for the poet, provides a more satisfying and deeper experience than the usual tourists' sights of Hawkshead.

The selection of the chapel and not the church at Hawkshead is the first indication to the reader that the poet is more moved by the simple than the spectacular. The opening line is spoken as if by a fell walker, directing people as they descend from the fells into the village of Hawkshead - 'to the village of Wordsworth's youth'. It sounds like a place of poetic pilgrimage but after the mention of Wordsworth in line two the poem concentrates instead on the cottages and narrow streets from where the poet directs the reader to:

look around
for a chapel'

and having located it to:

Go in.

The use of these words here seems to show a poet with positive, certain Christian belief. There is a sense of pastoral guidance in the first two verses with the phrases 'look around' and 'Go in'.

The chapel door is open and welcoming.

Here is the peace of the Gospel
in the faces of remembered saints.

For the poet, the peaceful chapel in its rural community is 'God with man':

If the Lord..
himself came...
he would find here the little flock
he once spoke of, and be at home.

The chapel is 'so closely-neighboured' with the village buildings that:

it will not be difficult to think
that God tabernacles with men.

Encountering the noun 'tabernacle' used here as a verb, draws the reader's attention to the language of the poem. The poem is full of biblical allusions.

In the first verse the:

cars are camels threading themselves
through a needle's eye,

which reminds the reader the poet has walked from the fells, not driven along roads to this village. Both cars and camels are incongruous in this simple village: cars because of narrow streets. The reference to camels and needle's eye is from the gospels and Christ's teaching⁴— an exaggeration used by Christ to emphasise a theological point.

With the use of a noun made into a verb 'God tabernacles with men' is an unusual way of saying 'God dwells with men', which emphasises a deep spiritual experience.

The word 'tabernacle' has its root in Exodus⁵ in the Old Testament where it meant a portable sanctuary – a tent, later a hut, made of greenery. The point the poet is making here is surely one of the simplicity. The tabernacle was a very simple dwelling place and just as God was felt by the Israelites to be present there in the makeshift 'tabernacle', so here in the rough simple stone chapel God is also found. The poet points the reader to the peace and silence of the chapel, in contrast to the place where most visitors as tourists would be crowding – Hawkshead church, with its Wordsworth associations.

The third verse links the Cumbrian fells and the hills of Galilee; linking the landscape reinforces linking the life of Jesus with the simple rural existence of the lake-district people. The mention of shepherds is a further link between the fell dwellers and the life of Christ.

Such is the peace of this chapel that :

If the Lord who walked on the fells
of his north country, who communed
with shepherds and the Father of Men,
himself came, seeking his own,
he would find here the little flock
he once spoke of, and be at home.

Again the expression 'flock' is significant in biblical reference⁶, while

the final phrase 'be at home' conveys a feeling of peace and 'at oneness' and sums up the poet's view of the village chapel.

So the poet, on entering the tourist village, moves away from the recognized tourist trail. Indeed the poet dissociates himself at the start from the cars and tourists. The poet is contrasting the shallow experience of the tourist who visits the church as a poetic shrine, with the deep spiritual experience of a silent, peaceful communion to be found in the chapel - yet it is a chapel also portrayed as homely, suggesting it is the spiritual home where 'God tabernacles with men'. Throughout, the tone is of certainty. This 'guide' knows where to direct people. The fact that he knows the door will be open helps to convey a feeling of his authority. The poem is one of statements, not questions.

In contrast 'La Grotte, Vauxbelets' describes 'a cracked and happy monk' who built a miniature church :

with fragments of lusted china and
empty ormer shells.

The poet describes the monk's efforts:

this doll's-church for Him to dwell in,
a life-work, bright with a saint's joy,

Broken china is put to use to create something positive here. In contrast, the poet reminds us:

While scientists hunted formulas
to blow a world to bits,

It was built for shepherds and quarrymen, a fold
for Christ's flock in the wind and the cold,
a sanctuary against storms, a stronghold.

The church is a part of the natural scenery:

Over its slated roofs the buzzards sweep,
plovers nest within sight of it, sheep
stare in at the windows

Nature has no fear of the church, a church which is also described as
taking its part in the changing seasons:

In summer the leisurely clouds
pattern it with shadows, autumn shrouds
it in mist; responsive to all moods

it reflects the sunset,

Its attraction for the poet also stems from its simplicity -

economical of beauty, free
from self-conscious art

as it fits the landscape which is a desolate one. Just as there is :

sublimity on nature's treeless waste scree

even so

the Christ of solitary places
gives to shepherds and quarrymen graces
transfiguring their rough and homely faces

The choice of words in 'House of Prayer' is evocative. The fold 'for the flock' has undertones of Christ's teaching; 'sanctuary' has a peculiar significance when used about churches, referring both to the place where the altar is and the protection offered against civil law to fleeing felons.

Verse two conveys a grandeur with 'buzzards sweep', their great wing movement contrasted to 'plovers who nest within sight'.

Plovers are birds who spend much time busily pecking for food on the ground in contrast to the airborne buzzard; the sheep 'who stare' give the picture its permanence in contrast to the activity of the birds.

Similarly, the changing seasons affect the building - 'shadows', 'shrouds', 'reflects', 'responsive', are all gentle-sounding words, contrasted by the later harsh, onomatopoeic line :

a target for the artillery of the hail

and the House of Prayer withstands both clement and inclement weather. This metaphorical use of the weather to represent adverse times for the church is a further example of the certainty of the poet's faith.

All three poems about churches focus on their simplicity of construction but with the message that this is where God may be found. However, alongside this simplicity is a hardness. The buildings have

withstood harsh weather; the worshippers have lived harsh lives. The monk's lifestyle has been ascetic. Also, there is a feeling of a Northern ruggedness to the poems, portraying as they do the rural living of the fell dwellers.

There is implicit Christian teaching here; whereas 'La Grotte' is an offering to God, 'House of Prayer' is portrayed as a shelter offered by God, while 'Hawkshead Chapel' is seen as the place where both worshipper and Protector may meet side by side. These are all necessary, interrelated facets of worship.

Three poems concerned with Christ's life are 'A View of the Baptism', 'Comrades at a Crucifixion' and 'The Ship'. Although these do not follow the normal biblical narrative they allude to it and without knowing the 'code'⁷ it is impossible to understand the point the poet is making.

'A View of the Baptism' describes the descending dove as:

a pitiful small bird,

pretty as a plaything. It hovered over
depraved humanity and the dirty river

The line 'depraved humanity and the dirty river' prepares the reader for a harshness which follows. As Christ's hands are raised and the dove prepares to land in them, it is swooped on and killed by a kestrel which

cast a crooked
shadow on his back as they dipt him, naked

in cleansing water. I was elsewhere, caught
by questions, watching crowds move to the ghat.

The verses above force the reader to consider the poet's allusion to other religions because Hindus are cleansed ceremoniously by immersion in water and Indian poverty is suggested by 'crowds' and 'ghat'.

The last two lines of the poem question the need and reason for the Baptism.

What unlikely sins did he need to repent?
Or was it only to show willing he went?

This last line wonders if Christ saw it as strategic to undergo baptism.

What is obvious in this poem is the sound. There is much alliteration i.e. 'crinkled crags', 'pretty as a plaything', 'sun's shaft'. The alliteration used in conjunction with the positioning of words as below

described the descent of the dove -

results in a modulation of voice that is repeated, thus giving a pattern to lines like this.

The same effect is achieved in another verse with :

and the kestrel that killed it cast a crooked..

where the hard k sound also stresses the harsh action.

In contrast the fourth verse:

before softly falling down a sun's shaft
to him whose hands were lifted for a gift

creates a softer and gentler feeling by the use of sibilants.

The poet's choice of words helps create the cadences and patterns of his poetry, apart from the final verse where the two questions in the last verse are highlighted, not only because they are questions rather than statements, but also because here the language is direct and colloquial - for example, 'show willing' - and imagery free.

'The Ship' is quite different. The metaphor of the ship of His loving is followed through as the Crucifixion takes place.

Here the ship sails into a black storm (death). The mariners, referred to as 'we', from the sixth to the ninth hour :

fought wind and water
with ropes of blood and hands of fire,
waiting in darkness for the shock
that ends all. Only the women
went to their situations on the deck

without despair.

The tremendous strain of pulling on sails results in the mariners' hands becoming painful and the ship's ropes bloodied. Here the colour of blood, red, and the accompanying darkness, a blackness, are vivid pictures of the crucifixion. The great storm encountered by the mariners

represents Christ's struggle against the powers of evil.

In this poem it is not the veil of the temple that is rent in twain at Christ's death but the mainmast. The wind, referred to as the 'piercing spear',- (another reminder of the Passion narrative)- drops and the sea becomes calm after Christ's death. In true mariner fashion, after Christ's burial:

After the embalming and burial
we saw the sabbatic moon
shining on a dolphin's back.

Sabbatic is an important word. It is an adjective meaning seven, which is a number much used in biblical literature as a special number (i.e. in the Book of Job)⁸. It is also a reference to the Sabbath, the day on which Christ rose - Easter Day. Astrology was an accepted belief and the moon played a part in this forecasting of one's fate. So the use here of the expression 'sabbatic moon' is indicating prophecy of future events, fortunate events because of the link with the numeral seven, typical of mariner superstition.

Furthermore, the use of the word 'sabbatic' to mean the Sabbath parallels the gospel story of the Resurrection where, after the Crucifixion, the women went to the tomb early on the first day of the week; the sabbatic moon is 'shining' with the Resurrection light. The parallel continues, with the disciples' behaviour :

We had no heart
to mend canvas and cordage,
to take bearings or set a course.

In what might be called allegory the poem concludes:

At daybreak on the Third Day
the ship of His loving was brought
into harbour, one hand lost,

and sheltered until Pentecost.

The 'one hand lost' is Judas Iscariot who hanged himself after betraying Christ. The other hands are presumably the disciples because the ship of His loving is firstly the people who were close and dear to Him. The sea storm is representing a battle of the forces of good and evil. The stormswept ship, battered and off course, survives and is brought safely into harbour on Easter Day – the Resurrection which marks Christ's victory over death.

The mariners, in a wider sense, represent humanity at large. The storm or tempest of life is our fight against 'wind and water' i.e. evil.

In darkness for the shock that ends all

is the black despair of death and the end of everything.

At the least the sabbatic moon is a sign of hope and coming calm. The battered mariners represent the beaten and bewildered, subdued by life's vicissitudes.

At daybreak with its association of new light after darkness, and a concept of a long full day ahead i.e. new life, the ship is brought safely

home, at the expense of one crew member's life -that of Judas. Judas despaired and was lost. Christ has died that all might be saved - if they wish.

In complete contrast 'Comrades at a Crucifixion' is written as a dramatic monologue, using an incongruous linguistic register - the language of the Party.

The situation in the poem concerning the two men crucified alongside Jesus is explained by one of the watching Party members to another. The two men who are dying with Christ:

didn't deviate from the Party line

(Ironically, neither did Jesus deviate from God's plan).

The two dying men are presumed to be fanatics because Jesus is contrasted with them

a dreamer incapable of hate (further irony about the God of love)

'Blood is blood' comrade
whether it's shed
for a cause or a crime;
but a dreamer's blood
butters no bread.

The dreamer's blood, of course, is the life essence itself - bread - so the poet's irony continues to underline the poem.

There is bitter truth in verse three where the Party members stress

their unity in defiance of the state, whereas they describe a dreamer's friends as those who 'knock off before dark' (i.e. death).

Verse four continues the contrasts of verses one and two. The party member is rationalising the death of the two comrades who die with Christ.

Death is a death for a lion or lamb
this dreamer's kingdom
will never come, comrade
until the dead speak
and the living are dumb.

Firstly, it will be noticed that both the terms 'lion' and 'lamb' are those used of Christ who is the 'lion of Judah' and 'the lamb of God'⁹. There is further dramatic irony appreciated by the reader because the dead (i.e. Lazarus¹⁰) have already spoken and the living have marvelled (been dumb) at Christ's miracles. In one sense the dreamer's kingdom has already come; the seeds of Christianity have already been sown, although as yet unrealised.

The dreamer is dismissed by the party members who watch the Crucifixion because they do not see Christ's way of life as upholding a Cause; for them opposition means terrorism, deaths, blood, fighting as 'one fist in attack'. Consequently, the peaceful life of Christ doesn't make sense to them and they see His death as futile - the folly of the Cross.¹¹

By using the language of a card-carrying member of the Communist

Party F.P.G. makes the central Christian story new; he defamiliarises it through a new language (which suggests a different pair of eyes looking at the Crucifixion)

The practicality displayed in this poem is emphasised by the structure. The first three lines of each verse state facts while the last two lines describe the dreamer's deficiencies - he is described as :

'incapable of hate', 'having no reliable friends'.

Here the reader is struck by the choice of the word 'reliable' - an apt word for a Party member to use about his fellow-members, with its suggestion of efficiency; not a normal expression to use in a life-threatening situation.

The structure of the last verse changes from five to seven lines and the final four lines are used to explain, from the 'party line' man's point of view, the impossibility of Christ's kingdom ever coming, with its accompanying irony of which the speaker is unaware.

While this poem looks at the Passion from an atheist's view, the following poem, entitled 'My Hour is not come', focusses on Christ, Himself, speaking of His coming death and resurrection. His words echo those spoken by a dragon-fly nymph and the blossom of a pear tree.

It is an example in this collection of an overtly Christian poem. The title is a quotation from St. John 2 v.4 where the gospel narrative describes the wedding feast at which Mary, the mother of Christ, told Him of the host's running short of wine. This quotation was His reply.

My hour is not come
said the dragon -fly nymph
said the blossom of pear
said the Son of Man

Throughout the poem, in verses one, three and five, there are three statements as in lines 2,3 and 4 above.

The choice of dragon-fly nymph is of interest because a dragon-fly nymph can take up to three years to mature, at which time it sloughs off its skin, having reached maturity. Until this time it remains in the water and only at maturity rises from the pond in order to procreate. So it changes its appearance and habits at the time it reaches maturity. Similarly, the blossom of the pear undergoes a change, as the blossom 'sets' and forms fruit. Christ too, the Son of Man, is in His pre-glory stage. Thus the poet appears to draw a parallel between the three speakers.

but when it is come
I shall mate in the air
I shall hang from the bough
I shall lie in the tomb

Verse two shows the reader the breaking of the parallels. The dragon-fly nymph will arise, the blossom will be aloft but the Son of Man will be laid low. (However, we should not forget the Crucifixion and the raising of Christ on the cross.)

Verse four looks beyond the coming of the Hour:

and when it is gone
I shall die in my turn
I shall fall to the ground
I shall put on my crown

said the dragon-fly nymph
said the blossom of pear
said the Son of Man

For the dragon-fly the great moment is to procreate and then there is no further purpose in living. The blossom is forced to change in order to become fruit which will ripen and if unharvested, fall and rot. Thus, having produced fruit, the blossom has fulfilled its purpose in being. The great contrast is that the Son of Man, having 'fallen' when the others were aloft, will be raised to His final exalted position. He is now transformed as they were earlier but the Son of Man's transformation is permanent; at the end it is He who conquers. Paradoxically, the dragon-fly and the blossom first prepare for ripeness and then death, while the Son of Man prepares for death and then ripeness.

The final verse is short – because only the Son of Man remains to make a statement; He exists after the deaths of the other two, indicating His everlasting nature:

I shall comfort my own
said the Son of Man

The Son of Man exists after death by 'going to the Father' and sending the Comforter.(John 14 v.16) The end, as the beginning, is a reference

to St. John's gospel where in ch. 16 v.7 Christ is seen as the one who comforts. In this gospel the word 'comforter' is used about the Holy Spirit

The format of the poem leads the reader to expect a parallel situation, following the parallel statements in the first verse but as the second verse shows some contrast the reader begins to look for further contrast. 'in the air' and 'on the bough' contrast with 'lie in the tomb'; 'die' and 'fall' contrast with 'put on my crown'. The constant repetition of some words creates a delusion that the poem is of likenesses but the ending establishes the great contrast. The final statement is one of assurance.

What marks this poem out as different is that there is no attempt here by the poet to disguise his personal belief, or present the Christian belief in the Son of Man as anything but belief in an omnipotent, all-conquering Lord. Nature is seen as an endless process of change and renewal.

'Prayer in Lent' is a personal outpouring; at first it seems to concern only the speaker and God. The poet appears to be rebuking his own weakness. He sees that he might weaken under the loads of living :

Lord, if I cry
'take the sword from the lily's sheath,
take the agony from the olive grove,
dour from the way to the green hill';

As 'Prayer in Lent' begins with a verse that echoes and elaborates on

Jesus's cry in the garden of Gethsemane so the agony in the garden (here 'the agony [in] the olive grove) contains within itself the temptation to avoid suffering:

'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'¹².

The poet's cry to be spared these things, whilst reminding the reader of Christ's anguish in wishing to be spared the coming Passion, also underlines the knowledge that it was an inescapable part of God's plan.

The first two verses begin with an acknowledgement that this is a temptation for everyone- 'Lord, if I cry'; the third verse asks to be denied, so that the poet should himself be prepared to face difficulty and pain (the sword in the lily's sheath - the sharpness among the beauty of the lily - the agony of the olive grove and the 'doulour' of the via dolorosa, 'the way to the green hill').

If the poet prays to avoid these things, in verse 1, he also suggests in verse 2 that he might be tempted to avoid other things: the problems of 'the intransigent will', bitterness ('make all sweetness') and death:

Lord, if I cry
'straitjacket the intransigent will,
make all sweetness, and with a smile
soften the deliberate blow of death';

Here the poet asks for the imposition of God's rule on our free will - something which would change the relationship between God and humanity - and the removal of all that is bitter in life, with death

becoming something against which the poet will be almost cushioned. This is an unrealistic approach and would be an artificial existence for all. Thus the poet realizes such prayers as these must not be answered; the result of a life unaware of pain or pitfalls would be to set him apart from humanity. Without personal experience of these things such a person would be incapable of genuine pity for those who suffered. Part of man's essential humanity is the ability to be compassionate; thus the answering of the poet's prayer would leave him less than human:

Lord, then deny
me! Teach me all my prayers to unsay,
lest my tears, rarer than pearls, lie
sealed up in an uncompassionate eye.

Verse 3 prays these petitions for an easy and untroubled life ('make all sweetness') should be denied because if they are granted, he would become less compassionate. His tears for the sorrows of life would be:

sealed up in an uncompassionate eye

Finally, the poet realises the error of his prayers with the abrupt term 'deny me'. 'Tears, rarer than pearls,' contrasts the transparency and softness of the tear with the opaque, hard quality of the pearl, suggesting at the same time that this sign of human feeling would be less often found than pearls which are supposed to be the rarer of the two.

This 'less than human' result is underlined by the choice of words. 'Straitjacket' is the necessary means of restriction for people who

might injure themselves if left unrestrained. 'Intransigent' suggests an uncompromising attitude which will only change by force. Here both the words used are indicating the imposition of external force, usually against the wishes of the person but in this context prayed for, so that the result will be of having no further responsibility for one's own actions. This for the poet as a Christian would be contrary to the essence of his faith. The further use of words like: 'sweetness', 'smile' and 'soften', all repetitive in both sound and tone, reinforce the desire to make life easier, so that death after such a life would become a 'blow', something to spoil the sweetness of life, rather than a final stage in Christian development.

Finally, a poem that gave its name to a B.B.C. interview¹³ in which F.P.G. participated is : '*Why did you come so late?*' The poem was written in 1955 when the poet had not long been a published poet.

It is the opening poem in this collection and printed in italics throughout. Perhaps the poet himself wondered why his poetic ability had remained latent, for by the time of this poem he was fifty.

The first verse refers to :

The sparkling light
On shores where the sea holly
Prickles the feet of youth

This early development of the poet has been missed, as has the time of the 'young men basking alone' referred to in verse two. The first three verses detail things that have been missed, as if the poet's late arrival

has deprived others of the poet's insight:

We might have knelt to see
A city flowering in flame
And ringed the cracking world
With the strong bands of rhyme,
If you had come in time.

So the structure is of an opening question followed by what seems to be the poet's portrayal of what his readers have missed through his late coming. Yet the last verse shows that this is not a sufficient or true resumé of the verse. The pronoun changes from 'we' to 'I'.

Small wonder, then I sit
Inarticulate with delight,
Inarticulate with regret
Asking - was it my fate,
Or fault, you came so late?

'Inarticulate' is the crucial word here with its many meanings. To be inarticulate can mean to be incapable, through lack of vocabulary, of expressing one's feelings. Or is the poet 'inarticulate' because his feelings so overwhelm him that he is silenced by their intensity? And the feelings are seen to be extreme - delight and regret. Is the struggle within between these two opposing emotions such that he can not express them? 'Inarticulate' also suggests unvoiced thoughts, of the poet here left with an ever-unanswered question, one that he must ponder on for the rest of his life.

The poem seems to be questioning the poet's Muse, pondering over whether he was in any way responsible for his 'late development', or whether it was fate or life situation that resulted in this poetic outpouring in his fifties.

This last verse causes the reader to reconsider the whole poem. Now the opening question appears to be addressed to the Muse. The first three verses with 'we missed' and 'we might have' are now seen to refer to the writer and Muse together, forming a 'We'. The poet is considering how the Muse and he together throughout life might have:

ringed the cracking world
With the strong bands of rhyme
If you had come in time.

suggesting the healing qualities of poetry that the two might have offered to the world (reminiscent of Matthew Arnold and his view of the power of poetry¹⁴). The last line of the poem seems slightly critical of the Muse - whose absence has prevented the poet's full flowering - and he is left at the last, never to know whether it was fate or fault - predestined or accidental - :

Inarticulate with delight,
Inarticulate with regret'

at what has been missed - as is his reader.



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1977
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2.4

THE OLD COUPLE

Title Page:

THE OLD COUPLE / Poems New & Selected / F.PRATT GREEN / HARRY CHAMBERS PETERLOO POETS

Collation & size: pp.[8] pp. 64; 22 x 14 cms.

Contents: p. [i]: Title page p. [ii] black & white photograph of poet p. [iii] THE OLD COUPLE / Poems New & Selected / F.PRATT GREEN / HARRY CHAMBERS PETERLOO POETS p. [iv] First published in 1976 by Harry Chambers Peterloo poets. Copyright 1976 and statement on copyright / ISBN 009055291 08 5 / Printed in Great Britain by The Scolar Press Limited, Ilkley, Yorkshire

p. [v] Acknowledgements to The Listener / Outposts, New Poetry (Arts Council), The Poetry Review, English / The Yorkshire Post, The Countryman, Norfolk Fair and The Hibbert Journal / p.[vi] Dedication p. [vii & viii] Contents pp. 9 - 64 text.

Cover: White stiff paper. Front cover with pencil sketch of old couple against background of Norwich Castle, signed by Owen Waters in right hand lower corner. Title, publishers . Back cover: THE OLD COUPLE / Poems New & Selected / F. PRATT GREEN / Resumé of poet's life and poetry publications followed by printing of poem 'The Old Couple' / in brevier type / Publisher, ISBN No, Price : £1.50. Inside back cover: other works in Peterloo poets series.

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THE OLD COUPLE

The volume of poems entitled 'The Old Couple' comprises forty six poems; thirteen from 'The Skating Parson', three from 'This Unlikely Earth' (both of these earlier collections are now out of print) and thirty more recent poems not previously in a collection. All were written between 1950 and 1975. When this volume was published in 1976 the poet was 73 and his mind was turning naturally to problems of old age.

The following analysis and consideration of this collection is to attempt to trace thoughts and moods present in the poetry. The poems have been grouped together, starting with the poet's attitude to age; this was also the poet's starting point, as his first poem in this collection bears the name of the collection: The Old Couple.

The poem was occasioned by the poet seeing some retirement bungalows in South Yorkshire while he was travelling as a minister in the circuit. The old people were rehoused in 'brand new' housing - with its wealth of implied meaning of new gadgets, and modern up-to-date facilities. The use of 'drugged with the milk of municipal kindness' is ironic - to make the reader consider just how 'kind' this rehousing is. The couple are described as 'fumbling their way to bed', indicating a feeling of their being lost in the new environment. Such words as 'fumble' and 'drugged' indicate the poet's criticism of rehousing the elderly; they suggest that the couple feel strange and deracinated. 'Municipal kindness' is the poet's deliberate positioning of two incompatible ideas: kindness is an abstract quality displayed by individuals whereas 'municipal' is describing the group of people who run the local council. The poet's tone is conveyed here by this juxtapositioning: it is the acknowledgement that the caring that the elderly need is countered by the bureaucracy of local government so that the result, well-intentioned, is 'worse than the first state'. Never does the poet voice this directly but description below leads the reader to this as

the only conclusion:

 they nag each other to show
Nothing is altered, despite the strangeness
Of being divorced in sleep by twin-beds,
Side by side like the Departed, above them
The grass-green of candlewick bedspreads.

The couple nag one another because it is now their only communication. The strength of the word 'divorced' suggests the poet sees the familiar habits of the couple's relationship as having been broken by their removal to the new bungalow. The phrase 'like the Departed' describes them as lying as if they were dead; the churchyard image of grassed gravestones evoked by green bedspreads further emphasises the old couple's deterioration of life-style - despite the authority's feeling that it was improving the lot of the old couple. The use of 'dead' to describe the neighbourhood reinforces the nearness of the old couple to death. Just as there is no life, disturbance or dog barking in the area so the poet makes us realize how little life is left for the couple.

'It is silence keeps the old couple awake.'

Again there is irony; the quiet and respectable place, seen as desirable by many, is, for the old couple, an alien environment. Silence is linked with death, not life, and so we see the poet's presentation of the couple's new existence as being no more than a hanging-on to life. The quality of their life has deteriorated; the things they hang on to are human things further marked by flimsy memories like:

 the tinkle
That a budgerigar makes when it shifts
Its feather weight from one leg to another,
The way, on windy nights, linoleum lifts.

This is a very fragile hold on life, emphasised by the featherweight sound of a caged bird; the old couple too are caged, in the bungalow of silence. The point of the poem is the poet's awareness of the isolation and insecurity this move has brought to the couple, physically isolated from each other by their twin-beds, from other people by the absence of neighbours and from the normal, noisy living they had experienced all their lives. The bungalow and twin-beds are physical reminders of how the well-intentioned rehousing scheme has resulted in cutting the couple off from a lifetime's habits, indicating a complete lack of understanding of the elderly on the part of the authorities. The last verse starts with an apparent paradox and continues the idea of love and separation:

Too old for loving now, but not for love,
The old couple lie, several feet apart,
Their chesty breathing like a muted duet
On wind instruments,

The physical separation to twin-beds, 'divorced in sleep' from v.1, is reinforced here with 'several feet apart' but the absence of physical proximity cannot destroy their love, despite doing its best, a love described like their breathing as 'a muted duet', a form of music where both tunes are necessary for harmony. The chesty breathing becomes significant in the silence that surrounds them.

Their memories are very different in register. The budgerigar is 'featherweight' making scarcely perceptible movement which needs a tinkle from a bell to draw attention to it, whilst the wind in its strength blows under the door and lifts the floor covering. On this memory the poem ends which seems to emphasise the random memories the old are left with. The tone has changed from the couple's anxious irritability in v.1 to an unease of surroundings and finally, almost a feeling of resignation:

.....trying to think of
Things to hang on to,

This poem was singled out and quoted in the review by the Times Literary Supplement (13/4/73) of the Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century Verse, edited by Philip Larkin¹, perhaps because it epitomises the community's concern for the elderly alongside its inability to translate this concern into humanitarian practice. (In some ways Pratt Green's poetry seems to contain a 'Larkinesque' quality in his presentation of society.)

Whereas the tone of the previous poem is sad, because we feel sorry for the old couple, the tone evoked in another poem about ageing, 'Backs to the Engine', is different. Here, as the poet describes a train journey where the passenger looks back rather than forward, the tone is peaceful and contented at first. 'Backs to the engine' means literally not facing the way we are travelling and this is a significant point in the poem. The scenery is that which has already been encountered by the train-driver who looks ahead but these passengers are secure in their seats, looking at scenery as it is left behind them:

So we enjoy

A wholly-quiescent mood, in which
It is not we who move but fields
And horses and the twelve stations
We cannot stop at, each a stage
On our enforced journey in time.

The use of 'enforced' is in contrast to 'wholly-quiescent mood' and brings a realism into the poem. Similarly, the couple can not stop at 'the twelve stations'.

Unlike 'The Old Couple' where the poet describes a physical relocating in old age, here he is describing the mental process of ageing: the reviewing, the remembering and reminiscing:

From those who are looking back
Nothing is stolen.

These lines suggest a security and comfort. The train journey takes the poet 'through autumn orchards' suggesting harvesting of the year's crops (or life's work?) but the tone changes with the description of:

Playgrounds

where a pensioner sits
Waiting for the dismissal bell.

There is something slightly ominous about the linking of the words 'pensioner' and 'dismissal'.

The peaceful tone of the opening verses changes as the poet writes:

What disturbs us is not speed
But loss of it, this slackening

Of the landscape.

The image of the train journey is carried through the poem but the underlying theme of journeying through life and slowing down physically in old age is ever present. The last verse can clearly be seen as the poet's thoughts of eternity:

The end

Postpones itself; and we've time
To ponder, before we step out
Under that clouded span of glass,
Whether our arrival presupposes
A fresh directive and departure.

These final lines show a tone of speculation. The fact that the poem is in the first person plural should not be ignored; the poet was approaching retirement when this poem was written. However, there is a suggestion at

the start of this poem of almost 'burying one's head in the sand'. The elderly can forget the uncertainties of old age and death by looking back:

We are not conscious of the future
Menacing us, of harsh mountain,
Long tunnel, and strange terminus;

The words 'menace', 'harsh', 'strange' are suggestive of fear and discomfort, describing mountain, tunnel and terminus which are arduous, dark and final yet, although the poet says looking back means we're unaware, he does not deny the existence of these things in front of him. The past is comfortable viewing: old people tend to look back to remember happy times.

This observation of the elderly is keenly displayed in 'A Teenage World', a poem expressing how out of place the elderly feel.

Now it's a teenage world,
Where we walk like aliens without passports,
Hoping to get by. If stared at, we smile
With the defensive bonhomie of the senile.

There is a suggestion in these lines of almost 'fear' - a fear of being without rights to walk freely. 'Defensive' suggests the elderly are not at ease anymore. However,

Slyly, we think
This was a cup from which we used to drink

shows an identification with the young who now 'flaunt' their sexuality at each other, just as the elderly did in their youth. Apart from 'a foreign language' and 'outlandish garb' there is always a gap. The last lines of v.3:

rhythms that defeat
Our stiffening joints and spongy feet.

describe the physical generation gap, whereas the following lines lament the emotional gap:

Why are we strangers to our grandchildren?
Why do they contract out of our lives?

By midnight

We shall all lie between crumpled sheets,
Too far apart to hear each other weep,

The use of 'contract out' here suggests no recognition of need; it is a formal disassociation. The poem ends with the line:

One family beneath the low roof of sleep.

which is oddly unresolved. The one family needs each member; the poet suggests all ages have their own sorrows and the family (whether universal brotherhood or nuclear family) is meant to give mutual support. This makes us look afresh at the opening lines where the poet is stressing the apparent superfluity the elderly feel in teenage haunts. We realize the sadness at the end of the poem is because neither young nor old will admit their need of each other. Although the poet has used the phrase 'one family' he presents it as divided making the situation of the two groups within it more poignant.

'The Young Ones'² by Elizabeth Jennings, a contemporary of Pratt Green, is useful as a contrast with 'Teenage World' here because the feelings evoked are so different. Jennings writes 'I look, not wanting to be seen' but this is not through fear, as has been suggested in Pratt Green's poem, but merely not wanting to draw attention to herself. In 'The Young Ones' the poetess compares her youth unfavourably with the present generation of

teenagers whereas Pratt Green nowhere indicates he feels he has missed out. (Indeed elsewhere, in 'The Other Side of the Fence', there is a suggestion that he is sorry for the teenagers.) Jennings writes:

I see

How childish gazes staring out of each
Unfinished face prove me incredibly
Old-fashioned.

She does not seem to identify in any way with the young as the poet does in 'Teenage World' and there the poet's conclusion of the different generations needing each other but not acknowledging their need creates a poignancy that Jennings does not achieve. It is this ability of Pratt Green to identify with his subject which satisfies the reader.

Seeing aged people as a group apart is the focus of 'Old Men in Libraries' which is a poem that does not flatter the old. Such lines as these quoted below scarcely indicate much perception on the part of the elderly.

Know heat from cold, peace from
Nagging, not light from twilight,
Sameness from surprise.

Yet the poet reveals the true picture; these elderly men are the vital eye-witnesses but society disregards them:

Nobody wants to hear.

They fought the wars of history
Men write books about.

This is an interesting comment showing the poet's personal respect for such people who are generally ignored, and whose views are considered

superfluous.

The main concern of the old men now is:

.....the cloud of a cataract
On the eye or fire of arthritis
In the hip'.

which indicates the paramount position of physical disabilities in old age.
The poem concludes:

He died
In the library reading the papers
Is a desirable epitaph.

which perhaps suggests that this is better than some kinds of exit.

'Walking in Winter' is a positive look at old age by the poet. The symbolism of winter for ageing is used but does not bring bleakness; the poet talks of:

Friends, on a winter's walk,
 walking in the early
winter of age, we enjoy
 the pastel morning's
 frosty transparency,
the crackle of casual talk.

The deliberate format and the irregularity of rhythm give the feeling of a walk where the pace is varied - according to the ability of the elderly walker.

The use of words like 'pastel', 'frosty' and 'crackle' to describe the situation also conveys feelings of age, for example because we associate pastel colours with old ladies.

To us winter's death is no
death, but mature season,
truthful and bare
and beautiful, promising
revival in root
and seed of a life
to be tired of would be treason.

The Christian hope and belief in immortality is implicit in the viewing of the dormant season in nature as the forerunner of burgeoning spring . Nevertheless, in this poem the walkers are content with the present:

We grasp
at the existential
moment, this winter's
walk, before the weather breaks.

It is as if the poet sees his position clearly. For him Age is like Winter, a season with its own pleasures to be enjoyed for itself before spring (or a rebirth) replaces it. There is much use of symbolism here; is 'the weather breaks' a reference to death? The reader is led to think this. Nevertheless, the mood is of enjoyment and satisfaction with the present.

Perhaps the mature season, truthful and bare, is what old age should be, honest and unadorned, not camouflaged, with no need to try to 'prove' oneself in the eyes of the world.

The poet admits this human feeling of wanting to prove oneself in 'The Old Man and The Kite'. This poem has little punctuation, to convey the idea of thoughts passing through the old man's mind. The last verse ends with a period, the only one in the poem.

I'd be flying my new kite
on a bright windy day
instead of writing a poem
to prove I can still play.

This last line reveals the poet's self-awareness and self-knowledge; he does not shrink from analysing his own feelings and confronting himself with them. The poem centres on a bird, a plane and a kite which he sees in the sky. The kite is controlling its owner, instead of the owner flying the kite; the kite being neither bird nor plane does not fly but 'collapses ridiculously'. The plane and the gull fly off and the broken kite is rescued by its tearful owner - a girl. Things would be different, says the poet, if the kite owner had been a boy and if he, the poet, had been that boy. So the poem ends with the wishful thinking of returning to childhood to fly a kite.

Although this poem seems to envy the young, F.P.G. does not spend time in looking back and regretting pleasures associated with youth. His poetry in this collection is compassionate of people and considerate of situations - particularly of what the future holds.

His minute observation of his surroundings leads him to ponder on the unfathomable and thoughts of what follows old age - death - appear in various poems, not as direct speculation on eternity but as wider implications of carefully-observed natural phenomena as in 'The Next Minute'. There is a feeling of inexorability as minute succeeds minute. The poem describes the water moving towards the weir (life as a stream flowing to its final destination?). On the water float unsullied flowers of wild cherries; (could these be nature's gifts in this life?)

on a film of water
Dry as my hand, drift
Nature's excitable children
Whirligig, water gnat and pond skater;

The poet by describing these as 'dry as my hand' is intimating in passing the marvel of creation displayed in their behaviour. The water is described in v.1 as sluggish; this suggests a slow but forceful power in contrast to the wild cherry with its unsullied flowers, suggesting fragrance and lightness. 'Drift' in v.2 has a feeling of no definite purpose. There is contrast in v.4 where:

as the water folds
In falling, antennae wave
And eyes open, alert to
Whatever it is the next minute holds.

there is a moment of sudden alertness and expectancy, perhaps suggesting that there may be such moments at the time of death with the reference in v.3 to voles awaking in the river bank to the change in the water's movement. Does mankind have a final moment of recognising the transition to eternity?. That such a transition is inevitable is also conveyed elsewhere. The mood here is both philosophical and tentative. The title - 'The Next Minute' - refers to the future and thus to the unknown.

Similarly, 'Moving Shadows' though more general in comment than particularly focussing on old age and death, by the vocabulary used calls up ideas of both:

An invisible wind blows
from the dark side of the moon
to trouble these bare branches

The invisible wind blowing reminds the reader of the end of Shelley's 'Adonais'³ while feelings of fear and unease are created by the use of 'invisible', 'dark' and 'trouble'. Use of 'bare' suggests sterile or dormant nature and links fear with age. Does the unknowing trouble the old? The fear is expressed in v.2:

Who walks on moving shadows
shall be shaken by a fear
paradoxical and profound

This apparent reference to Plato's cave myth⁴ and shadow versus reality (a theme found in many of Shakespeare's plays⁵) is the poet's way of commenting on human behaviour. Shelley, in 'The Sensitive Plant'⁶, writing:

in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

is expressing the same idea.

The fate of man is seen in the following lines of 'Moving Shadows':

Do not these shadows write
the equivocal fate of Man
who, steeling himself to meet
reality, lets illusion
betray his wayfaring feet?

where 'illusion' may well be a reference to materialism which blinds man to reality and religion.

That it is the life of man is obvious by 'wayfaring', the walking is life, and the poet points us to the sober truth that we ignore facts and base our lives on 'shadows' - transitory objects. 'Shadows' suggests the temporal, intangible, disproportionate and insubstantial, never fully known, all rather a sobering description of our striving to live. However, although there is the reference to bare branches and man's fate, the poem is not

solely about a wasted life; if it were it would be a dismal conclusion. The key of the poem is in the opening line which is deceptively simple:

Let me take hold of your arm.

This could be an ordinary comment by a fellow traveller, but it could be God speaking, offering stability, security and guidance to the wayfaring feet; the use of 'paradoxical and profound fear' suggests a Godly fear. Furthermore, the reader is left to decide whether it is an offer of help or a request for aid.

There are religious poems in this collection (after all the poet is also a minister) but they are not all written from the expected point of view. 'Another Sabbath in the Western Highlands' describes a hooded crow cleaning its feathers while psalm-singing Christians 'clear their consciences' - with the parallel of 'clearing the throats' often heard in churches. Are the congregation, like the crows, also hooded - not seeing clearly? The poet describes the congregation as:

never posing
the bleak and unanswerable questions.

suggesting a Christianity that 'buries its head in the sand'. To reinforce this idea, later, in vv. 4 and 5 these lines occur:

This is a day

of dulled vision.

That particular Sunday is wet, 'cold as Christmas' but the lark is 'singing in the leaden sky':

This is a day
when we need religion to keep us warm

but the poet takes pleasure in 'watching the dark waters', the sea-gulls 'sailing' and the rhododendrons shaking off the water, all part of natural behaviour for this wet weather. The Christians out of the rain seem to be protecting themselves as they :

witness, with a compulsive holiness
to the strength of His arm and His rod.

The elements of nature praise Him in their very existence - the lark singing, the crow croaking. The idea of religion keeping the people warm has an amusing twist; the practice of church going protects the people in the church from the inclement weather outside on that Sunday morning but also should 'warm them' spiritually by renewing their fervour.

The poem 'Backslider' is a further comment on religion but one that might well come from a critic of churchgoers instead of a pastor of them. The title is the word that Wesley used in hymns for people who 'fell by the wayside'⁷, It shows the poet's ability to view objectively and at the same time to present the reader with the outsider's view of the church.

F.P.G.says that this poem was written from the memories of chapels encountered in his pre-ministerial training in North Wales as a young man. He is the speaker, the observer, who sees clearly the effect of a chapel and chapel life on its surroundings.

The poem is in the form of a dramatic monologue, spoken by the backslider. He comments on the chapels he passes, noticing their names and their construction:

Called by Bible names, beautiful names
With their windows square as honesty,
Rounded as charity, clear as purity,

while also bringing to the reader's notice qualities that are those expected of Christians. Yet when he sees the church elders, thoughts of Christ's return leave him:

But the deacons all walked with a tread
So solemn, I thought He was dead.

The chapels have railings round the grounds they stand in and no church garden to soften the setting. This seems to the observer as if:

the holy chapels (are)
Surrounded by spikes and spears,

(the spikes and spears put into the reader's mind the Crucifixion and death rather than life). He sees only dandelions:

- Which I love, mind you,

- growing round the railed-in church, pernicious but colourful weeds which need no tending.(Does the poet intend the reader to link the dandelion and the 'backslider'?)

The poet's focus on fences and flowerless ground outside the chapels and 'lugubrious', never happy, singing within by people dressed in black reinforces the idea of death from the first verse. The onlooker passes by 'respectfully' and walks on to beyond the chapels:

Where lambs sucked, chaffinches sang
And lilies of the field were arrayed
Better than Solomon, and the thorn
Flowered,

all suggestive of Christ's death and Resurrection.

It is surely deliberate that the poet uses phrases from the Gospel to emphasise the non-chapel-goer's knowledge of the Bible. The use of 'sucked' with the lambs receiving nourishment is also an indication that the church should be 'nourishing' its congregation.

The scenery cheers the speaker. Here is new life, happiness and beauty. The deacons may condemn the backslider but his chapel is the natural world where there is laughter and living proof that God exists.

In the final verse the speaker touches his cap to the deacons as he passes their chapel but they:

call me bad names

Such as Backslider, and Son of Belial,

This furthers the contrast because the deacons use biblical language to condemn the onlooker who uses biblical language only to describe the beauty of God's world.

The contrast from the first verse where the sombre, solemn deacons create a funereal appearance is completed in the last verse where the 'backslider' joins with nature in praising the Creator through appreciating His works and believing He has risen.

But I go to my own chapel, thank you,
Which has no railings, walls, or windows,
With the singing joyful, and my head
Laughing itself off He isn't dead.

and the lilting tone and Welsh expressions:

Which I love, mind you, and the singing

give the poem a gentleness that is deceptive, for the poet's description of the Welsh chapels is disturbing. It is a biting comment to present a functioning church as outwardly seeming to be remembering the dead

rather than praising the living, yet the reader reacting to the dramatic monologue is left feeling rather more apologetic for the congregation's narrowness.

A similar idea occurs in William Blake's 'Garden of Love'⁸. The contrast of the deacon's chapel and the backslider's 'chapel' parallels the lines:

And the gates of the Chapel were shut,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore.

The title 'Backslider' epitomises the poem in it being the opposite of the truth, for nothing is what it seems. The chapels with 'beautiful* names' are marred by their surroundings and congregation. The 'backslider' is safe in his isolation from being repressed by their representation of religion. The deacons are respectable but not spiritual.

Whereas 'Backslider' presents a view of religion from the point of an observer, there are poems that are directly based on his experience as a minister.

Two poems concern the moving from circuit to circuit that characterises the itinerant Methodist ministry.

'Neither Here Nor There' is his description of his life:

On the moving stair
Between waking and sleeping
The shallow and the profound,
The ground and the underground.

He suggests the moving allows him to start afresh in the next circuit but then thinks:

*'beautiful' changed to 'marvellous' in O.C.

Will our ghosts defeat us
By being first to greet us?

The past is 'neither here nor there'; only the future matters but his understanding of human behaviour prompts the final question: can one break away from the past mistakes (and does one repeat them ? seems to be implied.) This poem which is based on personal experience, this time of what happens to him as a minister, is seen in a wider light as he considers whether it is a universal failing that mankind does not learn from experience. So the reader is at one with the poet again; despite having not experienced the peripatetic life style of the ministry he can now join in consideration of the final question raised by the poet.

Constant moving about the country is the subject of 'Flitting', only in this poem it is the comments of those who watch and stay behind as other people depart that are the perceptive and provocative thoughts here. Not only the comments and attitudes of those leaving but also of those staying are considered as he describes the last week in the area.

Like as not, you'll be glad to get away;
Quickest is best in dying and flitting!

This shrewd comment shows his understanding here of the difficult moments of goodbye when everything that needs saying has been said. The dislike of prolonged death scenes and the desirability of quick clean breaks in human relationship when the time comes, is summed up in those few words.

Understanding of humanity is essential for the poet; this includes understanding of himself. In 'Humanscape' he expresses a personal sadness as he recognizes something missing in his own life. The poem describes a man who has spent the morning:

watching
Weather in eyes and a season
In the open field of a face....

as if he had been at a difficult meeting. At Chard a boy enters his railway compartment with his rod and apples and the man forgets his morning's dealings with people; instead he watches the boy opposite him:

the more sad
Beholding there in a glass
Darkly the questioning ghost
Of the son that he never had.

There have to be moments in the lives of all childless couples when they are made poignantly aware of the lack of children; here surely is the wistful tone of the poet, admitting that in this life we see the reasons for what happens to us only 'as in a glass darkly'⁹.

The poems here are tentative responses to life; there is no preaching here. We can identify with Pratt Green not just because he acknowledges the need of God but because, like most of his readers, he is driven to challenge God at times. These are not necessarily times of great anguish but as so often, arise from his observation of the world around him.

In 'Webs' the poet not only questions God's purpose but His creation as he ponders over what he sees around him. As he watches a spider creating a web for a nearby victim, he considers creation has made a mistake:

Clouding for me my image of God.

He wonders, if he were able to revise creation, whether he would:

Expunge these graduates of the inhumanities

The expression 'graduate' indicates a mastery of a subject and the use of 'inhumanities' is effective because we expect the link with graduate to be 'humanities'; 'inhumanities' stresses the efficiency and capability the spider has in killing:

What upsets me is this conjunction
Of beauty and violence.

It is after he has been moved by the scene that he accepts God's purpose in creation. The poet allows us to see how our feelings of compassion can make us incapable of straight thinking. Compassion is considered a virtue but the poet is making us aware of the results of a lack of detachment. Though he chides himself for feelings blinding him in watching a spider catch its victim, he acknowledges the fierce emotion aroused in him when he meets a group of spastics. There is great compassion in his poetry for those whose lot in life is hard.

The poet describes in 'Spastics' how, as he walks home in winter, he meets a friendly dog which 'trots by with loose gait'. The poet sees wood pigeons fly off in panic as he approaches; this is rational. In contrast to this rational natural behaviour he thinks about the 'irrational' and 'unnatural' as he encounters this group of children:

It is our humanity
Begets the nightmare children, these

Hostages to the incontrollable flesh,

He sees humanity as responsible because it is a biological, physical defect during gestation or birth which has resulted in their disability; it is not God's will. As he watches them he likens himself to a 'mole in daylight', blinded by painful scenes, and, more bewildered, he asks:

Are we not all children of darkness?

indicating we do not want to see such sights as these because they pain us. The sight of the spastics reminds him of Brueghel's painting of 'moronic peg-leg cripples'¹⁰ not painted for pity but to question and emphasise their cruel existence in particular, and the plight of humanity in general:

Waving for the last time, I am shaken
By a wasteful and misdirected anger
Against something which is itself broken.

The 'wasteful' and 'misdirected' might well describe the condition of the spastic. The physical fitness and energy is wasted by a lack of co-ordination, the 'misdirected' is the mind's inability to send the right messages to the nervous and muscular systems with the result that the person cannot function properly (is 'broken' and in need of repair). So the last verse is doubly significant.

The poet sees the part of creation which pains us all. So his wonder at creation and the marvel of God's world leads him to consider the imperfections such as are seen in 'Spastics'.

In some ways, Brueghel's picture called to mind in 'Spastics', with its depiction of physically and mentally handicapped people, leads us to understand another poem in this collection : 'You Can't Teach The Heart Not To Stare'.

In a programme of his hymns and poetry in 1993¹¹, the poet chose to read this as one of his more important poems. It seems to have been the result of a visit that left a permanent emotional scar on him.

It refers to an incident when he was eight and was taken to visit

someone both physically and mentally handicapped. The poem shows an observant child's recollection of a visit that he could not forget - hence the title of the poem. There is criticism of the adults who took him to see Jack:

Poor Jack, they said, as they looked where
There was nothing to look at, and their lips
Stopped talking, shutting up like mousetraps
Because I was not old enough, I was there.

Words like 'mousetraps' suggest a snapping shut on a victim and there is a feeling of unkindness from these adults which is stated later in the poem. This description of the adults here reminds the reader of adults 'affected' behaviour perceived in families when the young are present. The fact that the eight year old perceives it contradicts the last line above.

Verse two seems ironic:

I was old enough
To feed spiders with flies, to feel fear
Prickle the back of my neck, nobody near,

This suggests a boy who knew how to be cruel, what fear was and is, at this stage, deemed by adults to be ready to meet Jack.

Verse three begins to indicate the true viewpoint of the elders. So far it has been 'poor Jack' but the last lines of this verse indicate otherwise:

Like a child, no use to her, and bringing
Nothing in, doing nothing to earn his keep.

These lines describe Jack as worthless in the world's eyes and the lines quoted convey that estimate to the child. The elders are very concerned about the boy's behaviour and instruct him on exactly how to behave:

And whatever you do, they said, don't stare
At his right hand, but if he holds it out
Take it, shake it politely, it won't bite,
And accept nothing, only an apple or pear.

- but they are blind to their own behaviour and what it conveys to the boy. The cottage where Jack lives is described as 'a rutted lane' hedged with holly, 'wicked with nettles'; holly may be prickly but it is berry-bearing. It is as if the poet is pointing out to the reader that the situation is not entirely negative, which is the way the adults see it, but that there is a positive side as well. Also, of course, there is the child's dim perception of the awfulness of:

Jack was asleep there
In the doorway, with his head lolling back
And his right hand, small as a baby's, limp
Dangling, for a hand is nothing to fear
And more use, they had said, than a stump.

The last verse describes sunflowers as 'glaring at us', suggesting their hostility, a hostility which though veiled is shared by the adults. The elders try to convince the boy that this hand is more useful than a stump. We are left to consider the truth of this statement. The boy's sympathy goes out to Jack in heartfelt sharing of the man's misfortune; the child's reaction is italicised in the last line of the poem:

You can't teach the heart not to stare.

The contrast between the feelings evoked in the poet by Jack and the feelings of the parents is dramatic because Jack is at the centre of the drama but for the parents, the focus of pity is on his wife and her trials. The parents seem to have no sympathy for Jack. They call him 'poor Jack', not in compassion but in acceptance that he is less than normal. The

parents who describe Jack as:

Like a child, no use to her, and bringing
Nothing in, doing nothing to earn his keep.

are displaying a practical consideration of Jack and his value in the eyes of the world. It seems that only the poet considered how sad it was for Jack, the victim, denied the normal pleasure of living. Is this a criticism of how often sympathy is misplaced? The poet shows us Jack and the spastics, like the young and the old, although segregated in life by attitudes of others, all living out their lives with limitations, all in some way isolated, cut off from other humans. Nevertheless, the different groups are part of humanity. This leads the poet to consider where these fit in.

What exactly is man's place in the world? asks the poet.

'Night Driving' attempts to answer this question. Night has an aura of the unknown and unseen, with its silence and its feelings of isolation where darkness is protecting one from the awareness of distance.

The headlights' selective efficiency,

rather than the moon's overall half light, suggests mechanical lights for a machine, helping to anchor the poem in time. The use of:

The beam that catches the criminal fox,
And the crushed hedgehog, betrayed
By armour,

links the 'catch' and 'criminal', while the crushed hedgehog is reminiscent of Andrew Young's 'The Dead Crab'¹²:

Does it make for death to be oneself a living armoury?

The surrounding dark suggests suspension of space and time and the approaching dawn, bringing the dawn chorus, reminds the poet of the first morn when Adam, 'cast out of paradise', awoke to earth, like the poet who continues Adam's journey, as the descendant of early man, making the journey of living (albeit travelling by car).

It is a simple experience but leads to the poet linking a journey through night with the entire history of man:

Miles, time, are meaningless.

because man's reactions don't change; the journey under a night sky has been experienced since the creation of man, as has the dawn chorus. At night, too, the absence of scenery (twentieth century or natural) reinforces the timelessness felt in the encompassing dark. The poet is realizing his part in the procession of humanity. Writing in the first person he allows his reader to share his personal feelings.

Later, in 'Inheritors', he writes on behalf of us all, using contemporary society. Here he is pointing out the inheritance we offer to those who try to adopt a western way of living. At first the tone of the poem deceives us; we are lulled into consideration of the great cultural changes required of the 'black inheritors of white empires'. It is easy to miss the poet's somewhat cynical tone. The contrast of 'black limousines to white receptions' reinforces the dubious culture the black inheritors are to gain - it also points out indirectly perhaps, that black cars are more acceptable than black-skinned people. The last two lines in the following quotation lead one to consider that:

In rapid passage from jungle to jungle,
From tribal dance to political struggle,
From sex tabu to the eternal triangle,
Destined heirs
To what discriminations, what deceptions.

The parallel jungles of natural, riotous vegetation and contrived civic corruption are contrasted with tribal dances seen as having form and meaning while our political struggle has neither, and primitive rules on sexual behaviour are left behind in the adoption of western civilisation and its acceptance of adultery. Heirs normally inherit something valuable: property or money. The poet points to heirs who inherit corruption in personal relationships, in all its forms. We see clearly that the black inheritors:

Itching to ride

In black limousines to white receptions

are beguiled into relinquishing the known by the glitter of the unexperienced, regardless of its worth.

Here the poet talks for us all, because we all see the movement of the third world societies to adopt western lifestyles and values which are often dubious. While the poet has previously presented us with the place of man in history, he is here commenting on corruption of human nature – a further link with Adam 'cast out of paradise' – that is timeless and which takes different forms in different times.

Because every person is part of the chain of history and having played his part must die, each person gives thought to death. It is not always our own death that we are led to ponder but the death of someone near to us that sets us thinking.

Pratt Green expresses the thoughts of all in 'In Memoriam: E.W.T.'. In dealing with the news of his friend's death, the poet remembers their fights in childhood – 'your cut lip sealing our friendship', the activities shared, 'we slaughtered tin soldiers', 'we lazed in warm hollows' – things they had shared before they went their separate ways:

for thirty years
we wrote at Christmas...
I cannot believe you are dead.

The poet's inability to accept the news strikes a chord in his readers: we know the sense of disbelief when a part of our childhood memories is abruptly broken by the removal of life long friends.

'Paralysed by sadness' conveys the inertia that grief and shock bring. This poem, dealing with unexpected death which is also a personally felt sorrow, is markedly different from others in this collection concerned with approaching death or death itself.

'The Victim Died Of Stab Wounds' deals with the death of an elderly shopkeeper but from the point of view of the murderer, so the feelings displayed are irritation at the victim's stupidity, surprise at an old man who can:

Fight, to bellow, to blow
A referees's whistle

A death is a natural thing. A killing
Is a special sort of thing.
The slob had let him down by dying;

This is surprise writing, because death and its victims are usually referred to with respect. This reversal of situation is to highlight the effect of this violent death on the perpetrator:

If he could, he would have put it back
Into the body. That he never can
Makes him, prematurely, a man.

An encounter with sudden death makes people aware of their own

mortality and it needed violent death to affect the violent in society, whereas normally:

As for death,
What is it? You buy a wreath
Pull down a blind,

The tone of the whole poem is conversational, reminding us of Larkin (who befriended F.P.G. and whose work often has a similar tone and outlook) It is filled with slang terms like 'play it cool', 'ganged up', 'dough', 'guts', 'loot', 'scarper', 'slob' - to convey the type of person the murderer was and how he became a murderer just because the situation got out of hand. He wasn't a leader type but followed the cult and by a twist of fate ended up as a murderer.

This looking at things from the other side, in poems still dealing with death, is pursued in 'Cain's Self-Defence' where the poet, writing as Cain states:

I bear no grudge
Against the High and Mighty Judge,
Who merely gave me an awful wiggling
And then confirmed me in my digging....

Spotted the root of all the trouble
That I am Cain - and he was Abel.

There seems to be a tone of inevitability here - personality clashes are inevitable, claims the poet. What he teaches us to do is to take a fresh look at situations from a new angle. In both this and the previous poem the poet is using the incident to redirect our compassion rather than to focus on the murder involved.

Consideration of natural death is also present. There is not fear but a wish that it will be a mere moment in time before eternity takes over.

Preparation for death can be found in several of the poems with both the speculation and the acceptance of the inevitable. 'Slackwater Stillness' is likening the moment:

before the strong hands of the tidal swell
slap the stone steps in the secret harbour;

to the stillness

between the grief in voices I shall forget
and the joy in voices I shall remember.

The momentary effect of death is linked firstly with strong hands, then stillness, a moment before action, the sound of the water, and then the striking of the clock. With the use of 'death be no more' the poet may be asking that death prove no more than such a moment. Fear is replaced by rationalising of the inevitable but incomprehensible moment of death.

The collection covers more than the topics dealt with – Old Age, Religion, Man's place in the world and Death; so many other poems in this collection, for example, 'The Plastic Begonia', and 'Oystercatchers', start from a particular observation or incident and end with a profundity. This is characteristic of Pratt Green. Never does the poet claim to have the answers to his questions and ponderings. He presents ideas, aspects of life, consideration of situations for the reader to share with him; sometimes he offers what is his hope – God – but always leaves us to think further.

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2.5

THE LAST LAP

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2.5

THE LAST LAP

This collection appears to have done what the poet set out to do: 'to write about the things that happen in our house, about what it means to live in this sort of community, sometimes to do more than report, to think of the deeper implications'. The poet is always modest, quietly pointing out significant things but leaving us to think further. He describes the book as a 'sequence in verse'. In fact it is poetry made out of trivial incidents.

The Last Lap deals chronologically with preparations and removal to Oliver House, (Cromwell house, one of the Methodist Homes for the Aged group); the verse concerned with the other residents and life in the community does not appear to follow any particular order. The separate poems deal with individual experiences (meal-times, haircuts, going to church), while the book as a whole is an expression of a certain kind of life-style which has never been described before - life as a resident in an Old People's Home. At times the reader is left feeling the situation described is pathetic but never tragic because the poet is objective, self-aware, realistic and trusting.

The subject matter of this collection ranges from domestic detail and daily living to coming to terms with old age and accepting the inevitability of death. Often what starts as a narration of a routine widens into a deeper consideration as for example, 'Haircut':

Perhaps, I pondered, a new life style
calls for a new hairstyle. Perhaps
it is not too late to explore a self
one could have been.

There is both a whimsical and arresting thought here - an old man and a new style. We expect the new hairstyle to suit a new life, not vice

versa. The suggestion is that now he has adopted a new life style he might start to be a different person. This consideration of making positive changes even at this stage of life is also found in Eliot where in 'East Coker'¹ he writes:

Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union,

Both poets are continuing to live positively rather than awaiting the inevitable ending of life. Pratt Green is in these poems a more whimsical Eliot.

As he writes of mealtimes, activities organised, observation of fellow residents, the poet relates the particular to the general. When he does he surprises us with a universality that we did not expect, as is exemplified in 'Bonnets and Perms'. Having noticed the permed hair of residents, he remembers the general wearing of bonnets in his grandmother's time, as people at sixty accepted they were old. He sees today's elderly women as refusing to submit to age and writes:

And why not? We wage eternal war
against Father Time. It's a losing battle,
but one, paradoxically, we must win;
not to believe this, is to be defeated.

There seems to be an echo of Eliot again here. In 'The Dry Salvages'² Eliot writes:

only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;

It is a 'universal' thought because it contains a whole world of morality in its expression – for example, Camus, in 'The Rebel'³ – the necessity of rebelling against pointlessness – and yet it stems from observation of permed hair. When Clough writes: 'Say not the struggle naught availeth'⁴ he is pointing out the necessity of fighting regardless of odds. Pratt Green is pointing out that those who stop 'struggling' are lost; they see, in Eliot's words, 'the future futureless'⁵.

The juxtapositioning of contrasting concepts like time and eternity and losing and winning strengthens the original contrast of bonnets and perms while emphasising the 'refusal to submit' to the reality of living – to accept the 'future futureless'.

It would be wrong to see The Last Lap as solely concerned with life within the walls of the home because from his residence in the House the poet is able to see the dangers awaiting those outside it. We see this in 'The Other Side of the Fence' where we see glimpses of the poet of the fifties. Just as he showed concern for the future generation, an endangered species, in 'Oystercatchers'⁶, so does he here, as he sees schoolboys gazing at the House residents:

Moved by compassion
for him, for his endangered generation,
for its idealism, its addictions,

I would have waved to him.

This is typical of the poet's ability to move from the trivial to the profound. It is partly exemplified by the position of 'moved', at a distance from its subject, creating a suspended sentence, just as there is a gap between the trivial and the profound that he bridges. There is also a reversal of compassion here because the schoolboys who look in at the House residents, seeing them as pitiable beings, are themselves objects of pity but do not realize it. The use of 'idealism' and 'addictions', skilfully

placed alongside each other suggests how what starts as idealism can be as equally damaging as its addictions, in that both can be a stumbling block and both can act as unnecessary restraints on youth's life. The reversal of feeling is typical of Pratt Green: surprising, perceptive and witty - witty because old age concern is well-known; youth concern is not.

Again, in 'When we were Young' he expresses the thoughts of many adults as he watches the schoolchildren on the nearby sportsfield:

forgive us if we feel a little lost
and wonder if your world is worth its cost.

suggesting that the young may pay too dearly for what they have gained. The use of 'your world' may seem to be almost 'grumpy' but there is rather a sad tone here: regret. The poet has written of an age when the elderly never doubted 'basics must come first'; that is no longer true as the poet sees the reversal of some of his values. Materialism so different from his youth :

when credit cards had not been thought of yet,

seems to count for more than humanity does. So he does not envy youth's lifestyle but sees it as a possible pitfall - further reversing the extended compassion of the boys for the elderly, referred to above.

In the poem each verse ends with a statement of what his generation saw as a standard:

and never doubted sport was chiefly fun

We had no doubt the enemy was debt.

We never doubted basics must come first.

Each of these lines contains the stem word 'doubt'. Knowing exactly what was required of them created a stable secure generation. The last line of the poem in using 'wonder' is ambiguous: is it to ponder and consider or to wonder in the sense of grappling with a previously unknown concept?

This collection of verses is different from his previous collections. It contains fifty three poems in a variety of verse forms. Pratt Green himself in the Introduction writes 'I have called this a sequence of verse not of poetry. Most pieces are written in the free style which is fashionable nowadays, some are in metre and rhyme....sense the rhythm or varying rhythms'⁷. This flexibility on the part of the poet indicates surely not the modest attempts of a mediocre ability, but the sureness and confidence in style of the poet who has mastered his tools.

Some of the poems are deceptively colloquial (i.e. 'I cannot believe my eyes' in 'Progress Backwards', and 'wrong end of the stick' in 'Apology to the Very Deaf') as if to fit the style to the daily acceptance of the physical disabilities that surround him.

'When we were Young' is an example of his reference to the poetry of 'metre and rhyme'. The poem looks back on a more formal age, when poetry too was more formal in structure. It rhymes three out of four lines in each verse - to reinforce the security, stability and recognized pattern of living described in the poem. The verses are repetitive in the first and last lines of each verse, again creating a framework within which to work. The poet has urged us to 'sense the rhythm' of some of the poems. This can be done in 'The Last Lap', though the rhythm is not unique to Pratt Green. In contrast to 'When we were young' this poem uses its apparent colloquialisms forming the basis of the verses. Here the effect is produced by the sound of the line, and balance of the phrases. For example,

Nothing untoward

happened, so we were glad we had stayed,
enjoying another spring, another summer

where 'untoward' separates two two-syllabled words stressing the first syllable of the line and changing the pace in doing so. 'We were glad we had stayed' uses the iambic metre and quickens the pace despite the repetition, a pace which is changed again by 'enjoying' which introduces three-syllabled words. 'Another summer' varies the pace as the final word comes to rest on a sibilant murmur suggesting the season. Though it is free verse it is in fact carefully constructed.

This first poem called 'The Last Lap', from which the collection is named, bears resemblance in style to, and has verbal echoes of, Eliot's poetry. Eliot himself points out 'our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else'⁸, whereas for Eliot every poet is part of the literary tradition he inherits. Pratt Green's use of this form here should not detract from the portrayal of procrastination and loathing to make a big decision. 'The Last Lap' conveys a false security before facing an unpalatable truth:

We were a long time making up our minds;
we must do so, we said, before winter.
Winters came and went. Nothing untoward
happened, so we were glad we had stayed,
enjoying another spring, another summer.

These lines have echoes of T.S.Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi'⁹ in the rhythm and sound. In 'The Last lap' we have a series of statements which are at first glance almost banal - 'to put washers on taps' - but are brilliantly woven into verse in the way of Wordsworth and Larkin.

The mention of Spring and Summer suggests youth, freshness, growth and the ability to cope with life. There is a false security in their lives because the winters left them unharmed. Winters suggest age, possible crises, cold-bloodedness and the dying of the year. 'Untoward, so we were glad' gives the impression of a precarious situation. The unpalatable truth is further developed in the next verse of that poem:

Old people, say the experts, should be cared for by their neighbours, with the support of home-helps and meals-on-wheels. Our neighbours are kind, willing to put washers on taps, climb ladders, but they too, are no longer young.

There is a tone of realism and mood of practicality here. Facing the truth brings the recognition that the present help is short-lived and that security is essential for him at this stage of life. 'Should' and 'experts' suggest theory rather than practice and the poet needing security must turn to practical rather than theoretical solutions:

And security means living in community,
for us, certainly, a Home for the Aged;

where the opening line seems to be using repetition of three-syllabled words to achieve rhythm but the second line disappoints. Is it deliberate, so that the voice stresses 'Home' with its long vowel sounds suggesting a resting place? The effect is deliberately low key.

Another verse form used in this collection is one based on Herrick's 'Thanksgiving to God'¹⁰. Though in a deliberate imitation, 'My Cell' is used by Pratt Green to describe the contents of his room, whereas Herrick is solely concerned with thanksgiving for what he has received. Again, whereas Herrick is pouring forth praise, Pratt Green is talking not to God but to Herrick, telling how he will fit in to his new surroundings. Perhaps he is also talking to himself and disciplining himself to the new situation:

A view not likely to distract
me from my act

but there is a mood of contentment as with Herrick, for what he has received:

cadence but a finish on a strong beat. A final comment here is that the poet sees things for their true worth ; recognizing the truth, he points his reader to it in a subtle way. It is possible to make progress backwards, in a paradoxical way, as in spiritual life - the via negativa. It is important to continue to strive - a truth also expressed in 'Bonnets and Perms'. This truth is constantly in the poet's mind, essential to his own well-being at the House.

There is a danger of allowing the content of the verses to hide the craft of the poet. Pratt Green plays down his own poetic ability from the start. 'Just a sequence of verse for people who find poetry difficult'¹² suggests that his verse is easy to understand and there is no poetic ability used, which is the opposite of the truth. There is great craft used, as can be seen in his unerring choice of language, particularly if reading aloud 'On not feeding the Gulls':

The housemartins have all gone
but the gulls are back from the sea....
shamelessly begging for food...
Throw them a fistful of bread.

where the alliterative 'g' and 'b' sounds and the assonant 'thr', 'f' and 'br' can be heard: deliberate, not accidental choices.

Verse forms aside, one poem particularly stands out in this collection: 'Rainbow'. The poet counters the 'several, talking of rainbows' who crowd the windows, craning necks to see it, with those who continue eating breakfast. It is a 'rainbow of astonishing beauty' and reminds him of seeing a moonbow:

so mysterious, so beautiful
none of us said anything at all.

It seems he is contrasting the chatter and lack of response from residents who need only physical food and find no need of spiritual nourishment, with the genuine acknowledgement of the beauty of Nature, by silence from the sensitive. Such beauty calls forth inner response from the poet (as in Wordsworth's 'My heart leaps up when I behold /A rainbow in the sky'¹³). Pratt Green remembers it was the Captain who pointed out the moonbow to the passengers; it needs the informed to point out what the unknowing may miss.

What makes the poem stand apart from other poems here is that this is not an experience confined to old age or institutions. Rather more, the poet is making a distinction between the observant and the unseeing. Similar thoughts are voiced by W.H.Davies in 'A Great Time'¹⁴ when he writes 'A rainbow.....may never come again'. The rainbow described by Pratt Green spans the whole city, a further indication of the universality of his comments. It is for all, not just the elderly.

It is through his poetry that his feelings emerge about this last phase of life. His personal feelings are conveyed through the expressions found in some of his verse. In 'Selling Up and Clearing the House' he uses the phrase 'hit us hard' and then 'Believing the way to fight depression is to work' as he describes the dispersal of his belongings.

He later writes:

A hundred partings left us
wounded, exhausted but determined
to press on.

yet, having settled into the House, there is an air of peace and security as he writes 'A walk in the Paradise Garden', with its allusion to the music of Delius.¹⁵ The poet's wit is displayed in this poem in his apologising for a paradise:

in this urban survival
of Edwardian domesticity

He takes a walk in the 'paradise garden':

Everywhere there are signs
of the harm done by the drought.
Suddenly, walking on the burnt grass
I stumble.

The description belies the name. The garden is not a paradise but a hazard to him. Is the suggestion that it is 'near paradise' - with its shady trees where one can 'nod off'? The day is oppressively hot and the music heard - Mozart - is too lively (for the age of the listeners as well as the languor of the day?). Debussy's 'dreamy evocation' would be fitting for the residents under the shady trees lost in their own dreams.

Usually there is an objectivity or gentle acceptance of problems faced but at times the poet feels irritation, as admitted in 'The Indignities of Old Age':

It used to irritate me;
now I can joke about it

The mood of the poem changes as he puts himself in the place of the trainee nurse and looks at problems from outside himself.

A different kind of irritation is inferred in 'Visitors'. Here the irritation is because of interruption and not being able to get on with living in the House:

others are friends and relatives
who can't leave us alone.

The use of 'can't, not 'won't', suggests the relatives feel compelled to visit/interfere as if, knowing the elderly have been set aside, the relatives are experiencing guilt and thus 'can't' leave them in peace. The poem 'Caring' also conveys the poet's irritation but this time it is an irritation with attitudes towards the elderly. Caring is seen as meaningless:

Caring is a word I am weary of
A word as slick and abused as love

where the use of the word 'slick' highlights his feelings. It is the bandying about of the word which gives rise to the irritation. The poet defines it:

caring is awareness of a genuine need,
caring is knowing when not to heed;

Later, in 'Doing Nothing' his irritation develops into almost rebellion when he describes the organised activities at the House.. 'carpet bowls, croquet'. In part the format of the poem is like a list, deliberately. The organisers think they are being positive in their attitudes towards the elderly but the poet concludes in a tone which brilliantly catches a childlike sulk:

Today I want to do nothing
because of things
I am supposed to want to do.

His repetition of 'want to do' focusses on the change of tone; the first use is positive, expressing his preference; the second use is negative, the tone is grumpy - suggesting all the things offered are of no interest to him and he wants to be left alone.

Real anger and frustration, absent elsewhere, break out in 'God Answers Job':

When old age robs us of our dignity,
when under stress of age affections fray,
when wrinkled features threaten to betray
a self less kind, or dread disease sets free
an alien, uncontrolled identity:

I will not look! I turn my face away!
I hate the God to whom I have to pray,
for doing things like this to you and me.

We expect love of God and a desire to pray, not a suggestion of being compelled to. It is this expression of the feelings we all have, and understand must be exacerbated in old age that speak truly to the reader. This comes as almost a relief after reading 'Admonitions':

If your portion of pie is too small
and the honey's a brand you don't like,
ask yourself why on earth our providers
haven't all gone on strike.

where the poet's reasonableness and gratitude for what he receives seems almost too good to be true. There is a dichotomy; physical deterioration as described in 'Indignities of Old Age' seems to bring frustration but the security and relief of being cared for 'relieved of responsibility' (Time) contrasts this deeper feeling. The poet's admiration for fellow residents who overcome physical infirmity suggests it is this aspect of old age he finds disquieting. His use of the expression 'intransigent old men' (Matron) surely indicates an inability to accept physical deterioration.

The imagery used by the poet also conveys his feelings. The title 'The Last Lap' presents an image of a race nearly over. It suggests a long race with several laps and now the end is in sight. This image is explained by the poet in the Introduction¹⁶ when he writes:

'what I have in mind is not a competitive race but rather the finishing of

a marathon, when winning doesn't matter but getting there does.'

In the poet's preparation to move to the House, the image of a race is replaced. In 'Selling Up and Clearing the House' he talks of retirement as:

a change of trains,
a junction; this was a final journey
to a terminus.

The image is continued in 'A Storm in a Teacup' when describing the chairs in the lounge which remind him of a waiting room:

Why should sitting in our lounge
become a journey on British Rail

seeing his fellow residents as journeying with him. Indeed in 'The Vital Question' he describes them as 'travellers to eternity and nearly there'. This 'nearly there' shows his acceptance of the inevitable and his ability to face it and talk about it.

Later he uses the image of a ship riding at anchor. In 'Nocturne' with its residents all asleep in their bunks and a captain, mate and nightwatch on duty he likens the House to a ship. A ship riding at anchor is waiting to dock or set sail or waiting for the weather to change. So the poet again suggests the feeling he has of waiting to go on a journey.

Some of his imagery indicates an understanding of limitations. Consider the poem entitled 'My Cell'. The word itself has overtones of confinement.

Though mine's a cell eleven feet square
there's room to spare.

He seems to have taken great pains to plan his room so that there is enough space. This idea reminds us of an earlier poem - Browning's 'Bishop

Blougram's Apology'¹⁷:

A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long:

Pratt Green writes:

if...
we choke it with furniture
and a clutter of memorabilia
it's our own fault, to be sure.

{'First Impressions'}

The use of the word 'choke' (literally leading to lifelessness) indicates he recognizes a real danger in cell-like space if we fail to use it properly. The constriction imagery has been glimpsed earlier in 'Rules and Regulations' with the lines:

and the disease most common to Institutions
is hardening of the arteries - I mean
over regulation.....

where hardening of the human arteries restricts the blood flow leading to death.

Similarly, a constriction of personality leading to nonentity is hinted at in 'Privacy':

against having to conform
to the community norm.

Imagery used in 'The Importance of Meals' may be bringing to the surface the poet's awareness of being on show and his whimsical humour at his

own situation.

'The time to see them best is when they feed
the animals' is very true indeed
of us.

The poet in describing life in the House is both observer and participant;
he is able to view communal life with a mixture of gentle humour and
acute self-perception - for visitors to Methodist Homes for the Aged may
well be invited to meet the residents when they assemble for meals.
The poet has few illusions. He sees himself as others see him.
In 'The Indignities of Old Age' he refers to carers.

handling us
as if we were sacks of coal.

There are very few places where feelings like this emerge. There is
nothing attractive about being humped about like coal but he has accepted
the inevitability of the situation.

The images discussed so far have been concerned with the inevitability of
old age and its limitations. Alongside these images the poet uses some
garden imagery that is positive. He refers to 'our paradise garden' where

the tree mallow is untidy,
Its luxuriant growth over.

The tree mallow having grown to its fullest and flowered is now past its
best. So too the residents, having flowered, are declining.
This image is further developed in 'A Tall Lady' where :

hollyhocks along a wall,
flowerless now, and eight feet tall,
await the gardener's tidying up,
in certain hope of next year's crop.

What is important here is that the gardener in charge of the garden tends each plant and there's a feeling of 'just a matter of time' until tidying up takes place. The last line further adds to the importance of this particular image because it is the poet's affirmation of faith 'in certain hope' reminding us that the poet is also a priest.

So it would be surprising to find him, towards the end of his life, making no comments about death and eternity. Very early in the collection we find him writing in 'Selling Up and Clearing House':

Aware of finality, the tired mind
suspended its activities, still trusting
with Mother Julian¹⁸, all would be well

(we are reminded of Mother Julian's cell in Norwich where F.P.G.lives and where she lived most of her life. Indeed, elsewhere Pratt Green has written both a poem, 'Mother Julian's Cat'¹⁹ and a hymn : 'In Commemoration of Julian of Norwich'²⁰, in which he extols faith and her self-denial) so that he enters the House 'trusting' and like Herrick²¹ offers 'a thankful heart' for a refuge. The final line of 'God Answers Job' also shows trust:

I yield! His word is good enough for me.

As indicated earlier, his imagery indicates his belief in immortality. In 'The Vital Question', with the image of life as a play in which he acts, he refers to God as the Author; here the suggestion of God being the creator of all and thus in charge of all, is obvious. His personal conviction of faith

where the use of 'hoping' strikes a tentative note, as if it might just be wishful thinking in some people's minds. This final poem in the collection, 'A Death in the House', discusses the effect death has on the residents who are all awaiting the same event but the poet's final words are positive, culminating in the way the poem comes to rest on the crucial words:

for in Death, as in life, we are the Lord's.

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Introduction

This section presents a substantial number of poems by F.P.G. that have been ignored or forgotten, and which are not mentioned in Braley's Later Hymns and Ballads and Fifty Poems of Fred Pratt Green. Neither are the poems to be found in the archives of Stainer & Bell.

The idea of searching magazines for the poetry of F.P.G. came from two sources. Firstly, it was clear from my conversations with the poet, that by reading back numbers of magazines and periodicals that flourished in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s there was a good chance of finding some poetry that had not either been included in his anthologies or listed in the Stainer & Bell archives holding.

Secondly, acknowledgements in the anthologies themselves indicated that the titles mentioned there would be a good place to look for others. As a result, previously forgotten poems have been found through painstaking research and some happy accidents, details of which are recorded below.

Other finds were owing to personal contacts and fortunate happenings. For example, F.P.G. remembered writing 'Percuil Ferry' and knew it had been published in John O'London's Weekly but had no copy of the text and no record of the year. As a result, a visit was made to the British Museum branch at Colindale Periodical Library and, by reading through the copies printed between 1949 and 1959, it was possible to find the text.

Similarly, knowing of his link with Outposts, it seemed worth visiting the Poetry Library in the Royal Festival Hall and reading through the back numbers from 1950s to 1970s. This uncovered 'The Ripcord' and later 'Hawkshead Revisited'. It became obvious as the searches continued that some poems changed titles when included in later collections and what at first sight appeared to be a poem from a collection of his verse turned out to be a new, different poem. Also many reviews which F.P.G. had written on the poetry of

others for the Outposts magazine were discovered during this period of searching for poetry (a list of these articles is not included in this thesis); it also became possible from this search to date precisely some of his other poetry, published in the later collections.

Following this, time was spent at the British Museum Library reading the Poetry Review. This also yielded several other reviews Pratt Green had written on the poetry of contemporaries as well as another poem previously unmentioned elsewhere, 'Caractacus'.

The same method was adopted with Time and Tide, using the Glasgow University Library collection. Here poems were discovered that were published here before being included in The Skating Parson and The Old Couple which Braley gives as their first publication. As a result of this several poems from Time and Tide have now been dated precisely. Another discovery here was a poem, 'Sunset', which has no mention elsewhere.

English yielded another 'unknown' poem - 'Loss of Memory' - simply by taking time to read through all back numbers from 1949 onwards.

The Yorkshire Post has proved more difficult as their records do not include F.P.G.'s name as a contributor although he remembers, and Braley states, that his poems were published in that paper. However, back numbers in microfiche have been located at Leeds Reference Library and it is hoped that a search will soon be underway to find some more 'lost' verse.

Very sadly, the library fire at Norwich Public Library has meant that perusal of Norfolk Fair which might have yielded poetry of 1968 onwards by F.P.G. (when he went to live in Norwich) can not yet be undertaken. The drying out of what was saved is not complete and no material is available for perusal. However, enquiries are still being made to Eastern Counties Newspapers which could result in the emergence of 'new texts', for it is certain that he contributed some poetry to that press during his retirement.

Having approached Stainer & Bell for copies of all the poems in their archives and receiving their reply that The New Yorker held the copyright for some and therefore no copies of those poems could be made available to me, an approach was made directly to that magazine and copies of those poems unobtainable in this country were forwarded. This information allowed for the further reading of that magazine which resulted in the discovery of the poem, 'Advice to those visiting England'

The dogged pursuit of these poems in back numbers of magazines has been supplemented by a series of lucky encounters.

Whilst visiting F.P.G. in 1992 our conversations were interrupted by a 'phone call from his old friend, Peter Dunn. When this friend realised the point of my visit he sent to F.P.G. poems that had been sent to him by the poet. (The two men have exchanged poems over the years rather in the way that Fallon Webb and F.P.G. had, several years previously.) Later conversation with Peter Dunn has resulted in his permission to use some of these 'letter' poems which he and F.P.G. still exchange.

Similarly, when Professor J.R.Watson was addressing the York Organists' Society and mentioned, in passing, the existence of the Pratt Green Collection at Durham University, members of his audience happened to include former pupils of his wife, Marjory, at Humanby Hall Methodist Girls' School where F.P.G. had also been Chaplain. This contact resulted in a visit by these former pupils to Durham and, as a result of their interest, the consequent retrieval of a carol published in their school magazine and a poem from a local Humanby Magazine; both poem and carol are printed and discussed in this section. This unexpected retrieval of these two poems from the 1920s was due entirely to the kindly interest of these two ladies from the York Organists' Society who had kept magazines from that time and knew of my interest in the poet. This is another example of the happy accidents which have brought to light work, some of which F.P.G. admits he has forgotten he ever wrote.

At the beginning of the period of research a visit was made to Stainer & Bell

to read the Poetry Scrapbooks compiled by F.P.G. These were compiled much later than the time of the writing of most of the poetry. Although there are some interesting revisions and letters from editors concerning drafts of poems, the Poetry Scrapbooks in no way supply sufficient detail of F.P.G.'s poetic output.

It is for this reason that the various searches undertaken have been so fascinating and rewarding.

'I Think of Manchester'

I think sometimes, looking on sea and wold,
Or when our village street grows still of nights,
Of that grim city where men fight for gold
In the crash of looms and the glare of lights.

When men go by at dawn with dragging feet,
Taking cool water home in creaking pails,
I see the morning crowds in Market street,
The trams and cars, and carts with cotton bales.

When in the old Hall woods I see and pass
The hosts of Spring snowdrops and aconite,
I think of that sole crocus in the grass,
Beneath the Sundial, searching for the light.

At Mart'mas Fair the roundabouts and shies
Are reared between the Churchyard and the Swan;
High on an ostrich Jill has touched the skies,
Jack's arm around her, while the Dead look on!

A voice cries, 'Jack, it's late, and gotten chilly' -
But I am staring, when they've kissed and gone,
At an old Queen who over Piccadilly
Gazes in shocked astonishment of stone.

And when sometimes I speak of Manchester,
Of that dark city's grim, titanic grace,
They say, 'Ni doot tha's glad ti leeave it, sir,
There's nobut senseless folk i' sike a place!

I Think Of Manchester (1929)

This poem was written some time during Pratt Green's time as school chaplain at Hunmanby Hall School, East Yorkshire. It appears in The Yule Log, Christmas 1929; this seems to be a magazine closely associated with that school as on the front cover is a picture of pupils playing in the snow.

There is reference in v.3 to 'old Hall woods' which seems to confirm the place and time of writing. Why the memory of Manchester comes to the poet could be because he had just left a Methodist Ministerial Training College there; Hunmanby Hall School was his first appointment.

The memory of Manchester at first seems to be one of deprivation and poverty. The use of 'fight for gold' in verse one with the 'crash of looms' and 'glare of lights' is in sharp contrast to the 'still of nights' of the countryside where the poet is now. The words used to describe the city life are harsh in sound; 'grim' city enforces the idea of a struggle for existence. All this is in contrast to the 'still' village and beauty of 'sea and wold'.

In verse two 'dragging' feet at dawn suggests perpetual tiredness. The industry of the city is underlined by the words 'crowds', 'trams', 'cars', 'carts' and 'cotton bales'; these last words seem to explain the previous description as if 'cotton bales' are the originators of 'grim' cities. By calling the street 'Market Street' the poet sums up the effect of industry as described in the first two verses: commerce.

In contrast the third verse is a description of what surrounds him now:

The host of Spring snowdrops and aconite,

Here Nature is profuse. The 'host' of flowers in the countryside is then contrasted with the city where a single crocus is searching for light 'Beneath the Sundial'. This is a comment on the sundial itself, because a sundial is only

useful if it is positioned for the sun's rays to fall on it, and the inappropriate placing of both that and crocus highlight the inability for nature to thrive in a large city like the one described here.

To further the contrast the flowers in the 'Hall woods' are fragile - snowdrops and aconites - but the city flower is a crocus, with its bright rather than delicate colour, its almost rigid stem rather than the bending habits of the aconite and snowdrop and its attempted growth in full sunlight, rather than half-hidden under woodland trees.

The reference to 'Mart'mas Fair" between the 'Churchyard and the Swan' indicates the half-religious nature of these holiday fairs. There is also a suggestion that there remains a link of community with the church in country life, a link which has been broken in the city strife.

Jack and Jill are living and loving while the Dead look on and when in verse five Jill remarks :

Jack, it's late, an' gotten chilly..... -

But I am staring, when they've kissed and gone,

it is not only a statement that it is time for them to go home but has the deeper meaning of time passing and the transitoriness of life. That is why 'the Dead' watched them; Jack and Jill are following in the footsteps of those who have gone before. The memory of the past is further emphasised by the statue of Queen Victoria in the city centre, a queen who :

Gazes in shocked astonishment of stone.

The use of stone suggests an inflexibility in attitude. It also suggests a permanent fabric of a monument to times past which reinforces the theme of transitoriness and changes not only in behaviour but in livelihood.

In verse six the poet is telling people of East Yorkshire about Manchester and

describes its 'Grim, titanic grace'. 'Grace' is an unexpected word after the preceding description, indicating it holds an attraction for him despite its failings. The last two lines are the conclusion of the countryfolk having listened to his memories:

Ni doot tha's glad ti leeave it, sir
There's nobbut senseless folk i' sike a plaace!

This summing up shows their inability to understand how he or anyone could hold such a place in affection, yet the word 'grace' has alerted the reader that that is what the poet does. The difference in outlook is subtly shown by the use of two different dialects.

There is an irony here too, as the industry in Manchester which the listeners deplore has replaced an agricultural livelihood and a similar fate may well come to them later. For it is the price paid for progress and economic success - paid for in the destruction of Nature.

There are many contrasts here. The village street is contrasted with Manchester Piccadilly, the railway station and hub of city life. All the country can offer is a churchyard (suggestive of death and decay) and an inn - for relaxation. However there is a stream of water and the sea nearby in the poet's surroundings. In contrast, there is a bucket of water to be fetched in the city, indicative of how little of Nature's gifts is readily enjoyed there. This is further seen in the contrasting of the flowers growing in the two places. There is also an implied contrast of the two groups of people in the conclusion of the countryfolk that city people must be 'senseless'; this is an ironic reversal because this is often how city people view countryfolk.

There is peace around the poet but noise in his memories of Manchester; while there is rest and relaxation at Yorkshire country fairs there is no respite from toil in the city. There is no understanding in one group of the other's living conditions; the grim city is part of life as much as the 'sea and wold'.

This poem so early in his writing contains the hallmark of later poetry: the viewing of an immediate scene and his subsequent focus on a larger issue.

Both this poem and the carol which follows it have particular significance . Not only are they the earliest examples of his poetry but the carol also indicates that early in his career Pratt Green had already utilised his literary craft for the need he saw in the community around him.

A CAROL (printed in the Hunmanby Hall School magazine c.1930)

(A Knocking)

Who knocks? Who knocks so late on my Inn door?
Full many we have, lad, and can take no more!
O Master, 'tis a Lady fair,
And her Man, Joseph, who knocks there;
Nor any lodging can she buy
In Bethlehem, though her hour is nigh.

Take them, lad, to the stable bare,
Sir Joseph and this Lady fair,
To-night no other room have we
For Jesu, His Nativity.

(A Knocking)

Who knocks? Who knocks so loud on my Inn door?
Full many we have, lad, and can take no more!
O Master, in the wintry air
Stand simple shepherds knocking there,
Who quit their watching for to see
King Jesu, His Nativity.

No King have we, but a Baby small
Born this night in a manger stall;
Light the lamp, lad, they shall see
King Jesu, His Nativity.

(A Knocking)

Who knocks? Who knocks so loud on my Inn door?

Full many we have, lad, and can take no more!
O gentle Master, knocking there
Are three Wise Kings, with gifts so rare,
From very far they come, to see
King Jesu, His Nativity.

Then up, lad, set your lamp alight
For 'tis a very darksome night,
That these three Kings may gaze upon
Mary, and Jesu Christ her Son.

{A Knocking}

Who knocks? Who knocks to-night on my Inn door?
Full many we have, lad, and can take no more!
O Master, in the frosty air
All the world is a knocking there,
Come on this Christmas night to see
King Jesu, His Nativity.

Then light the lamp, lad! all shall share
The worship of this King so fair.
Come all you people, kneel and see
Jesu our King's Nativity!

A Carol (c.1930)

This early Christmas carol bears all the hallmarks of having been written to meet a particular purpose – that of a school carol service.

There is a focus on sound and action throughout, creating a pageant-like effect. The eight verses are divided alternately between the Innkeeper and his boy. Each verse starts with the question 'Who knocks?' and the first two lines are repeated in each six line verse. (The Innkeeper's orders are in four line verses.)

In verse one the first callers are Mary and Joseph. They are taken to the stable all rooms being full. The reference to Joseph as 'Sir Joseph and this Lady fair' has a ring of the mediaeval knight about it.

The next callers are the shepherds and they too are taken to the stable by the boy. It is stated that they have come to see the 'King Jesu'. Next to come are the three wise kings; they follow the boy to the stable. Finally the boy announces the next knocking is :

All the world
Come on this Christmas night to see
King Jesu, His Nativity

In this way the stage is filled with the different groups as they arrive to see the King and the stable scene creates a tableau as each group upon arrival arrange itself round the Holy Family.

The repeated knocking and excursion to open the door, bring in the callers and then conduct them to the stable is reminiscent of the action of a morality/mystery play. This is further emphasised by the repetition of both words and verse form. The structure of question and answer is a very old dramatic form – finding its first use in the 'questis?' of early church drama. Perhaps, this is why one is reminded of mediaeval drama.

The directions to lead people around and the recurring knocking create constant movement and sound which is the reason for viewing this as a type of

pageant, thus particularly suitable for a school's participation. Also, recurring lines are easy to remember so its format seems less stylistic. As a carol it certainly has a formalised structure but this becomes obviously suitable when one considers its purpose and enactment on a school stage with the colour, movement and sound as well as the singing, that is needed in that situation. [This type of structure occurs again years later in one of the poet's plays, a play written in Surrey about 1967, called 'The Star Of Peace'.]

In format the printing of this carol in the school magazine might well have been re-arranged because it seems more sensible to keep all verses as fourlined and the Innkeeper's questions as the two lines. However, the carol here is as printed in the original.

Years later he was to view himself as 'an architect' in responding to requests for hymns for certain occasions. Here in his first post he is writing a carol to fit a given situation, keeping in mind the age of the people involved, the desired effect and the space available to him, so tailoring it to a situation just as he was to do fifty years later.

Sunset (Time and Tide volume 34, January 3, 1953)

This sunset hanging
above the creeping
tide of the kiosks
is Atlantis burning

(for water so gentle
could not drown it)

its doom reflected
on the soft bellies
and drifting scarves
of cloud formations

at the centre of it
a small white cloud

like a magnolia flower
floating unconsumed
on a lake of fire or
like peace returning.

This poem was written in the early 1950s when the poet was living in Brighton. It was his practice to walk along the seafront and his focus on clouds, he says, dates from childhood and a life-long fascination with them. [In his Norfolk retirement days he was to write a poem about the skies there, published in The Countryman as 'Norfolk Skies'.]

The kiosks referred to in 'Sunset' were the small outlets that sold confectionery and newspapers - the creeping tide' is a reminder to the reader of the growth of seaside esplanade industry. There is a feeling of

'insidiousness' about the use of 'creeping'. Yet above the 'consumerism' is 'Atlantis burning'.

In Greek legend Atlantis was a large island destroyed by earthquake (according to Plato in Timæus and Critias). Around 1450 B.C. there was a cataclysmic volcanic eruption on the island of Thera, north of Crete. Perhaps this is in the mind of the poet who sees the sunset glow as all consuming in contrast to the 'water so gentle' which, while surrounding the island, had never destroyed it. The suggestion that the water is incapable of inflicting pain and must be peaceful, although a fallacy, is added as if in passing, by the use of brackets. The 'doom' of Atlantis is reflected in the reddened sky as the clouds take on a flame colour. Here the descriptions of 'soft bellies' and 'drifting scarves' recall the cumulus and the cirrus cloud formation of our skies. The small white cloud suggests a pure 'core' amid the rose-tinted clouds - a contrasting cloud 'unconsumed' amidst the red sky, the cloud's colour representative of peace and purity.

The lake of fire is Miltonic; a burning lake of destruction underlines the picture of an apparently burning sky before darkness falls. The poem ends positively with the 'small white cloud' unconsumed and 'like peace returning', stressing wholeness and inviolability.

The rhyme of the poem could be described as written in vers libre; it relies for its structure on the use of devices like feminine endings, as in verse one - 'hanging', 'creeping' and 'burning', two line verses as in verses two and four, instead of stanzas of four lines, and a final rhyme, the only one, which links the last line of verse one and the last line of the poem, 'burning' and 'returning'. These words also focus on a recurring effect of sunset, the daily reddening of the evening sky.

The two line verses are different in tone from the rest of the poem. They seem almost explanatory lines, particularly verse two with its brackets, amid the imagery of a 'tide of kiosks', 'drifting scarves of cloud formations' and 'like a magnolia flower'.

Percuil Ferry (John O'London's Weekly, 10 April, 1953, p.319)

Dearest, do you recall the lane in Roseland
the drop in shadows to the Percuil River,
and how we fretted and fussed there on the shore
when no one came to take us over?

Go easier now, for another road dips down
to a deeper river and we need not hurry;
this time we shall hear a dog bark and the pull
of oars before we reach the ferry.

This ferry was probably from St.Mawes, the estuary of the Percuil river, to St.Antony in Roseland in Cornwall. The Percuil river flows parallel to the minor road from Trewithian to St.Anthony in Roseland – the Roseland referred to here.

So often, as here, the poet takes an incident and extends its meaning to convey a universal truth. In the first verse he remembers the energy exerted as they worried about the late arrival of the ferry; he recalls their desire to be moving at their speed to their destination, not to be frustrated by the tardy ferryman.

The second verse shows that time has passed and the ageing couple are no longer pushing ahead to set their own speed. 'Go easier now' suggests a slowing down physically and the road that 'dips down' in verse two is not to Roseland but is the road of life leading inevitably to the river of death. In lines three and four the references are to Dante; in his poetry the river Acheron is the river across which the souls of the dead are ferried to hell by Charon.

The two verses are full of contrasts, firstly between the past and the future.

In verse one there is impatience at the situation; in verse two there is an acceptance. There is speed contrasted with a slow pace. Other contrasts are a desire with a reluctance: a frustration with a fulfilment: isolation with a sound of oars. The first verse is questioning; the second is a statement. What started as a short holiday trip is portrayed in verse two as life's journey.

There are also similarities. The shadow cast by trees in verse one is the shadow of death in verse two. The 'drop down' in verse one, though steeper than the 'dip down' of the road in verse two, is also a final descent. In both verses the time of the ferryman's arrival is unknown.

CARACTACUS (Poetry Review volume XLVI, no.1,1955)

Caractacus is in our blood!
When he rebels against his lord
in shame of human servitude,

his unilateral decree
flutters no dovecote in the dread
remote imperial chancelry,

and all his brave barbaric hordes
have no more hope, though nine years free,
than tumbling clowns with wooden swords;

yet such a grandeur lights the way
of sorrows the survivors tread
to grace a Roman holiday,

no greater dignity sustains
Caesar at his saluting-base
than proud Caractacus in chains.

The poem is based on the life of a first century king of the Catuvellauni; he was the son of Cymbeline and organised resistance to the Roman invasion of 43 A.D. When defeated he fled first to Wales and then to the North British Queen, Cartimandua. She betrayed him. He was pardoned by Emperor Claudius but died in exile.

The historical background that generated this poem was not the only prompting force. Pratt Green remembers vivid impressions made on him by a picture of tumbling clowns with wooden swords. It is this antithesis of might and ineffectuality that forms a starting point for the poet's thoughts.

Caractacus's rebellion is from shame at being a prisoner when he himself is a king. There is a parallel streak in him and the reader as we rebel against higher and greater power. The 'unilateral decree' sounds important and majestic but the words 'flutters no dovecote' convey its ineffectuality. The dove as an emblem of peace underlines the pointlessness of his protest and rebellion while the words 'dread', and 'remote' suggest the lowliness of his position. The 'brave barbaric hordes' who fought under the command of Caractacus by this description alone are seen as lesser soldiers than the organised Roman army and have no more chance of making a stand against the Roman army than the 'tumbling clowns with wooden swords'. The image suggests more a Punch and Judy situation than a battle.

On a different plane this verse three may be seen as stating the impotence of mankind when it attempts to challenge God in his omnipotence. Like the clown, man is 'a fool' in such an attempt.

Verse four mentions the way of sorrows which puts in mind the Via Dolorosa. To provide entertainment for Roman citizens Caractacus has been led as a prisoner 'to grace a Roman holiday' where the word 'grace' whether ironic or literal adds a dignity to the situation. In Byron's 'Childe Harold', IV. cxli, there is a close parallel to this description but Byron uses the word 'make' rather than 'grace'.

This dignity is referred to in the final verse. It is proud Caractacus in chains before Caesar which adds to Caesar's greatness. Without such worthy prisoners as kings, Caesar's reputation would be lessened. The necessity of powerless subjection to underlie majestic victory may seem paradoxical at first but is of course a truth.

The words used here are often symbolic. 'Chains' is a physical restraint on Caractacus but is also used metaphorically because he is powerless to reverse the greatness of the Roman empire yet remains a link in the hierarchy of it. 'Grandeur', 'grace', 'dignity' and 'proud' are words associated with emperors

and kings and both Caractacus and Caesar share these traits, thus they are linked by them though separated by circumstances.

The poet is showing how Caesar is less dignified than Caractacus and that the victim is greater than the Emperor. Perhaps also in the poet's mind is the position of Christ and Pilate where, paradoxically, the Victim is the Saviour of his captor.

Advice to those visiting England (New Yorker, 2 May 1964)

Voices must not be raised
unless supporting a sport,
or aiding the deaf or dazed,

but to whisper in company,
unless in a bank or church,
exposes one's pedigree.

At cricket one gently applauds
whoever is doing his best -
this is the charm of Lord's.

This poem is one of gentle irony. The suggested low tone, the words, 'gently' and 'whisper' all emphasise in contrast the forceful, somewhat aggressive approach associated with some nationalities. The poem provides an interesting contrast to different life styles; its subject is the English reticence.

Throughout, the tone is detached. There is no answer given by the poet as to why the English never say anything. Rather more, it is a gentle criticism of our way of life.

The rhymes in verses one and three are strong - 'raised', 'dazed', 'applauds' 'Lord's' - while verse two digresses both in rhyme and subject matter. The middle verse is a comment on behaviour, not an instruction.

Alongside the variety of scansion - the iamb and the spondee - there is also variation in sound. The assonance of verse one is repeated in 'whisper' in verse two. Verses one and two both have harsh sounding words in lines two - the plosive 'supporting a sport' and 'bank or church'. This is missing in verse three.

Verse two with its reference to 'bank or church' brings to mind high, lofty stone buildings where whispers seem appropriate. The opposition of 'bank'

with the idea of money (Mammon) and 'church' (God)is also suggested by these words. 'Exposes one's pedigree' is particularly ironic to those who - a classless society - are not touched by the British preoccupation of 'keeping up appearances'. Furthermore, 'exposes' suggests a nakedness which, like noise and the voice out of normal pitch in verse one, is unacceptable. Finally, it is not pedigree which is exposed but the lack of it - another touch of irony.

In reality verse three is the antithesis of much sport:

At cricket one gently applauds
whoever is doing his best

The concept, 'the charm', of applauding people objectively at sport is certainly ironic; this is a word which would not normally be applied in this situation. This verse also contains a double entendre: 'At cricket'. The idea here is of the rules of that game extended to life in general.

The pace of the game is evoked by the first line of this last verse. There is a pause effected as the voice modulates after the words 'cricket', 'gently' and 'applauds'.

Loss of Memory (English volume XI, no.65, 1957)

Images fade. Nothing is memorable,
A numbered house, a cat on the sill,
Disturbs his mind like a vague gesture
He cannot fathom (is it intended for
Another person?), or a lock the key
Gropes for when it's too dark to see.

A cat, it seems, is never at a loss,
Never mistakes the door. Clever puss,
We say. But what's specially clever
In finding your way home if you never
Mislaid, or doubted, your identity?
It's a cat's self-possession we envy;

He's always so competent to conduct
His affairs. We have to reconstruct
Who an old man is from generalities
Of age, height, colour of hair, eyes,
And usual clothing. To be typical,
Head to toe, is to be nothing at all.

We do our duty, we fit key to lock;
And, if it fails to turn, we knock
On the most probable door. The cat
Yawns, being too clever to look at
Him or us. When a curtain twitches
We think we know who it is watches

A street corner. It's so unlike him,
She says. But no evasive synonym
Deceives her. As we take our leave,
He smiles. Exactly what do we grieve over?
What self-hood in senility
Solaces the cat curled on his knee?

The poet's interest and compassion for disorders of the mind is explored further in this poem where the opening words encapsulate the problem in a short succinct sentence: Images fade.

'Nothing is memorable' is the state of mind of the amnesiac. A 'vague gesture' is too indecisive for any to interpret its meaning and similarly, the vague memories that the man has are too indefinite to hold on to.

a lock the key
gropes for when it's too dark to see

conveys not only a door key to give access but a key to a map to understand the area. 'Gropes' with the fumbling, an idea of feeling one's way stresses the struggle in the mind to find something with which to identify.

The contrasting image of the cat here is partly explained by the poet's admiration and liking for these animals. The cat on the sill, silently reposing, in verse one (in contrast to the disturbed mental searching by the man) becomes active in verse two. The cat's self-possession in knowing where it is going and what it is doing is explained away - it has no inner turmoil of mind as humans can have, having never:

Mislaid, or doubted, your identity

The cat appears competent while the man is shown to be deficient, yet at the end of the poem we find they satisfy each other, despite such perceived differences. The contrast of the cat and the old man in verse three moves from

the cat who can 'conduct his affairs' to the man who is just a dressed human, physically recognizable as 'typical' from external appearances:

To be typical

Head to toe, is to be nothing at all

Here a comment on the man in the poem can be viewed in wider context as a truism on those who dress to conform, assuming a uniform of typical clothes and thus losing their individuality physically, as the man in the poem has done mentally.

Verse four returns to the idea of 'key to lock'. The opening words 'we do our duty' are disturbing; they suggest an action not carried out in compassion. The image of 'key to open door' is pursued by 'we knock' as some common factor is sought that will enable a link to be made between the visitors and the old man. The cat's yawns remind us of its self possession; in contrast it is too clever to become involved in breaking of such barriers.

Verse five introduces the man's female companion or carer. She remains nameless rather like the visited individual whose personality remains unknown. The poet queries what it is that grieves the visitor. Is it our inability to make mental contact? The final question suggests an answer :

What self hood in senility

Solaces the cat curled on his knee?

This points out that the cat finds physical comfort with the man. The loss of man's memory does not affect the cat's attitude because the physical presence of the man is sufficient. Human visitors have struggled to have his mental presence, whereas the cat is cleverer than humans (it lives by instinct, as expressed in verses two and four) and finds the man's physical warmth a comfort and is satisfied with a physical proximity which the visitors have disregarded in their search for a mental nearness. The poem ends with the

question about the nature of the human being who is left. The visitors have not appreciated the 'selfhood in senility' that they have encountered. The cat remains the clever one because he takes what is offered and does not demand more.

Some of the language used is a vivid example of the man's failure to keep a hold on reality. 'He cannot fathom' suggests the depth of consciousness necessary for him to find reason. The use of 'clever puss' derided in verse two is seen to be true at the end. The idea of mislaying one's identity fits the failing mind of the elderly whose short term memory results in constant mislaying of belongings. 'To reconstruct' gives the idea of a photo kit as the visitors try to see the man as he was many years previously and not as he appears now. The self possession of the cat is envied because most humans would try to be self-possessed in front of others. In this poem the man has lost this ability.

The Ripcord (Outposts, 110, Autumn, 1976)

Like the sky diver who jumps -
to find he cannot free
the ripcord of his parachute,
you fall through vacancy,
victim of your dead weight.

Earth that is our cushion
if we fall right, using
our buoyancy, becomes obstacle,
death trap. Helplessly
we hope it is not too late.

Can no one, no one, reach
the ripcord in your mind,
unsnarl its operational skill,
and bring you safely down
to where we watch and wait?

'The Ripcord' is based on the poet's personal observation of parachutists over Sutton Bank in North Yorkshire. The poem stresses the isolation of the parachutist with words like 'vacancy' and 'to where we watch and wait', as the spectators are powerless to act and must leave the 'skydiver' to 'free the ripcord' that will ensure safe landing on 'earth that is our cushion'. The words 'death trap' are menacing: if the ripcord does not function, the man must die:

victim of your dead weight.

The ripcord is seen as a life-preserving device for the individual, a device that only he can operate. This leads the poet to consider the 'ripcord' in the mind, the facility of 'righting' the senses and controlling the vacancy of mind, as the

parachute controls the vacancy of space. The poet compares the physical law of falling where no control is possible with the idea of a human being not in control of his mind, helpless and beyond external help.

Just as the earth is a cushion to the floating parachutist so the controlled mind may enjoy the 'comfort' of all earth offers. Lack of control brings physical death on impact with earth for the parachutist and mental isolation for the vacant mind.

There is a sense of urgency in verse three with the repetition of 'no one' as the poet parallels the isolation and necessary self-dependence of the parachutist with the diseased mind and the inability of onlookers to 'unsnarl its operational skill'. 'Unsnarl' is a harsh-sounding word indicative of the ugly tangled condition of the senses, whereas 'operational' suggests a functioning capacity and the 'ripcord' alone can establish control. The final lines:

and bring you safely down
to where we watch and wait

reiterates the helplessness of verse two where the poet views the parachutist's danger. In verse three to witness the human non-functioning mind evokes the same feeling of helplessness in the onlooker. The anxiety of 'watch and wait' is further focussed by its rhyme with 'dead weight' of verse one and 'too late' in verse two in a poem which otherwise employs no rhyme scheme, perhaps to underline the lack of control of the parachutist's 'free falling'.

Instead the poem relies on three five-line stanzas of varying feet, as in the first line where anaepaestic is followed by trochee and then iambus. So the variety the poet uses in metre provides the apparent 'free' verse with definite patterns of stress. It can be seen here that the final verse becomes iambic as the reader's attention is directed to the main point of the poem :

'where', 'watch' and 'wait'.

2.7

POETRY OF FRED PRATT GREEN NOT INCLUDED IN COLLECTIONS

Introduction

Where the title differs from the first line of a poem both are given. The date where known is given after each poem in brackets as is the place of publication where applicable. In almost all cases this information has been the result of my research. Where there is no information after a poem this indicates that the text is unpublished and held in the Stainer & Bell Archives.

Asterisks preceding a poem indicate that the poem has been discovered through personal research or the text has been given to me by the poet himself and thus it is not listed anywhere in either the Archives or in Braley's list in Later Hymns and Ballads and Fifty Poems. Where whole or part of a poem is quoted in that text or Braley's Hymnwriters 3 the poem is preceded by the symbol*

Textual variants are also cited. Where extra verses appear in the first publication of poems which were subsequently published in one of the four collections they are also printed here.

Abstract Object (1982)

A Carol of Seven Days (1978)

On a Monday, washing's out

A Ceremonial Ode for Two Voices in celebration of the Golden Jubilee
of the Hymn Society (2nd July, 1986)

Hail, mighty clerics, such as do attend

A Congratulatory Sonnet addressed to Canon Cyril Taylor on his
Seventieth Birthday

TAYLOR, revered and hymnologic Friend

*Advice to those visiting England {The New Yorker 2nd May 1964 }

Voices must not be raised

*After Reading A Book On Ferns {Poetry Review XLVI, 1, 1955}

[Later published in New Poems , The Skating Parson, and The Old Couple]

Original text read:

v.4.6 'heartlessly left' replaced by 'left heartlessly'

in S.P but original used in O.C.

*A Fine City {post 1968}

Thoughts on the way home

Coming out of the Assembly House

*A Hymn for the 1980s written for the International Hymnody
Conference, Oxford, 1981 [Listed here because of its secular nature]

{See Hymns And Ballads ed. Braley 1982}

How can we sing the praise of Him

*A Letter to a Friend in the Chinese Style { The Pen, untraced }

My wife having left for the Temple of the Three-in-One

A Little Ode { The New Yorker, 4th May, 1957 }

[In Honor of the International Geophysical Year]

You who mend simple fuss by magic

Poetry Scrapbook contains query from the magazine:

'Is eerie grasshopper an instrument?'

A Man with a sickle { The Countryman, Summer 1954 }

The roadman with a sickle

*A Memory of Childhood { Methodist Recorder, 2nd. September, 1993 }

Sunday began with father winding up the clocks

*Another Sabbath in the Western Highlands { Outposts no.107, Winter

1975

[Later published in The Old Couple]

A hooded crow on the Wee-Free roof

Original version read :

title : A Wet Sabbath in the Western Highlands;

v.3.2 'sing in the leaden sky of a Sabbath';

v.5.3 'shake off the rain'.

*All Passion Spent { Outposts Winter, 1979, no. 123 }

That they embrace little

*An Earnest Reply to a 'Letter to an Old Friend'

[A private exchange of poems with Peter Dunn]

A non-hymn in Honour of St.Jess of Blubberhouses(1972)

*A Small Talent {Outposts Spring,1974}

A small talent is a great burden

*At the Folly {April,1991}

The wind that had been disorderly

*Backslider { Poetry Review Vol.XL1V, no.4, 1958}

[Later published in The Skating Parson and The Old Couple]

I've seen so many chapels in Wales

original text read:

v.2.2 'surrounded with', not 'by' as in O.C.;

2.5 'marvellous' not 'beautiful' singing as in O.C.;

2.7 'He will never' not 'as if He had never' as in

S.P and O.C.

*Ballade of the coloured Chalks { English 1964 }

[Reprinted Centenary Brochure of Rydal School, 1985]

You taught the Shell what History it knew

Blind Man's Light {1980}

*Caractacus { Poetry Review Vol. XLV1, No. 1, 1955 }

Caractacus is in our blood

CAT POEMS:

featuring Jespah and Smoke, our much loved cats for twelve years,

R.I.P.

i. Cat Song

We sing of cats! Egyptian god and tyrant of the tiles

ii. Two cats

Some say two cats

iii. Where is Jespah?

Is he shut up in the garage?

iv. *Copy Cat

Smoke is in Jespah's chair

v. *Cat Door

Do we have a cat-door?

vi. Meals

With snow in Ohio and riots in Spain

vii. Cream

Do you give your cats cream?

viii. Lick and Purr

When two cats lick

ix. Cold Paws

Smoke has cold paws

x. Philosophy

Yes, Jespah, our golden tabby

xi. Contrast

Smoke's a talkative cat

xii. Fleas

Try to imagine , if you please,

xiii. Mice

What are cats for?

xiv. Going to the Vet

The trouble with having cats

xv. A Fear Shared

When we leave our cats behind

Chinese Restaurant { Poetry Review, Vol. 52, no.3 1961 }

[Later published in The Skating Parson]

Since Mister Wong opened *The Lucky Star*

Original text read

v.5.2 'That foreign' replaced by 'as foreign';

v.7.2 'anxiously' replaced by 'seriously';

extra verse as v.8 in original :

Straight from *Elijah* in the Minster nave

The Vicars Choral listen. All the more

Confused for being Christian to the core,

They think it a bit rough when prophets rave

At Jezebels, that jealous gods abhor

A synthesis and thunder Either/Or.

*Christmas {1984}

The thorns of Winter

*Christmas 1989

Child of an ancient time

*Christmas 1991

Another year! So much to lose or win!

Explanatory Sonnet at Time of Controversy { April, 1985 }

So Durham says there is no Resurrection

original text read:

1.3 'Norwich' replaced by 'colleagues' with
'prelates' followed by a question mark in
brackets;

1.10 'we have a right' replaced by 'are disposed';

1.12 'though' replaced by 'when';

1.13 'has to be' replaced by 'is'.

In the poet's handwriting the following is written after the poem:

'The new Bishop of Durham had startled and shocked the orthodox
by announcing that he didn't believe the story of the "physical
Resurrection" as told in the Gospels.'

Family Fishing { The Countryman, Spring 1970 }

On Sundays I go down to the Yare

For Editors and Committees of a New Hymnbook

The Lord have mercy on you, gentlemen

*For Francis Bland Tucker (1982)

We love Savannah for its French connections

For John Wilson in Celebration of his Eightieth birthday

{ Hymn Society Bulletin, October, 1985 }

Dear John, you most meticulous of men

Glossy Living {c.1983}

It's the glossiest kind of high living

Harriet and the Psychiatrist{ Poetry Review, vol.54, no. 4, 1963/4 }

[Later published in The Old Couple]

Harriet had a gift for arranging flowers.

Original text read:

v.2.2 'where the telephone was. Indeed,'

replaced by 'Beside the telephone, so that'

v.6.1 'She fitted ' replaced by 'And fitting';

6.5 'and married ' replaced by 'she married';

v.8.1 'Poor' replaced by 'Dear';

8.3 'sleeve' replaced later by 'cuff';

8.5 'marigolds, neglected in a waterless jar'.

replaced by 'Marigolds in a most unattractive
jar'.

*Hawkshead Revisited { Outposts, Autumn 1964, No. 62 }

In the Hawkshead of the poet's youth

*Head and Shoulders : in Six Sitzings { Poetry Review 1965 vol.56, no.1}
[Awarded The Greenwood Prize 1964]

You have turned your lounge into a studio

High Street Carol { Eastern Daily Press, 27 October, 1983 }

Before the smoke of Guy Fawkes blew away

House Martins {1976}

For days now we have waited

*I think of Manchester { The Yule Log 1929}

I think sometimes, looking on sea and wold

Incantation on Human Rights {1978}

[written for a service in Westminster Abbey on the Thirtieth
Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights]

Celebrate the struggle for human rights

Is God my Sister? {September 1983}

To call God Sister seems to me quite wrong

Joker in the Pack {1983}

What, I wonder, are you, my friends, doing?

La Grotte, Vauxbelets {Time and Tide vol.35, 15th May, 1954}

[Later printed in The Skating Parson]

Original text read: v.2.3 'ormer' replaced by 'orner';
v.5.3 'strange creatures' replaced by 'Eccentrics';

Letter from a Lay-by {1980}

Under grey skies I sit here

Live if you can {SEE: Two Antique Sonnets}

*Loss of Memory { English Vol. X1, No. 65, Summer 1957 }

Images fade. Nothing is memorable

Mother Julian's Cat { Norfolk Fair, October 1974.}

[A set of verses in nine cantos respectfully dedicated to the Dean of Norwich]

Of all who come to pay respect

In Poetry Scrapbook stanza 9 v.1.4 reads 'is eccentricity'.

which maintains the regular metre of 8.6.8.6. and omits

'That'.

*Mugs like us

If anyone wants to hand out medals

Music {1981}

You gave me music, Lord, to compensate

Nuts {December 1985}

Sparrows are quick learners

Ode in Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Methodist Church Music

Society in 1985 {1984}

When the leaves of autumn fall

Ode in Honour of Kenneth Greet {1984}

O everybody's heard

*On receiving the gift of a Brass Buddha { Written to Peter Dunn }

Do you remember you gave me this brass buddha,

One Morning's Weather { The Countryman, Spring 1966 }

All this morning village and loch

*Parents {1979}

Parents are a mixed blessing

*Percuil Ferry { John O'London's Magazine April 10th, 1953 }

Do you remember, dearest

*Poem for Marjorie's 82nd birthday

*Poem for Ralph Lawrence on his Ordination to the Priesthood

{ London Quarterly and Holborn Review, April, 1965 }

Here in our northern city, as snow falls

F.P.G.'s comment in Poetry Scrapbook 1, p.15:

'This poem, written for an Anglican friend, is gentle protest against the disunity of Christians - as it was in 1965.'

Poems written to Ten Friends: A Sequence in verse

[In the original order of writing as given by F.P.G.]

*1. In Memoriam: E.W.T. (Eric W.Thomas)

[Later printed in The Old Couple]

Today hearing of your death, I remember

Original text read:

1.1 'The day I heard of your death, I remembered'
possibly changed to avoid confusion with poem 8

2. *F.B.W.(Francis Westbrook)

Of all the people I have known well

3. *F.W. {To Fallon Webb}

To each of my friends I owe a special debt

4. *R.L.{ To Ray Lucas, a lifelong friend }

When war in the west was over

5.* P.E.D.(as P.D)

[There seems to be a doubling up here]

Some friendships are chequered

6. *O.W. { To Owen Walters, the artist of The Old Couple }

When we moved into your landscape

7. *D.D. (To Donald Dugard)

What is it makes someone loveable

8. *H.D. {To Herbert Dixon}

The day I heard of your death

9. *P.D.(Peter Dunn)

Some friendships are chequered

10. *M.B. (To Mark Bourne)

What comes of poetry competitions

Polperro: on a Christmas Card {text of poem untraced }

*Ripcord { Outposts 110, Autumn, 1976 }

Like the sky-diver who jumps

Save the Children {July, 1987}

Why are the children still neglected?

*Seasons of Love : for Marjorie {November 1991}

Seven Sonnets for Lent { Methodist Recorder Lent, 1970 }

1: Caiaphas speaks: Concerning this blasphemer from the North

2: Pilate speaks: How senators, safe in their villas, prate

3: Peter speaks: To me, simplest of men, Jesus was God,

Poetry Scrapbook 2 : line 12:

'revolution' changed to 'insurrection'.

4: The beloved Disciple speaks: Did Jesus love me more than all the
rest?

5: The Mother of Jesus speaks: You see it coming - like a little cloud:

6: Judas speaks: I sold you, Jesus, not for traitor's pay,

7:* Paul speaks: Others lay claim to know him in the flesh;

Sexism in Hymnody { August 1983 }

So, God, we may no longer call you He

Skyscape { The Countryman, Summer, 1970 }

Norfolk, they say, is flat. Well, have it so:

Reprinted in Speak to the Hills

[edited by Hamish Brown & Martin Berry,

published by Aberdeen University Press]

*Soliloquy in a London Square { Poetry Review Vol. XLV 11, 2, April
1956 } To F.D.R.

Your statue, in its reticence of metal and stone

SONNETS ON HYMN-WRITING:

[as numbered by the poet]

1. *Sonnet for Carlton Young

Hymn-writing is an art, though apt to be

2. *Sonnet for Canon J.E.Bowers

With HYMNS, ANCIENT AND MODERN, I began

3. *Sonnet for John Wilson

Our thanks to all who taught us what we know

4. *Sonnet for a friend seeking advice

You want to write and publish hymns? The first

5. *Sonnet for a lady seeking advice

You cannot find a tune to fit your text?

6. *Sonnet for Valerie Ruddle

When is a hymn a song, a song a hymn?

7. *Sonnet for Basil Bridge

This editorial itch to 'alt' a text

8. *Sonnet for Freda Head

Forgive me, Lord, that when I write my hymns

9. *Sonnet for Cyril G. Hambly

After a living author's name, a bracket!

10. Sonnet for Peter E. Dunn

On radio, once, I heard a Hindu sing

11. *Sonnet for George Shorney {U.S.A.}

We share, in hymns, a common heritage

12. *Sonnet: in Memory of Erik Routley { Hymn Society Bulletin 1982 }

He was, of all of us, the most alive

*Sonnet for Ben Drewery (post 1990)

Ben Drewery? Yes, of course it rings a bell!

Sonnet for Peter Dunn {1982}

The hand that dropt your letter on my mat

*Sonnet on Eternity { Epworth Review vol. 21, no. 1, p.48,1994 }

Lord, when you promise me Eternity

Revision of original for publication:

1.3 inserts 'l' between 'that' and 'must';

1.4 'imagination' replaced by 'discrimination';

1.6 'found' replaced by 'find';

1.8 'live' replaced by 'go';

1.12 'refining' replaced by 'consuming';

1.13 'some' replaced by 'that'.

Sonnets for a New Decade or Lil and Merle (Poetry Review vol.51, no. 2
1960)

[Later published in The Skating Parson and The Old Couple]

Original text read:

v.1.3 'may be Mars' replaced by 'now is Mars'
in O.C.;

v.6.6 'love is their constant' replaced by
'Love is our constant' in O.C.

v.7.1 'Love is our constant' replaced by
'Love is the constant' in S.P.

*Spastics {Outposts_no.33 Summer 1957,}

[Later published in The Skating Parson]

Walking home afterwards, I am struck

Original version read;

v.3.1 'a' replaced by 'the' wind;

v.6.1 'we have to confess' replaced by
'Watching, who wouldn't confess'

6.2 'We move' replaced by 'He moves'.

*Spring is coming (1993)

Beneath our windows daffodils

Spring Song

Who does not love an English spring,

*Sunset { Time and Tide Vol.34, January 3rd 1953 }

The sunset hanging

*The Age of Steam { The Countryman, Spring 1965 }

We crane our necks. A Highland train

*The Barber's Mirror {September 1984}

When I am sitting in the barber's chair

*The Bridge {June 1974}

How fierce the torrents that divide

The Boy and the Painter { Norfolk Fair, March 1975 } [For Owen Walters]

He ran barefoot from a thatched cottage

The Cat and the Rural Dean { Christmas 1985 },

[for Mary Andrews and her cat, Matthew]

There lived a cat of shrewd obsequious mien

The Cattery { Decemeuse } SEE: Cat poems

The Dove {1978}

We saw the dove descend

The Dove of Peace {July, 1977}

Where is she now, the Dove of Peace?

The Geophysical Year { SEE: A Little Ode}

The Nightmare Oaks {English 1966 vol. XV1, no. 92}

Between the high and stony silences

The Plastic Begonia { New Yorker, 20 April, 1963. }

In a world of the phoney

in Poetry Scrapbook 2 a letter, dated 30/1/63 from the
magazine requesting the following changes:

perishing in a fire
that I haven't got the guts,
God help me, to try

be changed to:

perishing in fire
that I haven't the guts
God forgive me, to try

Changes agreed by F.P.G.

~~#~~The Poet and the Musician {1989}

A poet once, in Shakespeare's time

The Proudest Ship of All{1976}[A ballad on the Sinking of the Titanic]

Of all the ships that ever sailed

~~#~~The Rare Orchid { Rydal School Magazine }

This is the tale of a botanist

In Poetry Scrapbook 2, p. 33:

revised in 1984 for Rydal School Magazine, March 8th, 1985:

Title: 1981: 'The'; 1984 'This';

v.4.1, 1981 reads:

'Exceeding it, yet with a rare aplomb'

1984 reads:

'Doing his duty with extra aplomb'

v.6 1&2, 1981 read:

'Having declared the area safe

They posted a guard, piled into a jeep'

1984 reads:

'Their duty done, the area safe

The Bomb Disposal piled into a jeep'

v.7. 1 &3, 1981 read:

'This only proves, I regret to say,

Alas, is not necessarily good.'

1984 read

'This only proves, I have to confess,

Has consequences you cannot guess.'

The Red Arrows are coming { 1978; revised for Outposts, Spring 1980 }
All the morning we wait for them

The Seven Churches :

A short Cantata based on The Letters to the Seven Churches in
Revelations chapters.2 and 3:

1. The Church that has lost its first love: Ephesus
2. The Church that is afraid of persecution: Smyrna
3. The Church that is holding fast: Perganum
4. The Church that is doing better than at first: Thyatira
5. The Church that is spiritually dead: Sardis
6. The Church that is lukewarm: Laodicea
7. The Church that has before it an open door: Philadelphia

*The Three Swans (1980)

The three swans flying up the Yare

*The Tide is Out {Outposts 1956 No.29 }

[later published in The Skating Parson]

The tide is out. Women too old for love

Original text read:

title: The Tide was Out

v.1.1 'the tide comes in' replaced by

'The tide is out';

v.4.1 'or' replaced by 'the' ;

v.5.3 'and history' replaced by 'its history';

v.6.3 'slides' replaced by 'glides';

v.8.1 'Soon the dipping ' replaced by

'Until the slow dipping'.

*The Victim Died of Stab Wounds { Outposts 1970 no.84 }
[later published in The Old Couple]

Original text read:

v.6.1 'A death is natural' omitting 'a' after 'as';

v.7.4 'bench' not capitalised (which removes
force of authority)

Thoughts after Epiphany { pre 1967 }

[instead of a carol]

The Wise Men never met the Shepherds

Two Sonnets in Antique Style {1981}

1.Live if you can beyond the range of hope

2.Whether I love God truly I know not

Umbelliferae { The Countryman, Summer,1965 }

Not to me! When the incoming waves

Vive La Difference {1983}

Long live the difference, the Frenchie cried

*Walking with Father { Outposts 1963 no.59 }

[Later published in The Old Couple]

It was expected of me,

Original text read:

v.8.3 'By now, father was joking, poking me';

v.9.3 'the sins' replaced by 'My sins' and,
'he' replaced by 'we' in O.C.

v.11.2 'always' inserted before 'forgetting' in O.C.;

v.11.3 'it was the same father, the same boy'
replaced by:

'The same walk, the same father, the same boy.' in O.C.

Whether I love God truly I know not { SEE: Two Antique Sonnets}

Who was Edith Cavell? { Norfolk Fair, February, 1984 }

Her home was Norfolk, where the sky

*You Can't Teach the Heart not to stare { Poetry Review,
Vol.XLV1, 1955}

[Later published in The Skating Parson]

When you are eight, and old enough

Original text read:

v.5.1 'when' not 'where';

5.3 'Knowing' not 'seeing';

5.4 'useful, they said,' not

'more use, they had said'.

extra verse v.6:

See p. 215

He is eight, they said, he is old enough
not to stare, not to cry, as he gives Jack,
poor Jack, this golden sovereign, this pair
of boots, and a plaid for his wry shoulders,
and then we shall all have to hurry back...
(His bearded face, I had seen it somewhere!
O I was old enough not to tell my elders.)
who that moron was crucified in his chair!)

