

Extracts from *Giving Light*, Alan Morrison

My Life in the Shade

Since I was sunburned as a boy I learnt to love the shade,
Spared me from the heat where the other children played –
But I was tugged out in the sun and punished by its light
Turning from a shadow to someone in my own right;
Found that I preferred it when I felt invisible.

Sometimes I wonder whether I was ever here at all.

The more I've lived I've lost myself, drifted far away
From the busy worlds of others, the places where they play;
As if I died some time ago and turned into a ghost
I've haunted all the places I used to love the most,
Lingered like a shadow where my own shadow should fall.

Sometimes I wonder whether I was ever here at all.

I came to fear feelings of love for how they made me see
The picture of myself through the eyes of those who loved me,
Until I was obsessed with being gone in all but mind
Sharing in the mourning with my loved ones left behind –
But I'm still here; still in the shade; so I must leave; that's all.

Sometimes I wonder whether I was ever here at all.

Adam's Nib

It wasn't a woman tempted me
Into my fall, into my fall
Just some paper and a pen –
The imperfection of it all.

The Mansion Gardens

Shall we stroll those mansion gardens,
baize on baize of velvet grass
so well-kept and un-walked-upon?
Come on, love, we've cut the coupons,
let's see those shouting flowers
round grounds of ivy towers.

Shall we walk those mansion cloisters
verged with portraits? There's the Lords
and Ladies, and their ancestors
hanging, framed and ashen-faced.

*But why are they ashen-faced dear,
when they lived respectfully here?*

Shall we stroll those dust-still rooms –
well, just alongside, take a little
look at them, just peep inside?
They're cordoned-off with blue rope...

just like our lives...

oh, we'll cope.

Shall we pace those mansion chambers
ringed by pasty-crust shaped rope...

easily unhooked and disobeyed...

No – that would be to abandon
our law-abiding principles...

what's wrong is always irresistible...

Shall we recall those mansion gardens,
baize on baize of velvet grass
so well-kept and un-walked-upon?

*I'm not envious: simply a dreamer:
those lawns were so much greener...*

Tales from the Empty Larder

I can't stand scant catechisms
of tremors in an empty stomach;
the stench of hunger-scented breath
where a full belly's the only tonic;
the famished itch in-between the teeth
where only food can feed relief.

The stain won't shift: mean-spirited strife
spoil my appetite for living well;
splintered my spittle with bitterness;
chipped my shoulder with its scrimping chisel –
I taste it still in weak stewed blends;
in sickly stings of singed dog-ends.

I suppose the harsh lessons I scribed
inspired in me a need to dream,
to believe in insubstantial truths,
for you need a God when you can't keep clean
and hope, when your faith overflows,
Socialism will cure most ills.

I've said to my brother, it's strange to think
amidst the dirt we found ideals,
a sense of justice in second-hand clothes
and transubstantiated packet meals -
that the glooms of a larder's empty shelves
were where we first found ourselves.

The Coin Foragers

During days of testing means
we'd find distraction in playing games;
one comprised four players,
rules always the same:
each foraged for mouldy copper tokens
hidden about the scrimping room,
collecting as many as they could find.

Some stuffed in crumbs
under the settee's cushions; some
stashed in the clutter of the kitchen dresser.

The winner: first to disinfect their treasure.