

## BRAZIERS PARK

Written contributions from a series of three courses entitled  
"Mutual learning and teaching".

Library Group (April)	Spring: Spring freedom
Cheiron Group (June)	Aspects of Love
Drawingroom Group (September)	Harvest reflections: Aspects of Death

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Glynn Faithfull's translation from Dante was written on a former occasion, but is now included in this collection with his permission, as being appropriate to the subject of the Course.

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From the Library Group:- SPRING: SPRING FREEDOM

### SPRING IN BRAZIERS

Throw out the old. Bring in the new. A time of re-assessment and appraisal. The dried flower arrangements, friends of winter, go. Bring in a world of affluence, a house of gold bursting with daffodils, primroses, narcissi, and then still more. Old patched trousers do their last proud play, then out for cleaning rags. Come in, new summer jeans - clean, blue. Comfortable saggy clothes of winter, now tired in spirit, are given the lilted joy of brand new peacock-strutting shawl Time for Braziers A.G.M., for scanning of friends and helpers. Time to look back, write reports, spot the new, the hopeful, plan the future. Take care, take care. The quiet snug days of winter must go. Take care, take care. The sun is poking his finger round the door, scratching beneath the skin with rasping precision. Restless you fidget in your winter wool. The call, the challenge is there. Throw winter apathy away. Sing in the new.

**M.F.**

### BRAZIERS IN THE SPRING

More music takes titles from Spring than any other season. There is a magic about it not shared by summer, autumn and winter. The voices, scenes and scent of Spring seem louder, sweeter and clearer at Braziers. It makes for a special Spring, as if Spring by itself was not special enough already.

Braziers helps me to be more aware of it than ever before. The senses feast on the fresh verdures of the meadows, also the stage for many sheep in lamb. All laid on by Nature to both humble and raise our feelings. The bird calls on the nature trail are a mass to winter departed and dead. The intricate pattern of the treetops, leafless as yet, is the background for Braziers' own 'spectacular'. My eyes and ears cannot accept it all at once, as the senses are flooded with new and sweet sensations. In subtle ways, much is done at Braziers to heighten my awareness. There is no hard structure for adherence, yet the progress of introduction to Spring at Braziers is orderly. No persuasion or guidance, but a relaxed feeling of 'let-go' permeates the house and grounds, and there is choice at all times.

I have taken some days off in Utopia, away from form, convention, and commitment. The trappings of Spring are there outdoors, and indoors right along to the flowers in the rooms and on the tables, lovingly arranged by those at Braziers.

I have learned to see shapes in Braziers Spring light in the woods, which I never espied before. For the first time ever, I sketched these shapes, and can take them away to remember. Braziers in the Spring as it came over to me. I shall come back one day.

**J.S.**

#### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF A FIRST VISIT

A castellated, grey stone building, set in green fields and surrounded by trees. Inside, dark oak-panelled hall, huge carved sideboard, polished floors, shabby comfortable chairs; wide, shallow stairs, anonymous doors, arches, passages in all directions. Why are we here? What are we doing in this imposing place, away from our own familiar, comfortable nest?

Fortified by sherry, we venture to the, dining room. Friendly faces, candles, more polished oak, good food; we begin to relax and enjoy ourselves.

After dinner we learn a little more of what the week-end is all about. We listen to some glorious music, and sleep well and deeply, as if at home and not in a strange place.

Morning. Awakened by bird song. First thoughts are of the weather, at least it's not raining. From the window we watch a squirrel run up a tree, and the birds darting in and out of the branches. Downstairs to the drawing room to start the day with Yoga. Feeling relaxed and peaceful we have breakfast, and then go outside to watch for the elusive birds, and explore the grounds. Later, looking at trees we feel utterly frustrated in trying to transfer what we see onto paper, but at least we try, receive encouragement, and finish with the feeling that if we were to persevere for a very long time, perhaps, one day, we might produce more than a scribble.

After lunch, out into the Spring again. The sun is warm and we find a wood where the bluebells will be in abundance next week, but now the leaves are in bud, and everything is young and green as it only is in April, before becoming dulled with maturity and the dust of summer. The winds sigh in the branches, making them sing, and I would like to sing a song of joy with them, but, back at Braziers a releasing session of music and movement allows me to express my joy this way.

And still this long day has more to offer, with a session of creative writing and more music before we settle for the night.

Sunday, and we are out of doors again — a steady trudge over the Ridgeway. Lapwings wheel and plunge above us, and the larks hover and sing. The hills roll gently away into the distance. The weather is pure April, sunshine and showers, hot and cold, but we are exhilarated and refreshed when we return to lunch.

These are superficial impressions only — the framework upon which much else — which will take longer to digest — has been hung. One thing only remains to be said now. This may have been our first visit to Braziers — it will not be our last.

**R.S.**

I can't find words for this Spring -  
Only feelings —  
Feelings deep down,  
Stirred by the eager singing of the birds  
Calling to each other,  
And the uprush of green in the wood where all was brown,  
And bare, bare branches suddenly covered with glorious blossom,  
All surging forth from the deep brown earth,  
Pulling, pulling, on my own 'within'.

**B.R.**

The language of birds  
Shall serve you for words:  
Their sweetness revealing  
The wealth of your feeling.

**M.R.**

#### BRAZIERS IN SPRING

LAMBS, lambs new born each day,  
One bottle-fed, his mother dead,  
Till foster mother takes him over.

TREES, long established, firm and stately shapes,  
Their branches bare, in finest tracery,  
Just here and there a touch of green.

HEDGES, bursting green, and blossoms white,  
With violets, celandine, and star-of-Bethlehem,  
All free for the picking,  
Half hidden between the lush and leafy green  
Of cow parsley, Jack-in-the-hedge and arum lilies not yet in bloom.

And further up the lane the bluebell wood,  
With flowers still in bud, but faintly mauve,  
The promise of coming splendour.

Sheep in the fields, and cows,  
Daffodils in profusion among the grass,  
A touch of red in polyanthus tub beside the entrance door.  
And round about, the soft encircling downs,  
Wide open space and cloud-decked skies  
Shadows of clouds across the soft green fields,  
A peaceful, restful country-side that feed the spirit.

The river near; nine tiny baby ducks upon its water,  
A friendly smile from villagers met in lanes,  
And at this moment not a car in sight.

J.M.

#### BRAZIERS IN SPRING

Spring, I must bury you,  
Wanting symbol  
All is not beyond  
The steps of time;  
Beyond time and season.  
I met again, for some reason,  
My own timelessness in a wood.

P.W.

Freedom is different now — my view of it;  
the feel of one belonging in a place  
where no green cage of Spring  
can close its latch on love.  
Something has widened out  
since, long ago, I felt the fetters  
of a peopled prison; some opposite  
has swung a knowing in.  
Now my need is all to be united  
in a real with others' real need.

Love like a widening lake reels out  
from the narrow rapids rush  
into a refuge fuller than imagination dreamed,  
no fantasy harbouring.  
Nothing affects my sense of this:  
a belonging freedom with a feel  
of Home from which we cannot fall;  
a freedom difficult as our first home —  
with the assurance that we are no longer children.

H.

#### FREEDOM

Freedom for me is constituted by a proper appreciation of THE OTHER,  
atomic structure, living structure, conscious mutuality, in so far as I pay them the  
attention of the scientist, artist, and the religious person; understand them, appreciate  
them, and enter into communion with them. In so far as I am able to do these things I  
am completely free; the freedom exists in being intellectually and emotionally rational  
in all things; where rationality means the knowledge of how to act in accordance with  
the nature of THE OTHER.

J.W.

#### SPRING FREEDOM

It is a thing of beauty, this springly feeling of green-ness. Truly, it marks the real  
start of the year when I feel reborn with nature anew. Locked-in winter feelings fade  
away slowly and the senses awake to the joyous sounds, scents, and spectres of annual  
rebirth. I have cast off the dark, cold, hostile winter.

Too quickly though, it passes by, this heavenly spring-time, and never am I ready to  
taste these sweet pleasures long enough when they are free for me to take. Too late, I  
cry for what I have missed, and mourn for what may not be mine again.

There is the fear  
That I won't hear  
The joyous sounds again.  
With each Spring perfected,  
I feel somewhat rejected,  
And nothing done to show the path of life.

This freedom then is tempered with fear that each year passed heralds the end of years to come for me. More reason now to be free to sample all whilst I am here to enjoy. Little else can compare with such perfection.

**J.S.**

#### WHAT CONSTITUTES FREEDOM FOR ME

I cannot imagine complete freedom. Freedom for me exists as the opposite side of the discipline of my life. Life without some structure and organisation would be chaos.

So what do you mean by freedom? Freedom from what? I am free from tyranny and hunger and want, and my mind is free. What other freedoms am I justified in claiming?

I am free to live my life as I choose, with whom I choose, where I choose. I have all these freedoms and am grateful for them. So my freedoms are reduced to how I spend my leisure when freedom is to forget the clock, to revert to my body's natural rhythm of eating and sleeping, to relax mind and body in warmth and to choose what I will do.

I do not want to be idle when I am free. I want to follow all the pleasures and activities denied to me in the working day. Music, books, exercise, the countryside, fresh air and sunshine. These are what I enjoy most. Then I want to enjoy good food, so I cook it and prepare it with imagination and love.

I don't think that for me, freedom can ever be enjoyed alone. For a short while it is freedom to be by myself, but sooner or later comes the need to share, to enjoy the experience of freedom with someone else. This means, of course, finding someone else whose idea of freedom coincides with mine.

**R.S.**

A job to do with the arts in a free and imaginative sense, possibly using the qualifications I've acquired in the society in which we live, though not necessarily so. Freedom for me, ultimately, is expressed in a co-operative, not a competitive, society, a society in which each individual is completely accepted, not judged, punished, labelled, or even perhaps very harshly assessed. 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' is the cornerstone of this new society. Man's needs are simple. But this simplicity is not realised in our society, which assumes that people need incentives to induce them to work, instead of recognising an element above self-interest in people. Materialism suffocates the spiritual element in man. We have souls that can range through the universe. In this, for me, resides our freedom.

**P.W.**

#### THE FREEDOM OF ACCEPTANCE

To me there is freedom in acceptance  
Not a blind, dull acceptance  
But an aware-anticipatory acceptance  
Of this truly wonderful world.  
There is so much we don't know —  
So much to learn  
And to accept what happens next is to learn something.

Without acceptance  
I want I want' arises  
And limitation starts  
Because so often I can't have -

I don't know the results of striving for what I think I want -  
Any more than the results of acceptance.

But acceptance brings freedom of mind —  
Just because of my acceptance.

This is "going with life" — the process of which we are a part  
Which really does know a lot more than I do!

**B.R.**

#### MORE THAN SPRING?

Everything in nature obeys the compulsion of its own process within the remarkable scheme of universal process — everything, that is, that has not the property to question what that compulsion is, in itself and of its reasons. The spinning sphere of earth, particle flung off from the sun untellable millenia ago, is clothed with such beauties of balance, not static but changing in successions of invisible transitions which, while they seem obvious repetitions of samenesses of states and behaviors provide, in the course of proceeding centuries, the eventual change that can ensure survival of the living genius into further beauties; beauties in which inner elegance balances outward appearance: the difference between the actual and the real.

Human kind alone may, with every possessed sense, not only experience but know that it experiences, with full appreciation of scent, sound, colour, form, structure and system; and with added self-knowing, choose whether or not to comply with that experience's directing. In the graph of evolution's timescale, consciousness, that seems

to us who possess it, so long a wonder and a burden, is of duration so comparatively young and tiny that it is not surprising if we jib at full response to such glimpses of the truth about ourselves and our situation as we catch through the tangled forests of the word-thoughts we have invented for understanding it. Seduced by our own still powerful primary senses, the glories of the earth seem to us like all. It is ironic that our struggle inside our own known, unknown, consciousness and with the related concepts and words we use to speak of them, somewhere, so far, separate both them and us from the Eden of our beginning and continuing environment.

In Spring, when the powerful drawing on of the sun's returning light and heat renews wave after sequent wave the world round, in shawls of fresh green, fresh flower, reptile, insect, bird, animal, something in us stirs in response more than at any other season; though every season has its related significance. Modern man alone in his dilemma of knowing, which should and must eventually be his saving, is stilted of response. No current revival of May revels can emulate the spontaneous uprush of abandon to this fever of Spring that our ancestors knew but a hundred years ago. Little children are nearest to it, though even they are at a remove from the flowery, bowery, wantoning, appealing dawn celebrations of our recent forbears. Yet, at each Spring's coming, something in us dances briefly, is elate; is halted by our weighty concept of all else that is. All praise for such Spring refreshment. Fortunate they who, knowing it, can respond to the seasonal miracle of sensual and sensitive renewal in the natural process, whether they be close to the earth earthy or meshed into man-made complexes in which a single blade of grass in a concrete crevice is the sign.

Looking out of my window this week I noted that even while the birds are obsessively nest-building, hurrying to and fro with wisps of hay, straw, twig, moss, feather, they do not neglect to perform those courtship rituals which will ensure survival of their species. Sparrows rowdy and rude blatantly pounce one on one with no warning, shrilly protesting in vibration of wings on any inconvenient fence-wire, roof-gutter, hard concrete yard; pert robins, he by turns aggressive, cajoling, feeding her with titbits, while she mimics fledgling behaviour, appealing with open beak and baby flutter, to the final grudging-willing consent; blackbirds on the lawn flashing jet dexterity, a swift-winged ballet of mutual curvetting and up-leaping; two partridges in the next field, lovely and comic to see, running round each other very fast in decreasing circles, first one then the other leaping up vertical, until, together at the centre, both leap up high in unison — to come down far apart and begin again their rapid round and round sensual circus; a neat wren foraging among aubretia in a doortside tub hears a shrill, sweet snatch of song from her mate, flies up and clings precarious to the pebbledashed no-support side of the wash-house. From nowhere he homes on her straight, and they copulate tinily, briefly, the secret centre veiled in a sphere of fast-whirring wings — then are gone, back to their domed nest in the low back.

There is much to be learned from the stabilised parts of evolution. Our own (essential) instability of mind is one of our discomforts. Watching the behaviour of birds, thinking of ourselves, it seems that all our knowingness short of knowing, has too soon deprived us of patterns of expression in which we might involve our direction undivorced from the compulsion of our own process. We attempt, but crudely, to re-structure our fragmented lives, our heavily conscious lives, in an effort to equate the stability we desire with the instability we require; to encompass what is eternal with what must be for ever changing. We know a hunger of spirit that cries out for a nesting in a new Spring, which will not come but by our own consenting and realising. What was and is sensual, lovely, needs to become, in time, our need increasing, must become a sensitive wholeness, a spiritual wholesomeness of and in natural variety. Our vision stops too easily short at the new green, the fresh flower, young bird, rabbit, lamb, cloud, star, the new-born human baby; vital but distracting symbols of our need crying in us, pitiful but strong, for real seeing, full being.

H.

From the Cheiron Group:- ASPECTS OF LOVE  
Translation of Dante's canzone: Amor che nella menta mi ragiona

(Translated by R. G. Faithfull)

- (1) Love, as he talks within my mind,  
About my lady fair,  
Tells many things of her to me  
That cause my thoughts to err.  
His words so sweetly then do sound  
That all my listening soul  
Must sigh and say "I lack the power  
To guide words to their goal"  
For if I wish to write of her  
What thoughts cannot collate;  
Or that which chiefly must be sensed  
Since it I could not state:  
If thus my verse seems weak in praise,  
Blame then my faltering thoughts,  
And blame the uselessness of words  
To show what Love imports.
- (2) The sun that circles round the world  
Cannot reveal a thing  
More tender in his rays than her  
Of whom Love makes me sing.  
The Minds Divine that watch on high,  
And lovers here below  
Bring her again within their ken  
Each time Love's peace they know.
- Her being is to Him who makes  
Her thus, so dear that He  
Infuses her with power beyond  
Man's known capacity.  
Her pure soul gains from Him this gift,  
Conferred on those she guides;  
Her beauties shine within their eyes  
And joy with them resides.
- His power divine to her descends  
As to His angels too:  
Let doubting ladies walk with her  
To learn what she can do.  
And where she speaks a spirit comes  
From heaven proof to teach  
That her high powers by far exceed  
What we can hope to reach.
- Her gentle gestures each evoke  
Love with a voice he heeds;  
Her tenderness and beauty shine  
In tender ladies' deeds.  
To see her strengthens man's belief  
In what men wondrous find;  
So that our faith renews, as was  
Eternally designed.  
When she appears her face reveals  
The joys of Paradise;  
Love brings them there to their due place  
Upon her lips and eyes.  
Yet they outdo our highest thoughts  
Like sun to human sight,  
And since I cannot gaze there long,  
My words must need be slight.

For flames of fire her beauties are,  
Lit by a tender soul  
Which shatters evil, or makes hearts  
By honest thinking whole.  
Whoever hears her blamed should seek  
Her humbleness to learn.  
At the world's birth He thought  
Who made the cosmos turn.

Oh song, it seems your meaning goes  
Against another's theme,  
Since you call humble that which once  
To me did haughty seem.  
We know the sky itself is clear,  
Nor other can it be;  
Yet oft our eyes may see a star As clouded, seemingly.  
For when that ballad called her proud  
It judged not what was real,  
But grasped appearances through fear;  
A fear that still I feel  
Since I fear what I know she knows,  
Thus plead defence and say:  
"My lady, if you wish it so,  
I'll praise you on my way".

**R.G.F.**

What is love?

A pattern of gossamer threads stretching from me to you — and you. A giant mesh connecting each to all, and all to the greater all. Delicate, easily broken, constantly newly spun. The interlinking web spiralling in the sun catches for me a quivering winged insect of joy, a coiling caterpillar of child-filled laughter, or holds aloft for closer knowing diamond drops of spent anguish. A many legged spider lures me to follow the silver threads to new experience, to clamber along new paths of learning.

What is love?

A mirror giving quick sideways glimpses of my inward self, and reflecting back the echoing shape of others' needs and cares.

What is love?

A sofa, worn and restful, receiving tired limbs and weary head for solace and retreat. Familiar in its lumps and bumps, familiar in its one harsh spring jabbing the unwary. A sofa warmly welcoming to stay, giving freedom freely to go. Patched and dented but accepting.

**M.F.**

The love between parents and children - the highlights when it is as though perfection is within our grasp.

Love between man and woman — the highlights when the wonder of the world is ours.

The love of animals — the child whose pet dog becomes a part of him — the elderly woman whose cat's welfare is more important than her own.

The more mundane love - love of your new Rolls Royce (or Mini I); love of money; love of power; love of things — antiques, jewellery, your home, your beautiful new dress, your soft white sheepskin rug.

Love of beauty - the beauty of people and animals; the beauty of mountains or sea; the flowing colours of the rising and setting sun; the wonder of the moon and stars against a blue-black sky.

All have one thing in common; at least for a moment the object of our love is of greater importance to us than is our own welfare. Surely the more often we can bring ourselves to surrender to an interest outside our own selves, the better will be the world in which we live.

**J.S.**

"Whatever can he/she see in her/him?" is a question often asked, and rarely satisfactorily answered. Love is an emotion, and defies attempts to reason about it. It may be temporary or permanent, selfish or unselfish, sacred or profane. In fact, one four-letter word can have a variety of meanings.

First, the pleasure of sex. In 'Tom Jones' Fielding describes the love felt for one character by another as akin to the emotions aroused in him by a beefsteak, hardly a spiritual passion. Young people who proclaim "Make love — not war" (Lloyd George did both) seem to think that a universal sexual free-for-all, apart from being a highly

amusing indoor sport, would also dispose of all the aggressions which threaten the peace and harmony of the world. In short, bed for all, regardless of the consequences. And why not, if you can get away with it?

Another, less selfish meaning, relates to the emotional bond between oneself and an ideal or institution. Love of country, school, regiment, family, all have, which the former aspect has not, a sense of belonging, and of unity. In this aspect the individual shares the lives of those he loves, and to that extent loses something of individual freedom in exchange for a share in the individualities of others. The man who, at a certain stage in his career is charged to remember that Nature has implanted in his breast a sacred and indissoluble attachment towards that land from whence he derives his birth and infant nature, is made aware of this aspect of love, and can never revert to complete individual freedom.

A third aspect is married love. Here the bond is the same as before, but is concentrated on one person. The emotional peak of sexual passion, but subdued and channeled; the fires glow, but only occasionally blaze; and the old saying that husband and wife are one person, proves to have more of truth than of fiction about it. Darby and Joan think alike, live alike, even come in time to look alike. Sometimes, especially when they are alone together, they surprise each other by simultaneously uttering the same words. Yet they remain separate individuals, each capable of going about their own business, and returning refreshed to each other for mutual comfort and support.

Lastly, there is the love of God, which passeth all understanding. In this, the bond, if it exists, is absolute, not to be reasoned about, only to be felt. It is a matter of pure feeling, and all attempts at description must fail.

**M.S.**

What is the origin of all life? Can it be anything other than the thing we call 'love' — a compelling urge towards the continuing of a process that knows no beginning and no end?

If we confine our thinking to known facts, even looking back to such early life forms as cells, going through many evolutionary changes until we arrive at Homo Sapiens, we limit our understanding of this continuing process; we inevitably tend then to think of Love as a human attribute, with all its emotional overtones. We then proceed to theorise about it, and subdivide it into categories of different kinds or aspects of love.

Whether or not I am barking up the wrong tree will become, I hope, more apparent when I have heard what other people have to say: but to my way of thinking so far, there is only one kind of love, and that is divine love, the fountain and origin of all life.

There are still people, we know, who worship a God who to others of us seems to be an autocratic old gentleman, who though being sexless himself, created man — and woman — and presented them with problems he himself would never have to face. I don't know any more about God than anybody else, and am certainly not going to make any assertions which I can neither prove nor disprove. But for better or worse, I do find it possible and reasonable to suppose a divinity that shapes our ends.

So what emerges for me is something coming near to a conviction that all love is divine in origin, whether it be a matter of purely animal needs and desires of human or the brute creation. It seems to me to derive from mutual need, on whatever level. Can there be love without life, or life without love? Let us not confuse love with mere affection; but life and love seem to me to be so mutually dependent that there cannot be one without the other.

**M.R.**

It is somewhere recorded that shortly before his death, Beethoven said of the young Schubert, "Franz has my soul".

Beethoven, one of the giants among composers, a difficult man in his human relationships notwithstanding his deep sensitivity, had his occasional lighter moments; while Schubert, whose music bubbled from him like water from an inexhaustible spring, rose now and then to grandeur. Having little or no social pretensions, and ignored by Goethe whose permission he sought to dedicate to him a setting of the 'Erl King', he went on scribbling all his songs on odd scraps of paper as he sat in the beer gardens.

Beethoven and Schubert were probably alike in some lack of physical attraction that might inspire a lasting romantic love, yet both had undoubtedly a strong capacity for loving.

With music as their unbreakable common bond, here was their meeting place, and the love expressed in the words of the dying Beethoven, "Franz has my soul", seems to me to carry the seal of immortality.

**M.R.**

## HOLD THE BABY

She cries - tiny thing. Small bundle.

What hints of later beauty are in her face lost as that face becomes a purple outline to a square bawling mouth?

- Hold the baby.

-

Schoolgirl rushes in, lopsided socks, one oiled by her bicycle.

A bite to eat and not much to drink, while she changes into blue jean uniform for a punt or a party.

No time for little brother. MU - UM you

- Hold the baby.

-

Darling, I'm passing thirty, and if we're going to have a family it should start soon. You'll help a bit I'm sure, as much as you can. But I know who it is will

- Hold the baby.

-

Hi, little man. Six months old and you still haven't much idea about coming over that big bed to Mummy.

Come on, hands out now, cuddle her. How she loves to

- Hold the baby.

At 75 a woman gets pretty tired, and it's hard to see which of the kids is coming in Kids! Ha.

They're both more than 50 now. Blast! Standing up is hell. Who's got my stick?

Oh damn. I've just fallen over it. Two kids! They've been talking - about me I suppose. I wonder who will offer to

- Hold the baby.

-

Ageing Earth, yawning tomb

Takes her own back to her womb.

Enfolded there it feels I may be

Earth, mother, father, daughter, Baby.

**J.F.M.**

From the Drawing room group: - HARVEST REFLECTIONS - ASPECTS OF DEATH

No loss

The seasons fade in turn

and we are certain that next Spring,

Summer, and another fall

will be succeeded by as many more

before the eventual winter folds us in:

Knowing that renewed earth glories

will go on after we are gone.

The older ideas of heaven

and immortality for man

have mostly faded too.

They had their season.

Something is now to do

to realise ourself and selves in being,

to make the outward fading we deplore

into a more seemly spiritual thing;

as essential to being now

as that new difference from consciousness will be -

So our dearest may not then grieve,

but rather sing inside because

our being points all Being's gain.

**H.**

"The world is dying\*", they said.

"Look at the wilting leaves and rotting stagnant mists."

The devil is laughing at your saddened Autumn faces.

He chuckles to see you, feet buried in sodden compost heaps,

Grieving for wizened fruits and faded flowers.

He knows that thought-whirled humans

Freed from the slavery of sun-bound gathering of crops, or

skin-tanned play,

Will, at the first windswept flurry of whirling leaves,

Whisk, as free and as gay,

To new learnings, new loves and opening flowers of further mental quest  
New terms, new books, new clubs and meetings fresh,  
With first frost's vigour tingling in the veins,  
All is excitement, flurry and springing hope.  
The devil laughs for opposites are true.

**M.F.**

Just sit down by the fire, trying to forget winter's cold is coming, and try to forget the cold inside yourself; because when you feel too cold, warmer will be next to come, and you'll be ready to fly again, as Death feelings can't stay longer while Life is knocking in.

**L.M.**

My heart is moved to bless you  
O sturdy sheltering tree,  
Yet, in your gentle grandeur,  
Is it not that you bless me?

**M.B.**

#### THE 'TRANSITIONAL OBJECT'

He wails in the hall,  
He searches in the loo,  
Where can it be?  
Nothing else will do.  
A small grubby boy  
With a tear-stained face  
Is searching for 'it'  
All over the place.  
At last 'it' is found  
And grasped with great pleasure,  
Such a grimy piece of rag,  
Can this be his treasure?

(Dr. D. Winnicott uses the term 'transitional object' in describing child development)

Evil is a repeated choosing of things perishable, in conscious preference of those over things enduring. Morbidity — the choosing to dwell on and with things as dead or dying, because dead or dying - is evil for that reason.

The tribute of tears that we pay to recollection of what was lively in the dead, or lively in our feelings on their dying, is not morbid. Lively emotions are, though in themselves a rather neutral human factor: they may be in the service of good in us, or in the service of evil, or variably both.

The mental problems press on us as we try to choose the less and less perishable: so much, it seems, is perishable at length — in the long view natural to our minds - that the fear of finding nothing enduring grows. We fall into evil abbreviations of thought, in that fear. I take the identification of ceaseless change as the only enduring factor of the universe to be such an evil short-falling, a giving-up before the end.

**A.C.**

I have only recently realised that for more than a couple of decades I had been drifting: a comfortable life-style, a fairly satisfying job, a day-to-day life shaped by and conforming to the influences of family, friends, and colleagues; in short, a chip in the stream.

Then I realised that with retirement I was in an even greater danger:— being relegated to a stagnant backwater endlessly circling until, waterlogged, I sank from sight.

How can I take advantage of my change of circumstances? Take charge again of my own life?

**C.C.**

#### AN EARLY RECOLLECTION OF A DYING

A squashed hedgehog found in the gutter of a London street, and carefully scooped into a paper bag. Admired for my bravery by my friends, applauded by the teacher for providing such an interesting object for the nature table, I enjoyed the approval but the dead animal meant nothing to me.

My aunt was dying in a London hospital. A hushed aura surrounded her image - voices lowered whenever her name was mentioned. I was taken to visit her, and felt surprise and guilt at not being able to detect what it was that was so awful. The hospital room was small and green-painted and horrid. The bed was surrounded by flowers, and on the side was an early-morning teamaker, given by colleagues, that was said to give her so much pleasure in her last weeks. All this was odd, but the smile was the same. I did not understand.

**M.F.**

#### DANDELION IN AUTUMN HEDGEROW

Bareheaded now you stand  
Where but yesterday fine silvered threads  
Followed upon gold petalled splendour  
Winging bright major chords ascending  
Weightless, into heaven's blue.  
Today, in all humility  
I salute you.

**M.R.**

The telephone rang. I answered it. It was the hospital; they said that my mother had died during the night — peacefully but not unexpectedly.

I went into the sun-room, where my father was sitting alone, staring into the distance. I sat down opposite him but said nothing. Finally he said, "Was that your mother?" I couldn't reply, but reached out to take his hand, a rare gesture. He understood. It was the first time I ever saw tears run down his cheeks. We continued sitting, saying nothing, each alone with his thoughts.

**C.C.**

Birth and death were an almost every day event on the farm. Chicken, lamb, and calves were regularly killed for the family table. A valuable dog died of milk fever after days of round-the-clock vigil. A colt died mysteriously and suddenly. Unwanted kittens were drowned matter-of-factly. Matter-of-fact was the key word for all farm deaths. It was the same when we heard that my classmate Willie Alford had been killed in a fall in his father's barn. I looked at Willie in his coffin, listening to the elders' remarks about how natural he looked. He didn't look natural to me, white and rather puffy. I thought about what a smooth ball player he was, how we would miss him on our team. Why couldn't it have been someone else, who wasn't such a good player?

**C.C.**

#### WHY WAIT FOR SPRING?

Well, it might be nipped in the bud, 'it' being you and your thoughts, and all you hope for.

On the other hand, Dutch bulb growers know how to deceive their proteges into flowering in time for Christmas. That, in terms of you, would mean that you would be confined to the house for the winter months - a hothouse plant in other words. It must really be quite a joy to be like the snowdrop or the aconite or the winter jasmine, to appear cool and clear and joyous, no matter how frosty the weather.

Besides, I saw an advertisement in the 'Times' offering a Gent's Black Mink coat worth £1,500, for a mere £1,000, so there can be really no need to wait for Spring. I am sure a mink coat and hat would keep one's thoughts alive and warm any time of the year.

**M.M.**

I seem to have lost all inspiration. I don't feel I can say what I want to say in the right spirit, i.e. the appropriate spirit.

Why?

Am I a pessimist? No.

Am I an optimist? Not an immediate one, but I am an optimist

in the long run.

But why can't I put down all the things I think of value? Perhaps it is because my mind, (and therefore I) am obsessed with little things. And that points to what I must do.

**D.G.**

Why wait for Spring?  
Tree-bud in axil spins  
A folded magic now  
anchored in wood.  
The spent declines,  
the fresh is burgeoning  
among moulds and broken webs  
of August ruin.  
March leaf-flutter  
bare to blast  
may all be lost  
but for working sleep  
between grey fading,  
green awakening.  
Mid-season falters.  
As we grow older  
we glean and game  
against approaching cold;  
knowing our story  
to be a sentient thing  
entreating to be told.  
Why wait for Spring?

H

Any Canadian farm boy knows there are good reasons to wait for Spring. Poor drainage, the rigours of our winter, the dangers of a January thaw and subsequent freeze, make it risky to plant in the autumn, or to count on the survival of perennial crops.

What are the parallel risks in undertaking new human enterprises? Poor planning, fuzzy objectives; not considering all the risks.

What am I going to do with my life? The eternal question. The odds are that I will have at least a score of years — a full generation - plenty of time, but none to waste. Today is the first day of the rest of my life.

C.C.