

MILLIONS WOULDN'T

I sense you're sad when I say, 'Let's be friends,
Not more'; as I am sad, when you agree;
Yet both relieved also, imagining
Now we needn't hide our faults, nor ends
Plot. A prospect changed in seconds! And we
Need not test now the merest brush of lips,
The long love-looks, smiles, touching of fingertips,
The whole, riveting, night-enlarging thing.
Just friends. Ah absolutely. This is quite
Beyond a question now. So buried deep
At last, those old sweet-devious plotters, and
Near-shut what we can barely understand,
That sea-disclosing door-ajar of 'might'.
But ah, heaven help us if we peep.

THE DRUNKEN LYRICIST

We met that grey dull evening on the east shore.
Roaring round the bend he came, flat out
at fifteen miles an hour, and stopped. We had to shout
till he turned off his engine. *It's going to pour
it looks like:me. Oa, I'm haardly concerned
thee night wi weather, man!* he said, flat cap askew.
Gap-toothed smile. Torched cheeks. Eyes' Atlantic blue.
Hiv you seen any? Weemun? Whisky burned
its golden road in him, and he would search.
's that wun, man? – the shore's dark speck.
Not waiting a reply, through the bright wreck
of that grey evening, he roared off, with a lurch.
His tractor almost reared on its back tyres.
Fifteen miles an hour flat out, parched by amber fires.

Orkney

FROM: CUNNINGHAMHEAD SONNETS

I

Thoughts on Passing a Farm at Night

A decade gone from Middleton, Davie Smith.
Folk I don't know live there. In winter nights,
Passing, I see them in the kitchen light's
Homeliness — and Davie steps from his small myth
Large into that room. I ate in there, days he'd lie
Napping, in the break from thinning neeps with hoes
Or hands, moving like a tide, up, down, field rows.
The face-spread *Herald* fluttered with his each sigh.

*D'ye ken the deefrence, Jimmuck, atween
A bull an' a coo? And while Jimmuck quailed,
Red in his wee free childhood, before he failed:
A bull has a ring in its nose.*

He was 'green'
Although not after a fashion. As well he's dead,
And commuters live near his sold fields instead.

GOLDFINCH IN SPRING

That finch which sings above my head,
Last year's speckled egg, is now
A partner in some nest instead,
That finch which sings above my head,
Buff-gold dandy masked with red,
And hen on eggs upon some swaying bough
That finch which sings. Above my head
Last year's speckled egg is now.

THE SHELL HOUSE

When I was younger and the world wide, I sought
The fabulous bird that was over each next skyline;
Here, there, near, far, for twenty empty years
Ignored each simple linnet's nest to roam
Valley and hilltop on a timeless quest;
And came at last to a linnet's clutch,
Five eggs speckled in the lined cup,
And held one up to space; admitting the light,
Frail, the white shell glowed, vessel for earthly gold;
And so I found the first, last, place,
And distant-travelled rays their dazzling home.