

IN DISGUISE

(Collected Poems)



JOHN O'LOUGHLIN

IN DISGUISE

The Collected Verse (rhymed and free) of
JOHN O'LOUGHLIN
Of Centretruths Digital Media

CDM Poetry

This edition of *In Disguise* first published 2012 and
republished (with revisions) 2022 by Centretruths Digital
Media

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ISBN: 978-1-4466-9229-5

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BIOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTE

PREFACE

Drawn from several prior publications, this definitive collection of my rhymed and free verse poetry, to distinguish it from my 'abstract' poetry and/or poetic 'word art', dates from the early 1970s and reveals the slow growth out of a conventionally youthful romanticism of a philosophical-cum-ideological approach to poetry which became characteristic of all my literary work in the 1980s, as though transitional to an uninhibitedly philosophical phase of writings to-come, which would leave even philosophical literature, including short prose, severely in the lurch.

Therefore there is a sense in which the better or more evolved of these poems strain towards philosophy as though towards my true destiny in writing, while yet retaining certain poetic values and tendencies which I was not, at the time, in a position to wholeheartedly reject from a morally or culturally superior vantage-point, as from the standpoint of one who had 'seen through' poetry and its 'right' to certain limitations.

In retrospect, I find many of these poems ideologically and intellectually specious or, at the very least, suspect; but I would not have got beyond this stage of my literary evolution without having gone through it in the first place, and some of them, I have to admit, still impress me with their boldness, imaginative flair, spiritual insightfulness, and sheer poetic insolence. They may not be the wings upon which I have since grown accustomed to flying, but they at least enabled me to get off the ground and intimate of places and states of *being* which no purely mundane or overly romantic approach to poetry would even envisage, never mind set out for in the first place!

In that respect, these poems are an integral part of a steady climb to rarer and finer latitudes of the mind and should therefore be

read as a means to a higher end, rather than as a final statement on any of the subjects to which they purport to demonstrate some special knowledge. Yes, I took poetry pretty seriously in the early 1970s and then again, after the best part of a decade, in the early-to-mid '80s, but had that not been the case the results would hardly have been so impressive or seemingly conclusive.

John O'Loughlin, London 2007 (Revised 2022)

GOD'S SACRIFICE

Her Bible was a crown of thorns,
Her prayer debarred a mate,
She never saw the beast with horns
Who piped away her fate.

Her beauty blossomed like a tree
Whose fruit for man was ripe,
But, though she hankered after me,
She couldn't hear him pipe.

The Cross she bore was never raised,
The flesh was never torn,
And though of God she always praised,
Proud Pan would tap a horn.

He tapped the louder when, one day,
A lady's man passed near.
Oh God, with beauty plucked away,
No favours did she hear!

Instead she heard the pipes of Pan,
And though she blocked her ears
She knew her lover was no man,
The piper kissed her tears.

SONG OF THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER

My father is a vicar,
A vicar's toast is he.
He chain-smokes like a trooper,
But gives his love to me.

With Sunday worship on his plate,
A prayer book on the stand,
He staggers to the pulpit
On legs that need a hand.

Then down behind the lectern,
To help his sermon soar,
He tucks away the whisky
That keeps his throat from sore,

As "Praise the Lord for His good gifts
To mortals here below,"
Booms forth upon those ruddy lips
Where cherished blessings glow!

UNREQUITED LOVE

If I were to run to the ends of the earth,
Escape the place where love was blind,
An image of you would stay in my mind,
Regret would make war on mirth.

If I were to laugh until, on bended knee,
I cut my ears and let them bleed
Or throw to the winds all the things I need,
You'd still be around to haunt me.

If I, on request, were to slave for gold,
Recapture health in wine and bowl,
Then sell for a profit my body and soul,
Your face would stay young while mine grows old.

THE LOVERS' DREAM

Let us go to peaceful places
Far away from city dope,
Let us seek the distant faces,
Lands and climes that feed our hope.

Discontent contracts our jaws
As the day fades into night.
Where will we be when its laws
Change from darkness into light?

What respect is good advice
If boredom be the judge?
What sane man would sacrifice
His freedom for a grudge?

If in time we are together,
Travelling through the day,
If in time we share each other,
Love will find a way.

SOLICITATION

Give back, my love, that fleshy bowl
That I may fill it up
With lovers' dreams, fresh from the soul,
And drink its body wine.
Do not withhold, sweet sister, please,
I grant that you are fine.
When we have drunk and rest at ease
We shall refill the cup.

Tomorrow brings another rage,
Another lonely hell
Whose sadness you must camouflage
With educated skill,
Or act the part of happiness,
Who laughs and drinks her fill,
Not be derided by the stress
Of what your senses tell.

The gift of love cannot be bought
With worldly goods alone.
The food of love cannot be sought
By dreaming overmuch.
In short, love is a sacred thing,
As pure as sight or touch,
And when it comes, sweet sister, sing
Its praises in the bone.

A VINDICATION

In you perfection has its place
Among the treasures of your worth
Where, smiling, you alone could trace
Exquisite thoughts back to their birth,
And cast a glance on mirrored face
Reflecting beauty, joy, and mirth.

You spoke of places far away
Where temples "range in lunacy",
And though 'twould be unwise to say
That you had been their ecstasy,
That spirits spread along the way
Had praised your feet's supremacy,

I can't help feeling that your grace
Improves each building where you tread,
And that, if beauty shows its face
When fastened to your lovely head,
The only sense these lines can trace
Is one that leads to love instead.

REGRET

As night deports the uncouth day's satire
And sets a spark of romance to my breast,
An image of the one whom I think best
Begins to kindle flames of my desire.

Her voice is sweeter than the sweetest lyre,
No music soothes the heart as well as she,
No potion grants a better fantasy
Than she who stirs my heart into a fire.

And yet 'tis only dream! I must be fool
To waste away in selfish thought. What tear
Could bring us close again, what tool
Could carve her shape and make appear
That priceless smile, what wish could give it breath,
And die each night a sweeter death?

TO A PAINTING

If miracles were my domain,
Dear lady of the Plastic Muse,
Your charms would know still better use,
They wouldn't stay long *there* in vain!

When painting gave you form, some years
Ago, it framed your soul in strife.
I only wish it'd given you life,
That sound could reach inside your ears.

For who would think that blindness hides
Behind those brilliant eyes, that sight,
In fact, was never there, when tides
Of hope flow-in upon my mind ...
To ebb as doubt that I could find
A beauty such as yours tonight?

DESIRE

Sky as far as the eye can see,
For which, says he, some poetry,
A rhyme, perhaps, to mystery,
Like birds fly free of misery.

It seems a shame though, clouding sky
With thoughts of birds who glide and fly,
With words on which to hang a lie ...