The Poetry of John Gray
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Uncollected Later Poems
The Gold of Autumn  *

The gold of autumn falls to green
In sheltered depths from frost immune.
Infinity beyond a screen:
And all the ground with glory strewn.
Emerge in view of hedges, grass,
By this most tortuous of roads
And undulate. Behold the mass
Of trees the near horizon loads.

A sky as by Bellini seen,
Where blues to silvery streaks attune;
(To tranquillize a haggard scene
Of rock by air and earthquake hewn)
And pale on this striated face
Dramatic gestures, trailing shrouds;
And, in another plane and place,
Snail-shaped and clinker-coloured clouds.

Death (from Bólu Hjálmur)  *

Friends no more their weapons wield;
Cruel death their fate hath sealed;
I shall follow from the field
With cloven helm and riven shield,
With tattered mail and broken sword
and wounds unhealed.

Hymn to the Child Jesus  *

Thou, the Father's Splendour,
Uncreated Morn,
Small and soft and tender,
Deignest to be born,
Though the garb of meekness
Wrap thy glory now,
All who scorn Thy weakness
Yet to Thee shall bow.
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Sweeter than Thy mother,
Folded to her breast,
Thou, and not another
Sweetest art and best.
Fairer than creation,
Brighter than the sun,
Praise and adulation,
Mary's little one.

God of endless praises
Let the earth adore;
Heaven for ever raises
Hymns unheard before;
While in heaven before Thee
Mighty seraphs fall,
Jesus, I adore Thee,
Thee, my God, my all.

Nature-Morte *

Le lèvre creuse et sphéroïde de l'air avide
Suce nos âcres essences; dessèche et vide
De ses teintes virides la matière exquise
D'une feuille qui s'attenu et se brise.
Bulbes de lumière à queues tordues,
L'imagier nous fait gisser sur un plateau nu,
Qu'agree l'étoffe rayée qu'il a tendue dessous
Pour faire plaisir à lui-même, que sachons-nous?
Qui nous a crées, crois-tu, sœur, oignonne,
Dont nos joués nacrées nous-mêmes étonnent?
C'est un chrétien des lointaines îles de la Gaule
Qu'une fois voyait Gautier le plaid sur l'épaule.

Baby Clothes *

These did His Mother make
To shield Him from the cold;
That He might shelter take
In their soft fold.
Ah, happy swaddling clothes
That gave my God repose!
Ils Ont Huertés Les Portes D'Or
of Henri de Régnier  *

They have struck on the doors of gold
with the hefts of their rugged swords;
and their salt lips are cold
from the mists which hang in the fjords.

Like kings they have entered again
the bourg where torches flare;
the charger steps high, and his mane
flies back like the mad sea's hair.

They are bidden to notable feasts
in gardens, on terraces, spread
with sapphire and amethyst
as these lie on the ocean bed.

So drunk with wine of the years,
so dazzled with jewels and rings,
so deafened with praise, in their ears
the hammering ocean rings.

Holy Communion  *

Do not fear, the angel said;
God's eternal son
Comes to make thy breast His bed,
And thy heart His throne.

When He laid His little head
On His Mother's breast,
How her heart was comforted,
All her fears at rest.

If the flowers had all been bells
Ringing peals of joy,
She could think of nothing else
But her baby boy.

Little Jesus says to me:
Do not be afraid,
Though the earth and sky and sea
All by me were made.
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I was small on Mary's knee
Just because of you;
I love you more than she loved Me,
If you only knew.