

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Stevie Smith**  
**- poems -**

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# Stevie Smith(20 September 1902 – 7 March 1971)

Florence Margaret Smith was born on September 20, 1902 in Hull, England. Her father left the family to join the North Sea Patrol when she was just a young girl. She moved at the age of three to Palmers Green where she attended the North London Collegiate School. While still only a teenager her mother died and she and her sister went to live with their spinster aunt. The aunt became an important figure in her life, affectionately known as "The Lion".

After high school she attended North London Collegiate School for Girls. She began as a secretary with the magazine publisher George Newnes and went on to be the private secretary to Sir Nevill Pearson and Sir Frank Newnes. She began writing poetry in her twenties while working at George Newnes. Her first book, *Novel on Yellow Paper*, was published in 1936 and drew heavily on her own life experience, examining the unrest in England during World War I. Her first collection of verse, *A Good Time Was Had By All* (1937), also contained rough sketches or doodles, which became characteristic of her work. These drawings have both a feeling of caprice and doom, and the poetry in the collection is stylistically typical of Smith as it conveys serious themes in a nursery rhyme structure.

While Smith's volatile attachment to the Church of England is evident in her poetry, death, her "gentle friend," is perhaps her most popular subject. Much of her inspiration came from theology and the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. She enjoyed reading Tennyson and Browning and read few contemporary poets in an attempt to keep her voice original and pure. Her style is unique in its combination of seemingly prosaic statements, variety of voices, playful meter, and deep sense of irony. Smith was officially recognized with the Chomondeley Award for Poetry in 1966 and the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1969. Smith died of a brain tumor in 1971.

# Alone In The Woods

Alone in the woods I felt  
The bitter hostility of the sky and the trees  
Nature has taught her creatures to hate  
Man that fusses and fumes  
Unquiet man  
As the sap rises in the trees  
As the sap paints the trees a violent green  
So rises the wrath of Nature's creatures  
At man  
So paints the face of Nature a violent green.  
Nature is sick at man  
Sick at his fuss and fume  
Sick at his agonies  
Sick at his gaudy mind  
That drives his body  
Ever more quickly  
More and more  
In the wrong direction.

Stevie Smith

# Autumn

He told his life story to Mrs. Courtly  
Who was a widow. 'Let us get married shortly',  
He said. 'I am no longer passionate,  
But we can have some conversation before it is too late.'

Stevie Smith

# Away, Melancholy

Away, melancholy,  
Away with it, let it go.

Are not the trees green,  
The earth as green?  
Does not the wind blow,  
Fire leap and the rivers flow?  
Away melancholy.

The ant is busy  
He carrieth his meat,  
All things hurry  
To be eaten or eat.  
Away, melancholy.

Man, too, hurries,  
Eats, couples, buries,  
He is an animal also  
With a hey ho melancholy,  
Away with it, let it go.

Man of all creatures  
Is superlative  
(Away melancholy)  
He of all creatures alone  
Raiseth a stone  
(Away melancholy)  
Into the stone, the god  
Pours what he knows of good  
Calling, good, God.  
Away melancholy, let it go.

Speak not to me of tears,  
Tyranny, pox, wars,  
Saying, Can God  
Stone of man's thoughts, be good?  
Say rather it is enough  
That the stuffed  
Stone of man's good, growing,

By man's called God.  
Away, melancholy, let it go.

Man aspires  
To good,  
To love  
Sighs;

Beaten, corrupted, dying  
In his own blood lying  
Yet heaves up an eye above  
Cries, Love, love.  
It is his virtue needs explaining,  
Not his failing.

Away, melancholy,  
Away with it, let it go

Stevie Smith

# Bag-Snatching In Dublin

Sisely

Walked so nicely

With footsteps so discreet

To see her pass

You'd never guess

She walked upon the street.

Down where the Liffey waters' turgid flood

Churns up to greet the ocean-driven mud,

A bruiser in fix

Murdered her for 6/6.

Stevie Smith

# Conviction (I)

Christ died for God and me  
Upon the crucifixion tree  
For God a spoken Word  
For me a Sword  
For God a hymn of praise  
For me eternal days  
For God an explanation  
For me salvation.

Stevie Smith



## Conviction (Ii)

I walked abroad in Easter Park,  
I heard the wild dog's distant bark,  
I knew my Lord was risen again, -  
Wild dog, wild dog, you bark in vain.

Stevie Smith

## Conviction (Iii)

The shadow was so black,  
I thought it was a cat,  
But once in to it  
I knew it  
No more black  
Than a shadow's back.

Illusion is a freak  
Of mind;  
The cat's to seek.

Stevie Smith

## Conviction (Iv)

I like to get off with people,  
I like to lie in their arms  
I like to be held and lightly kissed,  
Safe from all alarms.

I like to laugh and be happy  
With a beautiful kiss,  
I tell you, in all the world  
There is no bliss like this.

Stevie Smith

# Deeply Morbid

Deeply morbid deeply morbid was the girl who typed the letters  
Always out of office hours running with her social betters  
But when daylight and the darkness of the office closed about her  
Not for this ah not for this her office colleagues came to doubt her  
It was that look within her eye  
Why did it always seem to say goodbye?

Joan her name was and at lunchtime  
Solitary solitary  
She would go and watch the pictures In the National Gallery  
All alone all alone  
This time with no friend beside her  
She would go and watch the pictures  
All alone.

Will she leave her office colleagues  
Will she leave her evening pleasures  
Toil within a friendly bureau  
Running later in her leisure?  
All alone all alone  
Before the pictures she seemed turned to stone.

Close upon the Turner pictures  
Closer than a thought may go  
Hangs her eye and all the colours  
Leap into a special glow  
All for her, all alone  
All for her, all for Joan.

First the canvas where the ocean  
Like a mighty animal  
With a wicked motion  
Leaps for sailors' funeral

Holds her painting. Oh the creature  
Oh the wicked virile thing  
With its skin of fleck and shadow  
Stretching tightening over him.  
Wild yet captured wild yet captured

By the painter, Joan is quite enraptured.

Now she edges from the canvas  
To another loved more dearly  
Where the awful light of purest  
Sunshine falls across the spray,  
There the burning coasts of fancy  
Open to her pleasure lay.  
All alone all alone  
Come away come away  
All alone.

Lady Mary, Lady Kitty  
The Honourable Featherstonehaugh  
Polly Tommy from the office  
Which of these shall hold her now?  
Come away come away  
All alone.

The spray reached out and sucked her in  
It was hardly a noticed thing  
That Joan was there and is not now  
(Oh go and tell young Featherstonehaugh)  
Gone away, gone away  
All alone.

She stood up straight  
The sun fell down  
There was no more of London Town  
She went upon the painted shore  
And there she walks for ever more  
Happy quite  
Beaming bright  
In a happy happy light  
All alone.

They say she was a morbid girl, no doubt of it  
And what befell her clearly grew out of it  
But I say she's a lucky one  
To walk for ever in that sun  
And as I bless sweet Turner's name  
I wish that I could do the same.

Stevie Smith

## Do Not!

Do not despair of man, and do not scold him,  
Who are you that you should so lightly hold him?  
Are you not also a man, and in your heart  
Are there not warlike thoughts and fear and smart?  
Are you not also afraid and in fear cruel,  
Do you not think of yourself as usual,  
Faint for ambition, desire to be loved,  
Prick at a virtuous thought by beauty moved?  
You love your wife, you hold your children dear,  
Then say not that Man is vile, but say they are.  
But they are not. So is your judgement shown  
Presumptuous, false, quite vain, merely your own  
Sadness for failed ambition set outside,  
Made a philosophy of, prinked, beautified  
In noble dress and into the world sent out  
To run with the ill it most pretends to rout.  
Oh know your own heart, that heart's not wholly evil,  
And from the particular judge the general,  
If judge you must, but with compassion see life,  
Or else, of yourself despairing, flee strife.

Stevie Smith

# Drugs Made Pauline Vague

Drugs made Pauline vague.  
She sat one day at the breakfast table  
Fingering in a baffled way  
The fronds of the maidenhair plant.

Was it the salt you were looking for dear?  
said Dulcie, exchanging a glance with the Brigadier.

Chuff chuff Pauline what's the matter?  
Said the Brigadier to his wife  
Who did not even notice  
What a handsome couple they made.

Stevie Smith



# Exeat

I remember the Roman Emperor, one of the cruellest of them,  
Who used to visit for pleasure his poor prisoners cramped in dungeons,  
So then they would beg him for death, and then he would say:  
Oh no, oh no, we are not yet friends enough.  
He meant they were not yet friends enough for him to give them death.  
So I fancy my Muse says, when I wish to die:  
Oh no, Oh no, we are not yet friends enough,

And Virtue also says:  
We are not yet friends enough.

How can a poet commit suicide  
When he is still not listening properly to his Muse,  
Or a lover of Virtue when  
He is always putting her off until tomorrow?

Yet a time may come when a poet or any person  
Having a long life behind him, pleasure and sorrow,  
But feeble now and expensive to his country  
And on the point of no longer being able to make a decision  
May fancy Life comes to him with love and says:  
We are friends enough now for me to give you death;  
Then he may commit suicide, then  
He may go.

Stevie Smith

# Freddy

Nobody knows what I feel about Freddy  
I cannot make anyone understand  
I love him sub specie aeternitatis  
I love him out of hand.  
I don't love him so much in the restaurants that's a fact  
To get him hobnob with my old pub chums needs too much tact  
He don't love them and they don't love him  
In the pub lub lights they say Freddy very dim.  
But get him alone on the open saltings  
Where the sea licks up to the fen  
He is his and my own heart's best  
World without end ahem.  
People who say we ought to get married ought to get  
smacked:  
Why should we do it when we can't afford it and have  
ourselves whacked?  
Thank you kind friends and relations thank you,  
We do very well as we do.  
Oh what do I care for the pub lub lights  
And the friends I love so well-  
There's more in the way I feel about Freddy  
Than a friend can tell.  
But all the same I don't care much for his meelyoo I mean  
I don't anheimate mich in the ha-ha well-off suburban scene  
Where men are few and hearts go tumptytum  
In the tennis club lub lights poet very dumb.  
But there never was a boy like Freddy  
For a haystack's ivory tower of bliss  
Where speaking sub specie humanitatis  
Freddy and me can kiss.  
Exhiled from his meelyoo  
Exhiled from mine  
There's all Tom Tiddler's time pocket  
For his love and mine.

Stevie Smith

# Happiness

Happiness is silent, or speaks equivocally for friends,  
Grief is explicit and her song never ends,  
Happiness is like England, and will not state a case,  
Grief, like Guilt, rushes in and talks apace.

Stevie Smith

# I Do Not Speak

I do not ask for mercy for understanding for peace  
And in these heavy days I do not ask for release  
I do not ask that suffering shall cease.

I do not pray to God to let me die  
To give an ear attentive to my cry  
To pause in his marching and not hurry by.

I do not ask for anything I do not speak  
I do not question and I do not seek  
I used to in the day when I was weak.

Now I am strong and lapped in sorrow  
As in a coat of magic mail and borrow  
From Time today and care not for tomorrow.

Stevie Smith

# I Remember

It was my bridal night I remember,  
An old man of seventy-three  
I lay with my young bride in my arms,  
A girl with t.b.  
It was wartime, and overhead  
The Germans were making a particularly heavy raid on Hampstead.  
Harry, do they ever collide?  
I do not think it has ever happened,  
Oh my bride, my bride.

Stevie Smith

# In My Dreams

In my dreams I am always saying goodbye and riding away,  
Whither and why I know not nor do I care.  
And the parting is sweet and the parting over is sweeter,  
And sweetest of all is the night and the rushing air.

In my dreams they are always waving their hands and saying goodbye,  
And they give me the stirrup cup and I smile as I drink,  
I am glad the journey is set, I am glad I am going,  
I am glad, I am glad, that my friends don't know what I think.

Stevie Smith

# In The Night

I longed for companionship rather,  
But my companions I always wished farther.  
And now in the desolate night  
I think only of the people i should like to bite.

Stevie Smith

# Infelice

Walking swiftly with a dreadful duchess,  
He smiled too briefly, his face was pale as sand,  
He jumped into a taxi when he saw me coming,  
Leaving me alone with a private meaning,  
He loves me so much, my heart is singing.  
Later at the Club when I rang him in the evening  
They said: Sir Rat is dining, is dining, is dining,  
No madam, he left no message, ah how his silence speaks,  
He loves me too much for words, my heart is singing.  
The Pullman seats are here, the tickets for Paris, I am waiting,  
Presently the telephone rings, it is his valet speaking,  
Sir Rat is called away, to Scotland, his constituents,  
(Ah the dreadful duchess, but he loves me best)  
Best pleasure to the last, my heart is singing,  
One night he came, it was four in the morning,  
Walking slowly upstairs, he stands beside my bed,  
Dear darling, lie beside me, it is too cold to stand speaking,  
He lies down beside me, his face is like the sand,  
He is in a sleep of love, my heart is singing.  
Sleeping softly softly, in the morning I must wake him,  
And waking he murmurs, I only came to sleep.  
The words are so sweetly cruel, how deeply he loves me,  
I say them to myself alone, my heart is singing.  
Now the sunshine strengthens, it is ten in the morning,  
He is so timid in love, he only needs to know,  
He is my little child, how can he come if I do not call him,  
I will write and tell him everything, I take the pen and write:  
I love you so much, my heart is singing.

Stevie Smith



# Mother, Among The Dustbins

Mother, among the dustbins and the manure  
I feel the measure of my humanity, an allure  
As of the presence of God, I am sure

In the dustbins, in the manure, in the cat at play,  
Is the presence of God, in a sure way  
He moves there. Mother, what do you say?

I too have felt the presence of God in the broom  
I hold, in the cobwebs in the room,  
But most of all in the silence of the tomb.

Ah! but that thought that informs the hope of our kind  
Is but an empty thing, what lies behind? --  
Naught but the vanity of a protesting mind

That would not die. This is the thought that bounces  
Within a conceited head and trounces  
Inquiry. Man is most frivolous when he pronounces.

Well Mother, I shall continue to think as I do,  
And I think you would be wise to do so too,  
Can you question the folly of man in the creation of God?  
Who are you?

Stevie Smith

# My Heart Goes Out

My heart goes out to my Creator in love  
Who gave me Death, as end and remedy.  
All living creatures come to quiet Death  
For him to eat up their activity  
And give them nothing, which is what they want although  
When they are living they do not think so.

Stevie Smith

# My Heart Was Full

My heart was full of softening showers,  
I used to swing like this for hours,  
I did not care for war or death,  
I was glad to draw my breath.

Stevie Smith

# My Soul

In the flame of the flickering fire  
The sins of my soul are few  
And the thoughts in my head are the thoughts of a bed  
With a solitary view.  
But the eye of eternal consciousness  
Must blink as a bat blinks bright  
Or ever the thoughts in my head be stilled  
On the brink of eternal night.

Oh feed to the golden fish his egg  
Where he floats in his captive bowl,  
To the cat his kind from the womb born blind,  
And to the Lord my soul.

Stevie Smith

# Never Again

Never again will I weep  
And wring my hands  
And beat my head against the wall  
Because  
Me nolentem fata trahunt  
But  
When I have had enough  
I will arise  
And go unto my Father  
And I will say to Him:  
Father, I have had enough.

Stevie Smith

# Nor We Of Her To Him

He said no word of her to us  
Nor we of her to him,  
But oh it saddened us to see  
How wan he grew and thin.  
We said: she eats him day and night  
And draws the blood from him,  
We did not know but said we thought  
This was why he grew thin.

One day we called and rang the bell,  
No answer came within,  
We said: She must have took him off  
To the forest old and grim,  
It has fell out, we said, that she  
Eats him in forest grim,  
And how can we help him being eaten  
Up in forests grim?

It is a restless time we spend,  
We have no help from him,  
We walk about and go to bed,  
It is no help to him.  
Sometimes we shake our heads and say  
It might have better been  
If he had spoke of us to her  
Or we of her to him.  
Which makes us feel helpful, until  
The silence comes again.

Stevie Smith

# Not Waving But Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning:  
I was much further out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking  
And now he's dead  
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,  
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning)  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning.

Stevie Smith

# Our Bog Is Dood

Our Bog is dood, our Bog is dood,  
They lisped in accents mild,  
But when I asked them to explain  
They grew a little wild.  
How do you know your Bog is dood  
My darling little child?  
We know because we wish it so  
That is enough, they cried,  
And straight within each infant eye  
Stood up the flame of pride,  
And if you do not think it so  
You shall be crucified.  
Then tell me, darling little ones,  
What's dood, suppose Bog is?  
Just what we think, the answer came,  
Just what we think it is.  
They bowed their heads. Our Bog is ours  
And we are wholly his.  
But when they raised them up again  
They had forgotten me  
Each one upon each other glared  
In pride and misery  
For what was dood, and what their Bog  
They never could agree.  
Oh sweet it was to leave them then,  
And sweeter not to see,  
And sweetest of all to walk alone  
Beside the encroaching sea,  
The sea that soon should drown them all,  
That never yet drowned me.

Stevie Smith



## Pad, Pad

I always remember your beautiful flowers  
And the beautiful kimono you wore  
When you sat on the couch  
With that tigerish crouch  
And told me you loved me no more.

What I cannot remember is how I felt when you were unkind  
All I know is, if you were unkind now I should not mind.  
Ah me, the power to feel exaggerated, angry and sad  
The years have taken from me. Softly I go now, pad pad.

Stevie Smith

# Pretty

Why is the word pretty so underrated?  
In November the leaf is pretty when it falls.  
The stream grows deep in the woods after rain.  
And in the pretty pool the pike stalks.

He stalks his prey, and this is pretty too,  
The prey escapes with an underwater flash.  
But not for long, the great has him now.  
The pike is a fish who always has his prey

And this is pretty. The water rat is pretty.  
His paws are not webbed; he cannot shut his nostrils  
As the otter can and the beaver; he is torn between  
The land water. Not 'torn he does not mind.

The owl hunts in the evening, and it is pretty.  
The lake water below him rustles with ice.  
There is frost coming from the ground, in the air mist.  
All this is pretty; it could not be prettier.

Yes, it could always be prettier, the eye abashes.  
It is becoming an eye that cannot see enough,  
Out of the wood the eye climbs. This is prettier.  
A field in the evening, tilting up.

The field tilts to the sky. Though it is late,  
The sky is lighter than the hill field.  
All this looks easy, but really, it is extraordinary.  
Well, it is extraordinary to be so pretty.

And it is careless, and that is always pretty.  
This field, this owl, this pike, this pool are careless.  
As Nature is always careless and indifferent.  
Who sees, who steps, means nothing, and this is pretty.

So a person can come along like a thief-pretty!  
Stealing a look, pinching the sound and feel,  
Lick the icicle broken from the bank,  
And still say nothing at all, only cry pretty.

Cry pretty, pretty, pretty, and you'll be able  
Very soon not even to cry pretty.  
And so to be delivered entirely from humanity.  
This is prettiest of all, it is very pretty.

Stevie Smith

# Sunt Leones

The lions who ate the Christians on the sands of the arena  
By indulging native appetites played was now been seen a  
Not entirely negligible part  
In consolidating at the very start  
The position of the Early Christian Church.  
Initiatory rights are always bloody  
In the lions, it appears  
From contemporary art, made a study  
Of dyeing Coliseum sands a ruddy  
Liturgically sacrificial hue  
And if the Christians felt a little blue-  
Will people being eaten often do.  
Theirs was the death, and there's was a crown undying,  
A state of things which must be satisfying.  
My point which up to this has been obscured  
Is that it was the lions who procured  
By chewing up blood gristle flesh and bone  
The martyrdoms on which the church has grown.  
I only write this poem because I thought it rather looked  
As if the part the lions played was being overlooked.  
By lions' jaws great benefits and blessings were begotten  
And so our debt to Lionhood must never be forgotten.

Stevie Smith

# Tender Only To One

Tender only to one  
Tender and true  
The petals swing  
To my fingering  
Is it you, or you, or you?

Tender only to one  
I do not know his name  
And the friends who fall  
To the petals' call  
May think my love to blame.

Tender only to one  
This petal holds a clue  
The face it shows  
But too well knows  
Who I am tender to.

Tender only to one,  
Last petal's latest breath  
Cries out aloud  
From the icy shroud  
His name, his name is Death.

Stevie Smith

# Tenuous And Precarious

Tenuous and Precarious  
Were my guardians,  
Precarious and Tenuous,  
Two Romans.

My father was Hazardous,  
Hazardous  
Dear old man,  
Three Romans.

There was my brother Spurious,  
Spurious Posthumous,  
Spurious was Spurious,  
Was four Romans.

My husband was Perfidious,  
He was Perfidious  
Five Romans.  
Surreptitious, our son,  
Was Surreptitious,  
He was six Romans.

Our cat Tedious  
Still lives,  
Count not Tedious  
Yet.

My name is Finis,  
Finis, Finis,  
I am Finis,  
Six, five, four, three, two,  
One Roman,  
Finis.

Stevie Smith

# The Airy Christ

After reading Dr Rieu's translation of St Mark's Gospel.

Who is this that comes in splendour, coming from the blazing East?  
This is he we had not thought of, this is he the airy Christ.

Airy, in an airy manner in an airy parkland walking,  
Others take him by the hand, lead him, do the talking.

But the Form, the airy One, frowns an airy frown,  
What they say he knows must be, but he looks aloofly down,

Looks aloofly at his feet, looks aloofly at his hands,  
Knows they must, as prophets say, nailed be to wooden bands.

As he knows the words he sings, that he sings so happily  
Must be changed to working laws, yet sings he ceaselessly.

Those who truly hear the voice, the words, the happy song,  
Never shall need working laws to keep from doing wrong.

Deaf men will pretend sometimes they hear the song, the words,  
And make excuse to sin extremely; this will be absurd.

Heed it not. Whatever foolish men may do the song is cried  
For those who hear, and the sweet singer does not care that he was crucified.

For he does not wish that men should love him more than anything  
Because he died; he only wishes they would hear him sing.

Stevie Smith

# The Face

There is a face I know too well,  
A face I dread to see,  
So vain it is, so eloquent  
Of all futility.

It is a human face that hides  
A monkey soul within,  
That bangs about, that beats a gong,  
That makes a horrid din.

Sometimes the monkey soul will sprawl  
Athwart the human eyes,  
And peering forth, will flesh its pads,  
And utter social lies.

So wretched is this face, so vain,  
So empty and forlorn,  
You well may say that better far  
This face had not been born.

Stevie Smith



# The Jungle Husband

Dearest Evelyn, I often think of you  
Out with the guns in the jungle stew  
Yesterday I hittapotamus  
I put the measurements down for you but they got lost in the fuss  
It's not a good thing to drink out here  
You know, I've practically given it up dear.  
Tomorrow I am going alone a long way  
Into the jungle. It is all grey  
But green on top  
Only sometimes when a tree has fallen  
The sun comes down plop, it is quite appalling.  
You never want to go in a jungle pool  
In the hot sun, it would be the act of a fool  
Because it's always full of anacondas, Evelyn, not looking ill-fed  
I'll say. So no more now, from your loving husband Wilfred.

Stevie Smith

# The Pleasures Of Friendship

The pleasures of friendship are exquisite,  
How pleasant to go to a friend on a visit!  
I go to my friend, we walk on the grass,  
And the hours and moments like minutes pass.

Stevie Smith

# The Reason

My life is vile  
I hate it so  
I'll wait awhile  
And then I'll go.

Why wait at all?  
Hope springs alive,  
Good may befall  
I yet may thrive.

It is because I can't make up my mind  
If God is good, impotent or unkind.

Stevie Smith

# The Suburban Classes

There is far too much of the suburban classes  
Spiritually not geographically speaking. They're asses.  
Menacing the greatness of our beloved England, they lie  
Propagating their kind in an eightroomed stye.  
Now I have a plan which I will unfold  
(There's this to be said for them, they do as they're told)  
Then tell them their country's in mortal peril  
They believed it before and again will not cavil  
Put it in caption form firm and slick  
If they see it in print it is bound to stick:  
'Your King and your Country need you Dead'  
You see the idea? Well, let it spread.  
Have a suitable drug under string and label  
Free for every Registered Reader's table.  
For the rest of the gang who are not patriotic  
I've another appeal they'll discover hypnotic:  
Tell them it's smart to be dead and won't hurt  
And they'll gobble up drug as they gobble up dirt.

Stevie Smith

# Thoughts About The Person From Porlock

Coleridge received the Person from Porlock  
And ever after called him a curse,  
Then why did he hurry to let him in?  
He could have hid in the house.

It was not right of Coleridge in fact it was wrong  
(But often we all do wrong)  
As the truth is I think he was already stuck  
With Kubla Khan.

He was weeping and wailing: I am finished, finished,  
I shall never write another word of it,  
When along comes the Person from Porlock  
And takes the blame for it.

It was not right, it was wrong,  
But often we all do wrong.

\*

May we inquire the name of the Person from Porlock?  
Why, Porson, didn't you know?  
He lived at the bottom of Porlock Hill  
So had a long way to go,

He wasn't much in the social sense  
Though his grandmother was a Warlock,  
One of the Rutlandshire ones I fancy  
And nothing to do with Porlock,

And he lived at the bottom of the hill as I said  
And had a cat named Flo,

And had a cat named Flo.

I long for the Person from Porlock  
To bring my thoughts to an end,  
I am becoming impatient to see him  
I think of him as a friend,

Often I look out of the window  
Often I run to the gate  
I think, He will come this evening,  
I think it is rather late.

I am hungry to be interrupted  
For ever and ever amen  
O Person from Porlock come quickly  
And bring my thoughts to an end.

\*

I felicitate the people who have a Person from Porlock  
To break up everything and throw it away  
Because then there will be nothing to keep them  
And they need not stay.

\*

Why do they grumble so much?  
He comes like a benison  
They should be glad he has not forgotten them  
They might have had to go on.

\*

These thoughts are depressing I know. They are depressing,  
I wish I was more cheerful, it is more pleasant,  
Also it is a duty, we should smile as well as submitting  
To the purpose of One Above who is experimenting  
With various mixtures of human character which goes best,  
All is interesting for him it is exciting, but not for us.  
There I go again. Smile, smile, and get some work to do  
Then you will be practically unconscious without positively having to go.

Stevie Smith

# To The Tune Of The Coventry Carol

The nearly right  
And yet not quite  
In love is wholly evil  
And every heart  
That loves in part  
Is mortgaged to the devil

I loved or thought  
I loved in sort  
Was this to love akin?  
To take the best  
And leave the rest  
And let the devil in?

O lovers true  
And others too  
Whose best is only better  
Take my advice  
Shun compromise  
Forget him and forget her

Stevie Smith



# Was He Married?

Was he married, did he try  
To support as he grew less fond of them  
Wife and family?

No,  
He never suffered such a blow.

Did he feel pointless, feeble and distrait,  
Unwanted by everyone and in the way?

From his cradle he was purposeful,  
His bent strong and his mind full.

Did he love people very much  
Yet find them die one day?

He did not love in the human way.

Did he ask how long it would go on,  
Wonder if Death could be counted on for an end?

He did not feel like this,  
He had a future of bliss.

Did he never feel strong  
Pain for being wrong?

Stevie Smith