

[1] A Babe is Born, Op. 55 (1971)

Text: 15th century

A babe is born all of a may,
To bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day.
Veni Creator Spiritus

At Bethlehem, that blessed place,
The child of bliss now born he was;
And him to serve God give us grace,
O lux beata Trinitas.

There came three kings out of the East,
To worship the King that is so free,
With gold and myrrh and frankincense,
A solis ortus cardine.

The angels came down with one cry,
A fair song that night sung they
In worship of that child:
Gloria tibi Domine

A babe is born all of a may,
To bring salvation unto us.
To him we sing both night and day.
Veni Creator Spiritus. Noel!

Jesus College Canticles, Op. 53 (1970)

[2] Magnificat

Text: Luke 1: 46-55

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
And his mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.

He hath shewed strength with his arm.
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat
and hath exalted the humble and meek.

He hath filled the hungry with good things.
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel

as he promised to our forefathers Abraham, and his seed forever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

[3] Nunc Dimittis

Text: Luke 2: 29-32

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen: thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared: before the face of all people;
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Learsongs (1988)

Text: Edward Lear, 1812–1888

[4] 1. Calico Pie,
The little Birds fly
Down to the calico tree,
Their wings were blue,
And they sang 'Tilly-loo!'
Till away they flew, -
And they never came back to me!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me

2. Calico Jam,
The little Fish swam,
Over the syllabub sea,
He took off his hat,
To the Sole and the Sprat,
And the Willeby-Wat, -
But he never came back to me!
He never came back!
He never came back!
He never came back to me!

3. Calico Ban,
The little Mice ran,
To be ready in time for tea,
Flippity flup,
They drank it all up,
And danced in the cup, -

But they never came back to me!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me!

4. Calico Drum,
The Grasshoppers come,
The Butterfly, Beetle, and Bee,
Over the ground,
Around and around,
With a hop and a bound, -
But they never came back to me!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me

[5] 2. The Owl and the Pussycat
The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

II
Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

III
"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

[6] 3. The Duck and the Kangaroo
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,
'Good gracious! how you hop!
Over the fields and the water too,
As if you never would stop!
My life is a bore in this nasty pond,
And I long to go out in the world beyond!
I wish I could hop like you!
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

II

'Please give me a ride on your back!
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.
'I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack,"
The whole of the long day through!
And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee,
Over the land, and over the sea;—
Please take me a ride! O do!
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

III

Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,
'This requires some little reflection;
Perhaps on the whole it might bring me luck,
And there seems but one objection,
Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold,
Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold,
And would probably give me the roo-
Matiz!' said the Kangaroo.

IV

Said the Duck, 'As I sate on the rocks,
I have thought over that completely,
And I bought four pairs of worsted socks
Which fit my web-feet neatly.
And to keep out the cold I've bought a cloak,
And every day a cigar I'll smoke,
All to follow my own dear true
Love of a Kangaroo!'

V

Said the Kangaroo, 'I'm ready!
All in the moonlight pale;
But to balance me well, dear Duck, sit steady!
And quite at the end of my tail!
So away they went with a hop and a bound,

And they hopped the whole world three times round;
And who so happy,—O who,
As the Duck and the Kangaroo?

[7] 4. Uncle Arly
O! My aged Uncle Arly!
Sitting on a heap of Barley
Thro' the silent hours of night,—
Close beside a leafy thicket;—
On his nose there was a Cricket,—
In his hat a Railway-Ticket;—
(But his shoes were far too tight.)

II

Long ago, in youth, he squander'd
All his goods away, and wander'd
To the Tiniskoop-hills afar.
There on golden sunsets blazing,
Every morning found him gazing,—
Singing — “Orb! you're quite amazing!
How I wonder what you are!”

III

Like the ancient Medes and Persians,
Always by his own exertions
He subsisted on those hills;—
Whiles, -- by teaching children spelling,—
Or at times by merely yelling,—
Or at intervals by selling
“Propter's Nicodemus Pills.”

IV

Later, in his morning rambles
He perceived the moving brambles—
Something square and white disclose;—
“Twas a First-class Railway Ticket;
But, on stooping down to pick it
Off the ground, -- a pea-green Cricket
settled on my uncle's Nose.

V

Never -- never more, -- Oh! never,
Did that Cricket leave him ever,—
Dawn or evening, day or night;—
Clinging as a constant treasure,—
Chirping with a cheerious measure,—
Wholly to my uncle's pleasure

(Though his shoes were far too tight.)

VI

So for three-and-forty winters,
Till his shoes were worn to splinters,
All those hills he wander'd o'er,—
Sometimes silent; -- sometimes yelling;—
Till he came to Borley-Melling,
Near his old ancestral dwelling;—
(But his shoes were far too tight.)

VII

On a little heap of Barley
Died my aged uncle Arly,
And they buried him one night;—
Close beside the leafy thicket;—
There, -- his hat and Railway-Ticket;—
There, -- his ever-faithful Cricket;—
(But his shoes were far too tight.)

[8] 5. The Pelican Chorus
King and Queen of the Pelicans we;
No other Birds so grand we see!
None but we have feet like fins!
With lovely leathery throats and chins!
Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!
Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

We live on the Nile. The Nile we love.
By night we sleep on the cliffs above;
By day we fish, and at eve we stand
On long bare islands of yellow sand.

And when the sun sinks slowly down
And the great rock walls grow dark and brown,
Where the purple river rolls fast and dim
And the Ivory Ibis starlike skim,
Wing to wing we dance around,—
Stamping our feet with a flumpy sound,—
Opening our mouths as Pelicans ought,
And this is the song we nightly snort;—
Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!
Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

Calico Jam,
The little Fish swam,
Over the syllabub sea,
He took off his hat,
To the Sole and the Sprat,
And the Willeby-Wat, -
But he never came back to me!
He never came back!
He never came back!
He never came back to me!

Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee!
We think no Birds so happy as we!

Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill!
We think so then, and we thought so still!

Calico Pie,
The little Birds fly
Down to the calico tree,
Their wings were blue,
And they sang 'Tilly-loo!'
Till away they flew, -
And they never came back to me!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me

[9] Y nefoedd sydd yn datgan gogoniant Duw ('The Heavens Declare the Glory of God') (1988)

Text: Psalm 19

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1 Y Nefoedd sydd yn datgan gogoniant Duw; a'r ffurfafen sydd yn mynegi gwaith ei ddwylo ef. 2 Dydd i ddydd a draetha ymadrodd, a nos i nos a ddegys wybodaeth. 3 Nid oes iaith nac ymadrodd, lle ni chlybuwyd eu lleferydd hwynt. 4 Eu llinyn a aeth trwy yr holl ddaear, a'u geiriau hyd eithafoedd byd: i'r haul y gosododd efe babell ynddynt; 5 Yr hwn sydd fel gŵr priod yn dyfod allan o'i ystafell: ac a ymlawenha fel cawr i redeg gyrfa. 6 O eithaf y nefoedd y mae ei fynediad ef allan, a'i amgylchiad hyd eu heithafoedd hwynt: ac nid ymgudd dim oddi wrth ei wres ef. 7 Cyfraith yr Arglwydd sydd berffaith, yn troi yr enaid: tystiolaeth yr Arglwydd sydd sicr, ac yn gwneuthur y gwirion yn ddoeth. 8 Deddfau yr Arglwydd sydd uniawn, yn llawenhau y galon: gorchymyn yr Arglwydd sydd bur, yn goleuo y llygaid. 9 Ofn yr Arglwydd sydd lân, yn parhau yn dragywydd; barnau yr Arglwydd ydynt wirionedd, cyfiawn ydynt i gyd. Alleluia!

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Alleluia!

[10] Ave verum corpus (1992)

Text: 14th century, attrib. Pope Innocent VI

Ave verum Corpus,
Natum ex Maria Virgine,
Vere passum, immolatum
In cruce pro homine,
Cujus latus perforatum
Unda fluxit sanguine:
Esto nobis praegustatum
In mortis examine.
O Jesu dulcis, O Jesu pie!
O Jesu Fili Mariae.
Ave verum Corpus,
Natum ex Maria Virgine.

Hail, true body,
born of the Virgin Mary,
who truly suffered, sacrificed
on the cross for mankind,
whose pierced side
flowed with water and blood;
be unto us the foretaste
in the trial of death.
O gentle Jesus, O holy Jesus!
O Jesu, Son of Mary.
Hail, true body,
born of the Virgin Mary.

Riddles (1987)

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[11] Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew just how it should be;
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
The riddlers shall come to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew how to baffle with words,
To mystify, to mystify,
They knew the charm of mystery,
Just how it should be, just how it should be.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
The riddlers shall come to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle.

1.
Ring me, they ring me. I work long hours
And must eagerly obey my thane,
Break my rest, and loudly proclaim
That my guardian gave me a halter.
A man or a woman, weary and bleary,
Has often called on me; winter-cold
I answer them, surly as they are. Sometimes
A warm limb releases the bound ring.
But it delights my thane, a dull sort
Of man, and satisfies me into the bargain,
If anyone can fathom and solve my riddle.
They ring me, they ring me, they ring me.
A bell, a bell, a bell.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew just how it should be;
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,

The riddlers are here to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.
Riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle.

2.
[12] Silent is my dress when I step across the earth
Reside in my house, or ruffle the waters.
Sometimes my adornments and this high windy air
Lift me over the livings of men,
The power of the clouds carries me far
Over all people. My white pinions
Resound very loudly, ring with a melody,
Sing out clearly, when I sleep not on
The soil or settle on grey waters – a travelling spirit.
A bird, a bird, a bird.
A swan, a swan, a swan.

3.
[13] I've one mouth but many voices;
I dissemble and often change my tune;
I declaim my deathless melodies,
I don't desist from my refrain.
Aged evening songster, I entertain
Men in their homes by rehearsing
My whole repertoire; they sit, bowed down,
Quiet in their houses. Guess my name,
I who mime the jester's japes
As loudly as I can, and rejoice men
With choicest songs in various voices.
Nightingale, no! Pigeon, no!
Jackdaw, no! Magpie!

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew just how it should be;
Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle.

4.
[14] On earth there's a warrior of curious origin.
He's created, gleaming, by two dumb creatures
For the benefit of men. Foe bears him against foe
To inflict harm. Women often fetter him,
Strong as he is. If maidens and men
Care for him with due consideration
And feed him frequently, he'll faithfully obey them
And serve them well. Men succour him for the warmth
He offers in return; but this warrior will savage
Anyone who permits him to become too proud.
Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!

5.

[15] I'm a strange creature, for I satisfy women,
A service to the neighbours! No one suffers
At my hands except for my slayer.
I grow very tall, erect in a bed,
I'm hairy underneath. From time to time
A beautiful girl, the brave daughter
Of some churl dares to hold me,
Grips my russet skin, robs me of my head
And puts me in the pantry. At once that girl
With plaited hair who has confined me
Remembers our meeting. Her eye moistens.
A leek? A rosehip? An Onion!

6.

[16] I stretch beyond the bounds of the world,
I'm smaller than a worm, outstrip the sun,
I shine more brightly than the moon. The swelling seas,
The fair face of the earth and all the green fields,
Are within my clasp. I cover the depths,
And plunge beneath hell; I ascend above heaven,
Highland of renown; I reach beyond
The boundaries of the land of blessed angels.
I fill far and wide all the corners of the earth
And the ocean streams. Say what my name is.
Creation, creation, creation, creation.

Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle,

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Now give us a riddle to end them all,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Now give us a riddle to end them all,
Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle.

7.

[17] I'm a noble object known to warriors,
And often quietly rest; renowned amongst
High and humble, I range far and wide
And plunderers' pickings are mine if I,
Once remote from friends, can but win
Success and shining reward in halls.
Now, discerning men appreciate
My presence; I'll reveal wisdom
To many people, all over the earth
They fall silent. Although the sons of men,

Livers on land, watch eagerly now
For some sign of me, I sometimes
Conceal my tracks from all humankind.

Now name me, now name me,
Now name me, now name me.

The moon, wandering singer. No! No!

Riddle, riddle, riddle, riddle.

Riddle, riddle, riddle,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew just how it should be;
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
The riddlers have been to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Our fathers knew how to baffle with words,
To mystify, to mystify,
They knew the charm of mystery,
Just how it should be, just how it should be.
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
The riddlers have been to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
The riddlers shall come to give us good game,
'Twas ever the same, 'twas ever the same.

Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re,
Riddle, riddle, riddle-me-re.
Riddles. Riddles. Riddles.
Hey!

[18] **A May Magnificat, Op. 79, No. 2** (1978)

Text: Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1844–1889 and Luke 1:46-50

MAY is Mary's month, and I
Muse at that and wonder why:
Her feasts follow reason,
Dated due to season—

Candlemas, Lady Day;
But the Lady Month, May,

Why fasten that upon her,
With a feasting in her honour?

Is it only its being brighter
Than the most are must delight her?
Is it opportunist
And flowers finds soonest?

Ask of her, the mighty mother:
Her reply puts this other
Question: What is Spring?—
Growth in every thing—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and greenworld all together;
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested

Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within;
And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing
Mary sees, sympathising
With that world of good,
Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord.

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
Et exultavit spiritus meus: in Deo salutari meo.
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.
Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen eius.
Et misericordia eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum.

Well but there was more than this:
Spring's universal bliss
Much, had much to say
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple
Bloom lights the orchard-apple
And thicket and thorp are merry
With silver-surfèd cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes
And magic cuckoo-call
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth
Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto,
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

May, Magnificat.