

Prologue for a June Pageant

for Tom Harrison.

The cuckoo and the nightingale
those singers who belong to song,
whose short-lived generations throng
the different landscapes of man's age
are burdened by his mortal heart:
but they fly free beyond that cage,
border his darkly written page
with casual perfection beyond art.

The cuckoo and the nightingale,
the sounds that tell us spring has come
by incantation call us home
to where imagined meadows lie
flowering at the edge of joy,
to solitudes of moonlit sky
to thymey banks where lovers sigh,
and distant summers nothing can destroy.

The cuckoo and the nightingale
speak of a world man has outgrown
in language words have overthrown.
Groping through time we half recall
in classic images of grief
towers that fell, cities that fall,
our own short lives, and, beyond all
lost paradise, half hope and half belief.

The cuckoo and the nightingale
have sung here throughout history,
have seen with disregarding eye
the peasant's toil, the armoured knight,
famine and harvest, every change,
all that will pass before your sight,
pageant of shadows set in light
they framed in song, the usual and the strange.

Walter Cox from Wisula

June 18, 1963.