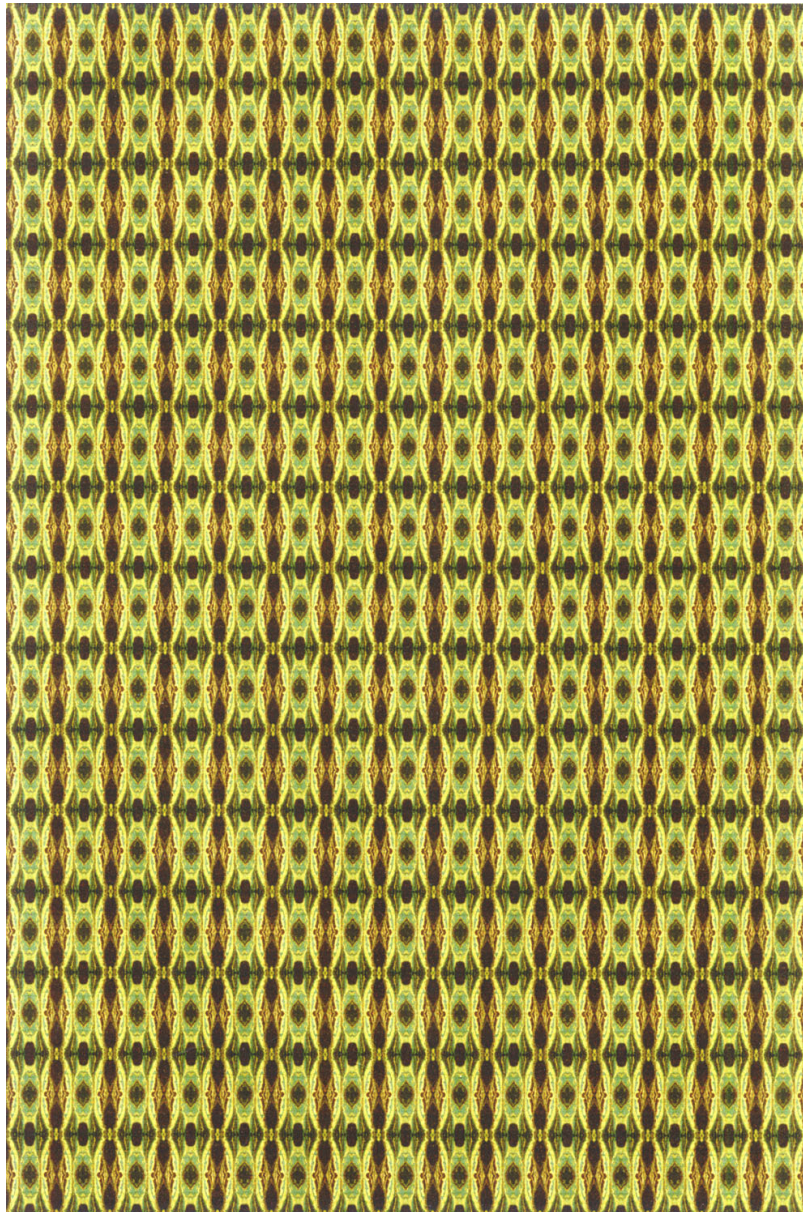


# PARABLES AND TALES

GRAHAM OVENDEN



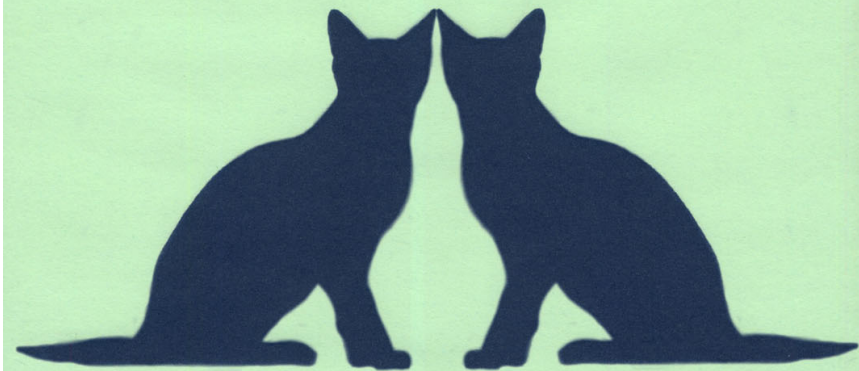
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# A TALE OF TWO TAILS

## IN THREE CHAPTERS

GRAHAM OVENDEN





## **A Tale of Two Tails – Part the First**

I'm sure that most children in this wide round world know that in the County of Wexford and its surrounding Green Eden Tom Cat Vinny and Queen Tipby reside. Not that one for a moment should think of them as the sole residents of Giddyside Gate, for apart from Mother, Father and Gran there are five children of various ages and sizes, their names being, umm, let me see, yes that's it, Katie, Jo, Aaron, Jake and little Marain.

You children of all ages will of course understand me if I make the point that Mother and Father, who regarded the "Gate" as being first and foremost their property and residence were in error. Parents by their very nature are owned by their cats and not the reverse. As to children and Grand Parents, well this point is still in debate and no doubt will remain so as long as Professor Feline O'Grady continues his discourses on the subject.

Let me as a prelude to this little tale and in hopes of doing justice to, not only the course of action of its plot but also the magnificence of Queen Tipby's appendage (I mean tail) give a brief description of Giddyside Gate. As you will have guessed by now this residence is named after the continual generations of children who swing on its gates (there being two) until their sense of equilibrium fails them and they fall off. I hope not too often to the detriment of their rear quarters.

Be that as it may... The cottage is pretty without being unduly "picturesque", comfortable, though as you may imagine with five little people to accommodate, not always as tidy as it might be ("I sometimes despair of them" queen Tipby has been heard to murmur to Tom Cat Vinny). The inevitable reply was – "Well children will be children".

The immediate grounds of Giddyside had many flowers and fruits in season, a fine vegetable garden (father's joy) and a small pool whose brightly coloured fishy population continually fascinated all residents of this delightful property.

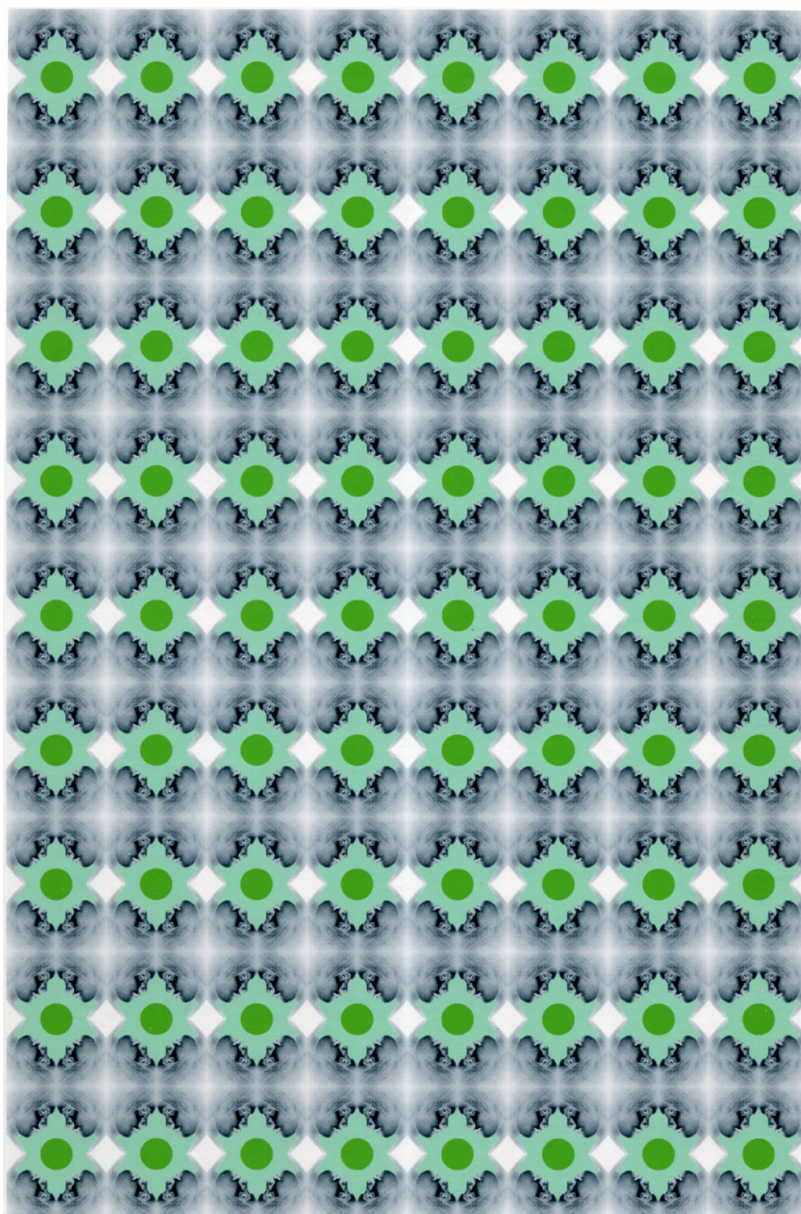
From Giddyside, though in the next country, one can see the beautiful and mysterious Sugar Loaf Mountain which shows itself as a dream landscape when the day is soft but with an almost forbidding air when the sky lowers and it once again takes on the guise of being the home of Leprechauns, Trolls – the darker side of our Faerie fold. It is rumoured that the great warrior cat Mog-Mog O'Callaghan went with a small band of fearless companions into these forbidden places to do battle, but alas were never seen again. The laments of his companion Madam O'Shindy Termaget were legendary and ghostly wailing,



# AS LIKE AS TWO PEAS

A TRILOGY

GRAHAM OVENDEN





## AS LIKE AS TWO PEAS

### PART THE FIRST

Amanda and Josh were twins, not only in their material physicality but equally with hearts and minds acting in an almost perplexing, perhaps even a sinister unity. No, sinister is not at all the right description for these two youngsters were the product of a growing childhood's Grace, albeit evolving with an uncanny parallel. The general platitude *As like as two peas in a pod* gives the rather unflattering possibility of a certain intellectual dullness, after all I doubt if there can be much to recommend the mental acrobatics of two peas however certain traditions may wish to enlighten us otherwise. These two marvels of nature's inventiveness were fortunate in their parents as both mother and father had longed for twins, thus when these little joys showed themselves for the first time their world proved itself amongst other positive attributes, that epicurian delight, the oyster. Certainly there was not the slightest likelihood of a lack of appetite for love and parental indulgence. Having said fortune had given them by the accident of birth much, they were unselfish, outgoing in affection, simply a pleasure to know. Of course as children may on occasions, particularly those of an adventurous nature, progress to the point of transgressing into naughtiness; nevertheless as all true parents have experienced in giving their forgiveness to their offsprings for modest acts of waywardness, this in itself is a pleasure, it strengthens love giving an even greater binding of souls.

One of the twins most accomplished pranks was to take on the guise of each other's personality. Their absolute similitude, they had always demanded that their hair be kept the same length, cut to a fringe at the front, aided this subterfuge, on occasions even mother and father had been confused into the mysteries of who was who. Finally after a particularly hilarious 'cross dressing' it was decided that each child should wear a little, individually named medallion placed on a chain around the neck, always to act as a pendant of identification. This was most solemnly inaugurated with promises never to be exchanged with each other; to always be worn and if asked after to be shown to any confused friend or relative. Of course the not knowing and unsuspecting stranger was still considered as legitimate prey for the twins, though this completely without malice.

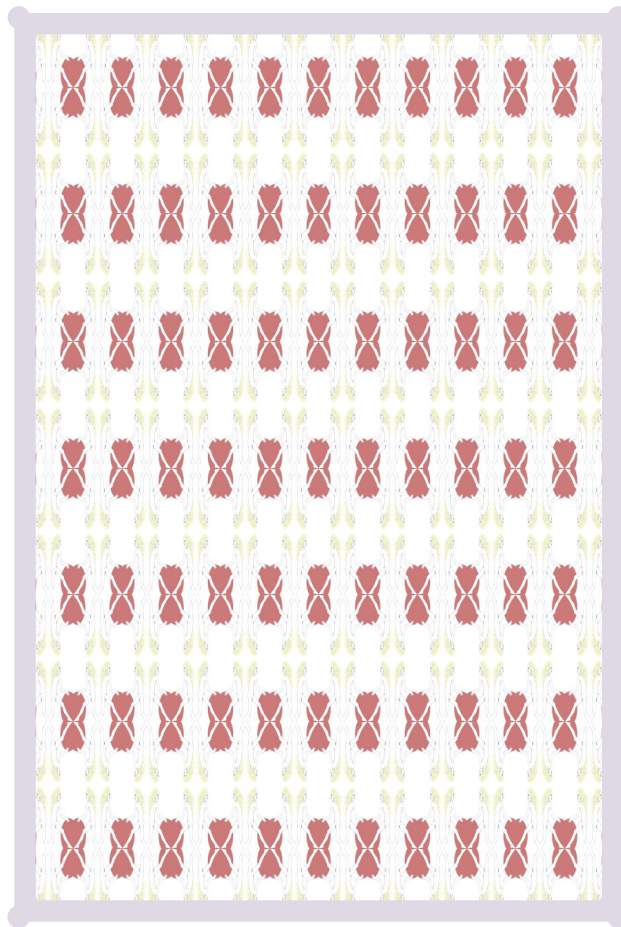
To give variety to this metamorphosis sometimes Amanda and Josh would parade as two boys, just as likely two girls. They had on one memorable occasion when on their eighth birthday turned up to morning class as boys then in the afternoon as festively decked hand maidens of Flora. It was a sensation and to give school officialdom its credit, taken in good humour if not also a little bemusement. Needless to say any opportunity to indulge fancy dress was taken, this being a general



# New Nursery Rhymes

Being those favourites  
now revisited  
also  
rhymes newly composed  
of a moral and imoral tone  
in hopes that  
none suffer  
the death of political correctness  
this being the negation  
of all art

Penned by Graham Ovenden



## *A Confusion of Rhymes*

Now little Miss Moffat and Tom Tucker too  
decided to visit the old woman's shoe.  
They knocked on the door and to their delight  
'twas opened by Mary, who contrary to sight  
was dressed for the garden in worsted so fine  
and soon to be weeding her maids on the line.

Then Foster came seeking a brolly on loan  
the old woman ransacked the rooms of her home.  
Eventually to find what the good doctor sought,  
who then off to Gloucester - he would not be thwart.

But alas for his task the Hubbard was out  
and only the dog, who was well on the pout,  
for he'd not had his breakfast, the cupboard was bare,  
the poor doctor finding his seat best beware.

So he turned on his tail and took to his home  
and said to himself, its next time a bone  
so I'll bribe the poor beast  
with a delicate feast - of marrow and meat.

Or the sparrow, his arrow will sting the retreat.  
For York and his men, ten thousand and all  
like Humpty, no doubt, will have a great fall.

Thus as you may see  
I'll not 'play' the piper or charge you a fee.  
For Ann and Jane Taylor, their bouncing of B  
shall sit in the cupboard with Kitty and me.



## *On Treading the Boards*

Margery Daw

I really implore  
at ten years of age  
to take to the stage,  
you'll find it a bore.

"I shan't said this Missy  
you're awfully prissy,  
too modest by far  
for I'll be a star  
whatever you think.

So don't make a stink  
as I'm bound for the stage.  
With my talents I'll wage'  
I've a fortune to make  
(so wipe off the slate

and pass round the plate).  
You'll not be invited  
unless I'll be sighted  
to stand on the boards  
and be cheered by the hoards."

So much for her passions  
how wayward the fashions  
of phesbian art.  
The child made a start  
but alas, failed her mark  
which has broken her heart.

## *Counting Thomas*

Doubting Thomas - If I'm fair  
was much inclined to stand and stare.  
This cynic, at the end of wrangles-wove  
"I think your thinkings better in the stove".

"I'm much more interested in toast  
or even better, Mother's roast  
of lamb or ham (your theories sham)  
which if you really wish to please  
gives pleasure served with buttered peas."

But then a ghost of foul descent  
decided Tom' his mind was bent  
and warped beyond the realms of truth ...  
"I'll screw that varlot and forsooth  
to prove he's just a whinging fool  
I think I have the very tool."

So with his blade that night he shaved  
young Thomas in his sleep.  
And there behold, 'tis truly told  
a pate if grazed by sheep.

Poor Thomas when he woke to find  
no hairy cover on his mind  
went off his head!

Now counting Thomas lies in bed  
not sheep, each hair to number now is wed.  
'Tis said, perhaps it better he was dead.



## *An Excess of Exercise*

Jack Spratt was inclined to fat,  
his wife as lean as a bean.  
This spouse thought it right  
(as a termagant might)  
thus she nagged him to diet ...  
So to keep the dame quiet  
said "The Gym I'll then try it."  
He took to the scene  
such as walking the beam  
then to straddle the horse,  
lift those dumbbells of course ...  
These were swung but a fraction  
with poor interaction  
so he dropped them both with a violent reaction  
on his toes.  
The Gymnast he'd chose  
thought he'd better impose  
(with a subtle entreat)  
that his client retreat,  
show rather less vigour in the removal of weight,  
to not be too eager so thus tempting fate.  
With his wife looking on  
as her hubby applied ...  
"I think dear Henry you were built to be wide."  
Look your press ups are flat  
for your belly's too fat  
and refuses to part with the floor - I really implore.  
But alas to say he would have his way.  
The blood pressure rose to the end of his nose  
so the exercise chose  
to carry his spirit away.

*A Literary Antediluvian (self portrait)*

There was an old man  
who lived - yes 'tis true  
in a remarkable dwelling  
(he'd not much to do).

Thus he took to writing  
a new book each day ...  
A thesis on tantrums  
or how to heat hay.

But his best selling tome  
was the eating of bone  
as a substitute rather than lead.

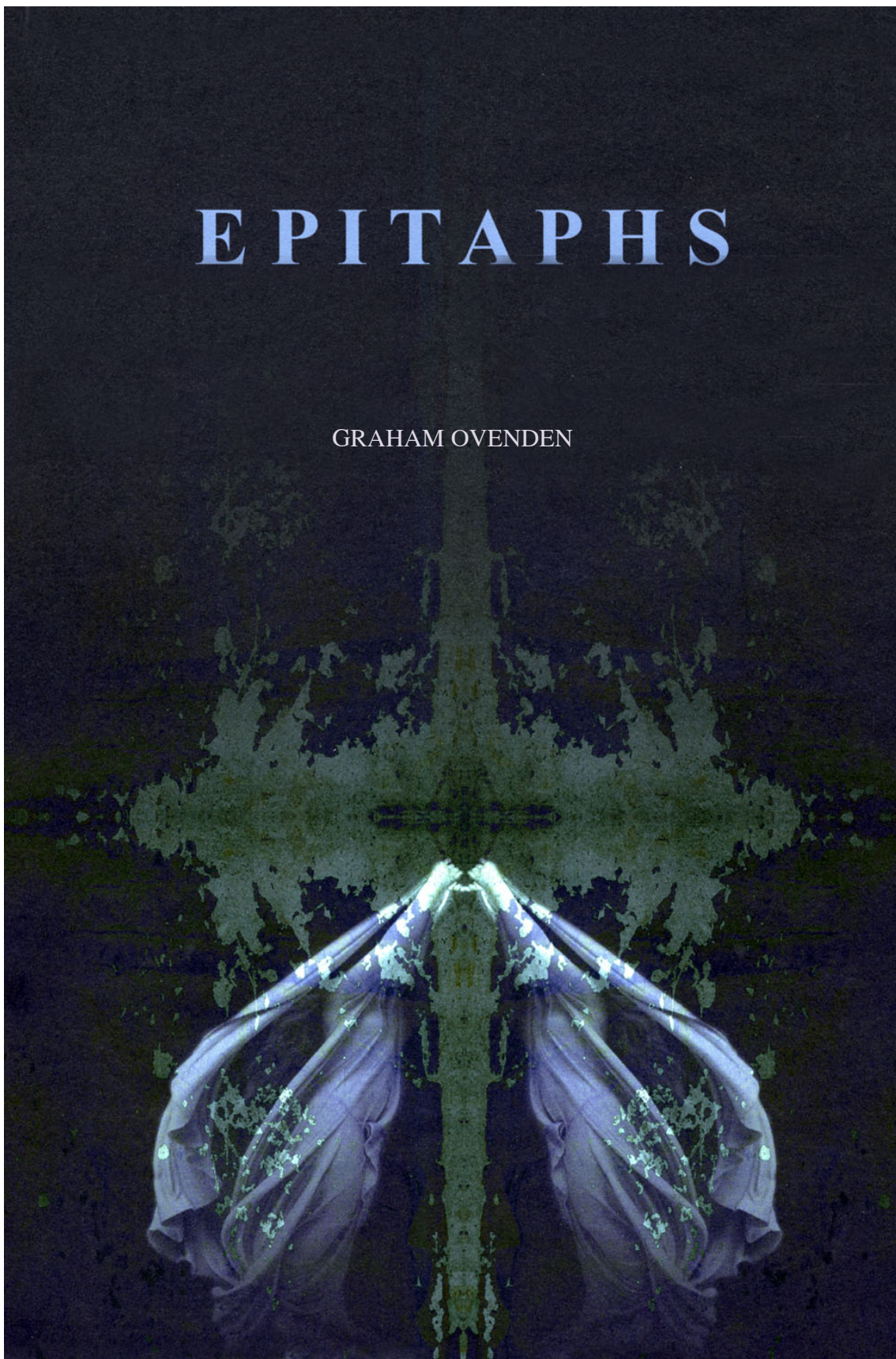
His fame has now spread  
despite he's not dead,  
so he'll shout at the boards  
as he kicks at the hoards  
of boring, illiterate young prigs.

His new book that's coming  
a volume, quite stunning  
is the nature of farting and figs!



# EPITAPHS

GRAHAM OVENDEN



### *Headbourn Worthy*

Three shades, a trinity of former rite  
hacked from the wall (a whim to fuel  
his Kingly spite).

I wonder, do these past great gifts of art  
when nighttime falls, replay their part -  
Renew with Godlike forms some secret mark  
that is a key, so truth impart?

The hands of God (a mystery still)  
give benediction to a faith  
which by his will holds yet the wraith  
of passions past ...

Though hacked, despite, his stone is firm  
and holding fast.

### *Now Duty Calls*

To duty's call  
so men will fall,  
the fodder of each state.  
As like, the mother, child  
will pay their trust  
to Mammon's vicious rape.

Since time has turned ...  
for glory yearned  
the *noble heart and deed*:  
but Death, the winner  
mocks us all and  
sows his blighted seed.

If man - the child  
could see, defiled  
his grace brought to the grave.  
We slaves, as such  
could free our bonds  
and damn each lying knave!



## *Damerham*

His office now is but a circled cross of wood  
whose legend, though a century old holds good  
the futile acts of Mammon's hate ...  
For death is glory's rotting state.

Two of his comrades, marked by a simple cross  
attend their master: thus each loss  
combine to play on sorrow as a mask ...  
So act the mirror of the past.

And yet, these relics are the fragments of a life  
whose task, complete, discarding strife  
stand silent in this house of God.  
For time has clothed the bloody sod.

Now Spring will show her fecund shift  
so each receive His Godly Gift.

## *Downside Abbey*

The school choir sings its lessons.

What ardour moves these pupils  
to such expressive heights  
that we may marvel at this truth of sound,  
their round of youthful flights.

The firmus sounds at ground  
then soars aloft:  
so belled, yet soft ...

Young voices now conversing  
within the arching stone.  
Theirs is a polyphony of echoes  
where shouts of joy will hone  
into a tempered truth ...

The spiritual universe listens ...

*Anon*

This love child lies in a forgotten grave.

The years have passed their cycle round  
all but remoulding her bedded mound ...

A life marked by a simple stone  
whose letters, sown amongst the grasping green  
of ivy growth, give just a name and death his troth.

Ten summers sorrows lie beneath ...  
To those who pass, we share her grief.

Unloved - through love, was born in shame:  
no fault this child of passion's flame.

But now, this dust in trust of nature's womb  
will grow her seed and flowers bloom.



*The Italian Church, Wilton*

Two gravestones paired, each with angels rampant.

Short years  
so flow my tears  
the lachrame of childhood gone.

This pavan is a dance of death,  
most mournful plays the song.

But here within her fecund womb  
an organ's trumpet sound ...  
His piping joy renews the hope  
that we may gigue our round.

## *A Train Journey*

The train now passes by the coast on time  
to track both sea, the sky's horizon line.  
Where beauty is the vista of this earth  
when seen "at edge" a greater worth  
if simply taken to the soul.

But here's the dole now handed out ...

The carriage filled with those that flout  
such pleasures of the natural scene  
to stare, transfixed at mobile screen.

OBSCENE!

For as the wonders flee them by,  
obsessed with digits and their lie ...  
Unseeing, who are fodder fed,  
yes Mammon's stole' their souls are bled.

Returns each text - you are the dead.

## *The Children's Playground*

### *Warleggan Vicarage*

The Vicar built these concrete shapes  
so children might engage ...

A slide, a fort  
a nameless form  
all hiding there, forgot, folorn.

For nature took them to her own  
their fragments show as she has sown.

Strange structures were this Parson's pride  
but children made their berth as wide  
as Eden's shame.

No child has entered, played his game ...  
No presence mark a youthful scheme:  
no ghosts at play, sans everything.

*Rousay*

A sailor toiled on these walls  
building a home for his bride.

No side is complete  
and nature, repleat  
has marked all the stone  
to the tone of grey bone.

Where love might have grown  
now is left to the moan  
of the cold seeking wind ...

It knows of their fate  
and the guilt of its rape  
as does sea and the land.

He's dammed in the deep  
once mortal, now meat ...  
She broken with grief  
took Death as her lover:

his sheet as a pledge  
'tis a chill winding cover.



*Alresford Church Yard*

A sister's grave.

A life that might have been part mine  
died in her cot.

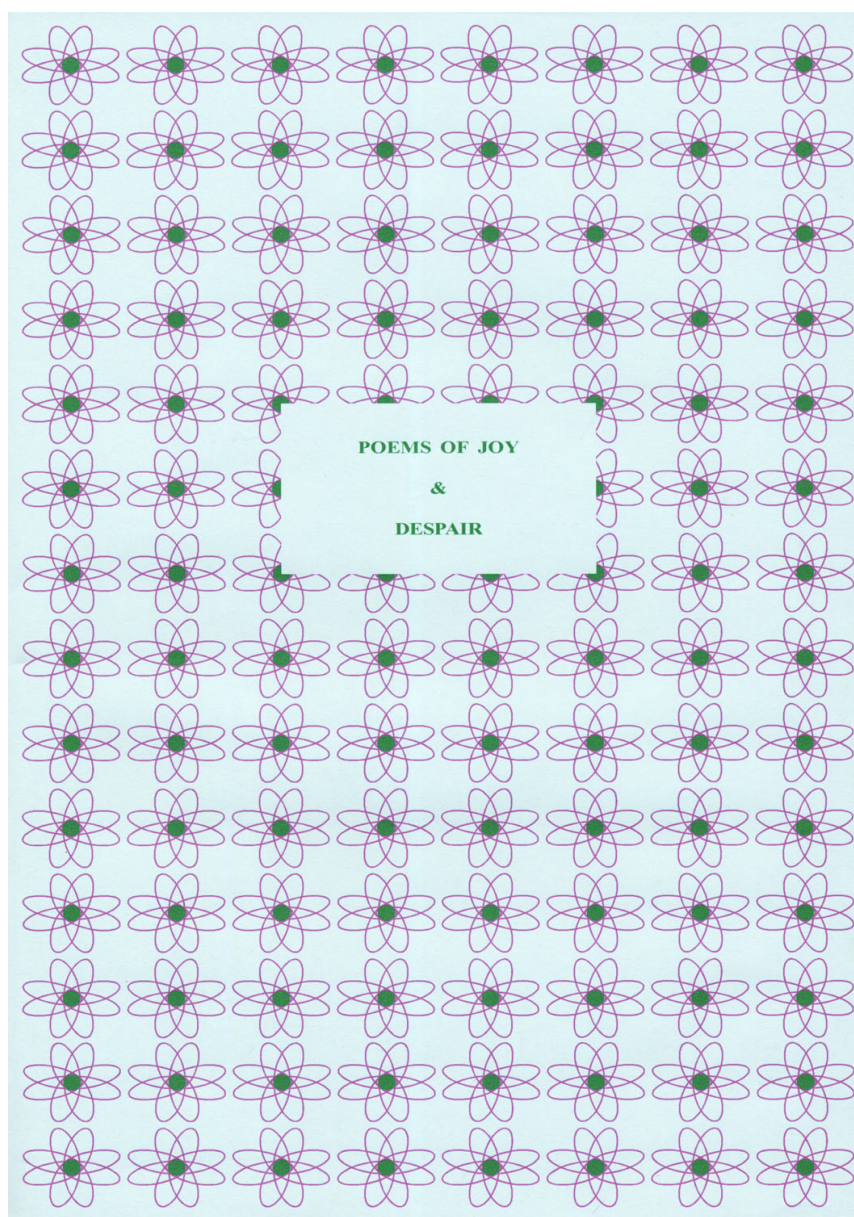
An infant's plot  
graced by a marble stone  
carved in the fashion of the day  
is where frail bones now lay.  
We weep her lot.

She, our parents ash have joined, made whole  
returned the gift that grief had stol'.

A cot of earth shall hold our dust ...  
United there beneath its crust,  
the parents, siblings lay in trust.

# POEMS OF JOY & DESPAIR

GRAHAM OVENDEN



## *The Pendulum of Time*

Alone in the children's park  
he swings like the pendulum of time.

A child lost in thought  
oblivious to all emotion  
except his dream of dreams in motion.

Swing  
Swing  
Swing ...

Now high to reach the sky  
or gentle as an ocean swell  
that lightly sounds a warning bell.

Ring  
Ring  
Ring ...

A chime so passing that he hardly hears  
the distant summons to our Sunday fears.

Sing  
Sing  
Sing ...

But now in song his time will mark  
and fling each echo to the coming dark.

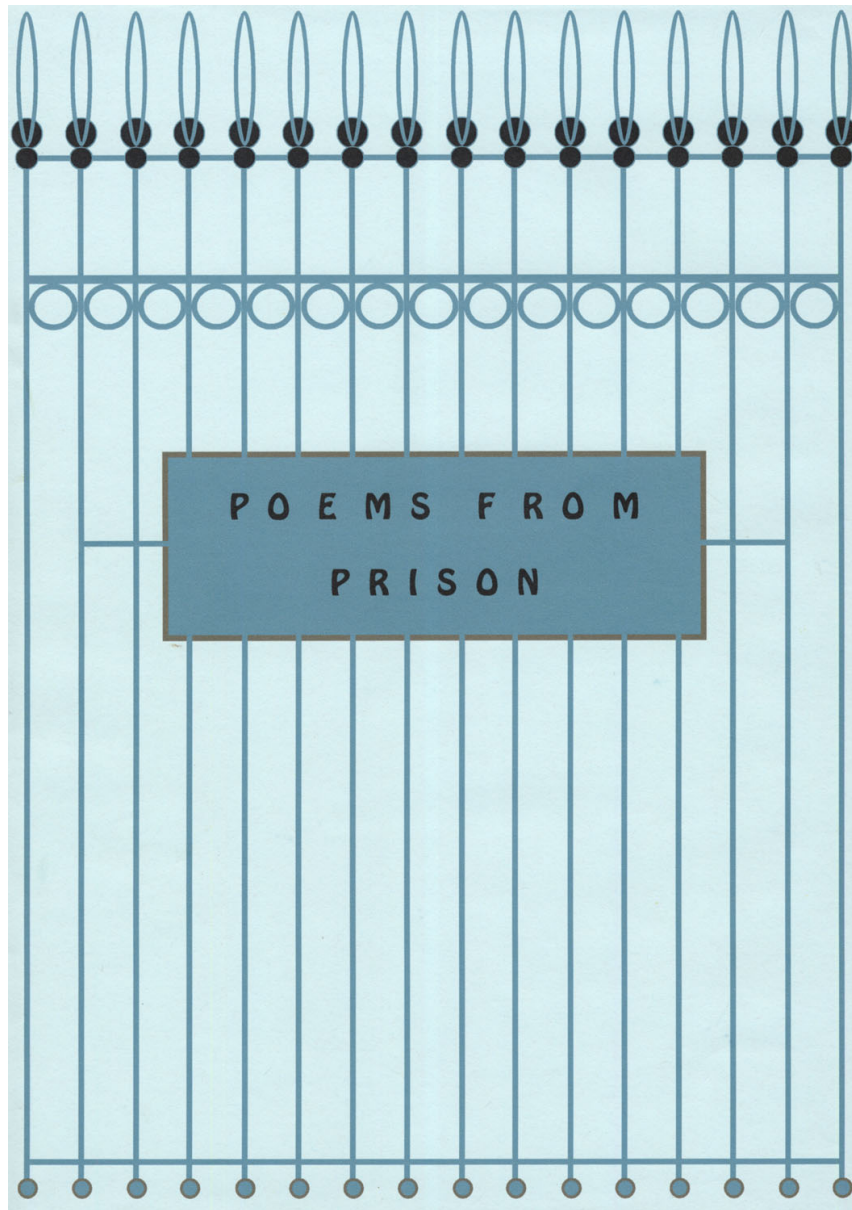


## *Flora Rejected*

Sweet Flora stood at Heaven's gate  
and enquired of St Peter - "What shall be my fate?  
As the Goddess of Spring I have tended with care  
all blossoms that God who with mankind will share."  
St Peter was stern and replied "I'll not open  
for my master has spoken  
and banned such as you  
to work in the stew of his Hell."  
So beauty then turned with tears flowing fast  
"But a little compassion is all that I ask.  
I stand as pure as innocence born  
how is it my craft is so viciously shorn?"  
"For my love was unsullied as the words of Christ  
and like his great gift, I too without vice  
was of innocent seed - to grow not to sigh.  
My heart now is broken, in grief will I die."  
"But I take with me the gift from my Mother  
who gave me at birth, as she did with no other.  
To show I had virtue, was not without trust  
with passion, 'tis true, but never of lust."  
From that moment on in God's Garden of Grace  
the blossoms, they withered, how barren his place.  
Where once was a joy now tares pierce the dust  
for God, though her Father proved untrue to his trust!

# Poems From Prison

GRAHAM OVENDEN



## *Oscar at Pentonville*

Within these walls where shadows wait  
the memories of Nature's gift and greening state  
are glazed by a cold light.

Here spite flowers of bloodless hue  
(the dying season of a fecund few)  
are wrought into a hollow mask of hate.

Fraught passions that the silence rape ...

Each hope of futures broke and stilled  
a patina that death has willed,  
his weave of Mammon's lies.

Oscar was brought here.

A man supreme in "edging wit"  
(the telling of so cruelly writ').  
Yet a *Happy Prince* that gave such love.

Do we sense your passing shade  
as all pretense of worldly pride is flayed?

The lily that you often wore  
that Solomon, despite his wisdom failed  
to whore: has that wilted on your breast,  
true flower of secrets now confessed?

Dear man of sorrows  
the open world of joy is yours.  
You now are freed their sores of hate ...  
No Death shall be your bedded mate!

## *The Wind in the Wires*

He lays himself on the prison bed  
and is soon half held in dream.  
Now his sorrows fled, his soul is wed'  
to the wild wind wailing so keen.

Its music plays on the wires of shame  
that harp - not condemning or giving of blame.  
It is a voice of the past, a fate yet to come,  
the mask of our making each coward will shun.

There held within that passing breath  
a message of hope -though it may be death.  
For its time travels long  
and has secrets in song,  
of lands grown to dust.  
Their swords turned to ploughshares  
are naught now but rust.

Hear the voices of those that fly with the air  
whose past is but passion, complete in despair.  
It whispers, I dare to reach for the edge  
or flay the brown earth - so here is my pledge ...

To search every corner and catch at each leaf  
my breath, ever chilling, will play as the thief.  
For I carry an anguish to lay on your hearts  
or joy if you wish it - the choice of my "arts".

From far lands and oceans my wind winds its course  
to tear at the fences that your evil endorse!

## *The Jailer Death*

Lock it

Open it

Lock it

Open it

Lock it - there is no choice we have to stay

Open it - so each will make his dreary way.

Perambulate, to talk of trivial things

of unsealed letters, whether love has wings.

The tightening tape of bureaucratic red

or if 'twere better to be dead.

Lock it

Open it

Lock it

Open it

Lock it - the lever's worn where once was firm

Open it - so now the key will catch, refuse to turn.

This cell apart, its bounds are cased

(but twelve by eight this prison paced).

The windows open just a finger's length

no fraction more despite your strength.

Lock it

Open it

Lock it

Open it

Lock it tight, for this will be his last

Open it - no more the door fulfills its task.

The holding of a soul now fled

despite its bitter crust the law has bled.

Both jailed and jailer torn from mortal shell

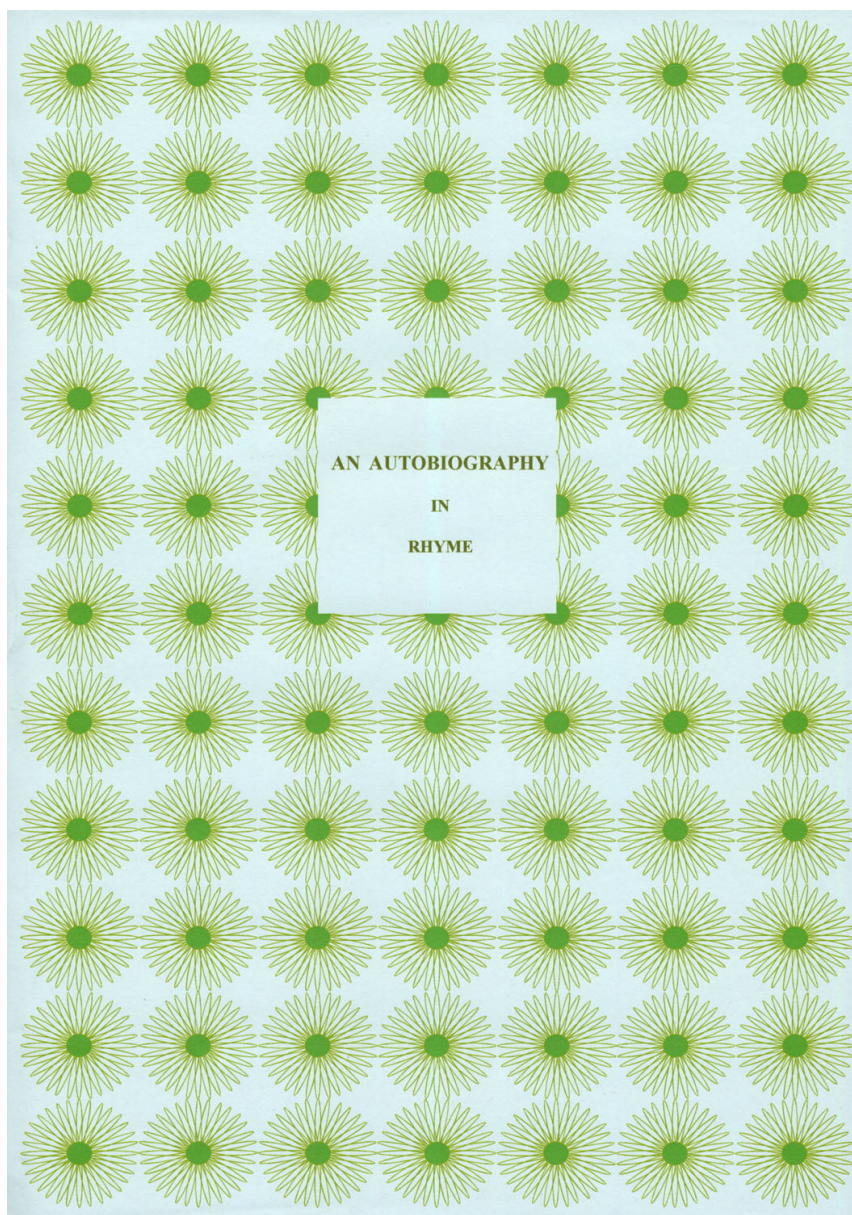
but of these two, who's bound for Hell?



# AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN RHYME

The First Eight Years

GRAHAM OVENDEN



## *Prelude*

These rhymes  
are first to entertain  
and thus, the author must take blame  
for any failing on his part  
in doing justice to the art  
of verse.

Or even worse, play to the play  
of pompous thought ...  
Though this more like the drivel wrought  
by critics of the joy of life.

Whose only pleasure is in strife:  
pen words, that meaning even less  
are writ' by them to mere' impress ...

So each and all who wear the pall  
make darkness of our dreams.  
Your's is the fate, take Eden's snake  
who'll tempt, then foil you schemes.

## *Postlude*

When thinking back to childhood days  
yes, all those secret paths and ways  
that took one into Nature's heart,  
who by the Gods our Grace impart.

The alchemy of simple things  
(not only birds but thought has wings).

The care, compassion, parent's joy  
and simple pleasure of a toy  
of simple means.

As days pass by each changing sky,  
the question then of how and why ...  
such beauty, what of dreams?

But all must out  
for age will doubt  
the visions of our past.

So cherish well  
who weaves the spell ...e3  
The child behind your mask.