

Translated from the Anglo-Saxon by

EDWIN MORGAN

THE RUIN

WONDER holds these walls. Under destiny destruction
 Castles has split apart; gigantic battlements are crumbling,
 Roofs sunk in ruin, riven towers fallen,
 Gates and turrets lost, hoarfrost for mortar,
 Rain-bastions beaten, cleft, pierced, perished,
 Eaten away by time. Earth's fist and grasp
 Holds mason and man, all decayed, departed;
 The soil grips hard; there a hundred generations
 Of the people have dwindled and gone. This wall bore well,
 Moss-grey and reddened, the revolutions of kingdoms,
 Stoutly withstood tempests. That great gate fell . . .
 Magnificent rose the fortresses, the lavish swimming-halls,
 The profuse and lofty glory of spires, the clangour of armies,
 The drinking-halls crammed with every man's delight,
 Till that was overturned by steadfast fate.
 The broad walls were sundered: the plague-days came:
 The brave men were rapt away by the bereaver,
 Their war-ramparts razed to desolate foundations,
 Their cities crumbled down. The restorers lie asleep,
 Armies of men in the earth. And so those halls are wastes,
 The once purple gates, and the bricks and wood are lying
 Scattered with the smashed roofs. Death crushed that place,
 Struck it flat to the hill, where once many a man
 Brilliant with gold and adazzle with costliest war-trappings,
 Happy, proud, and wine-flushed, glittered there in his
 battle-armour,
 Gazed over his treasures, on the silver and the curious stones,
 On the rich goods and possessions, on the precious cut jewels,
 And on this splendid city of the far-spread kingdom.
 The stone courts stood then; the hot stream broke
 Welling strongly through the stone; all was close and sweet
 In the bright bosom of the walls; and where the baths lay
 Hot at the heart of the place, that was the best of all. . . .

ROY FULLER

THE DIVIDED LIFE RE-LIVED

ONCE again the light refracted through the dusty crimson air
Leaves the spaces of the evening blurred and bare.
Bats that flicker round the edges of the square Victorian lawn
Symbolize the bourgeois souls from life withdrawn.

Now the nightingale arouses us upon the withered tree
With its disappointing, moving melody,
And against the chalky purple thrown by distant main-road arcs
Flow the tired suburban leaves like mouldy sparks.

Here the mower furred with grass like filings round a magnet's
pole,
Teacups left for ants to make our fortunes droll;
While we sit and try to think that everything is not too late—
Sparrows sitting on the sad outfield of fate.

Once and only once we were in touch with brutal, bloody life
When we got in or kept out of global strife;
And in desert or in dockyard met our coarser fellow men,
Wielding friendly gun or scrubber, not our pen.

How we innocently thought that we should be alone no more,
Linked in death or revolution as in war.
How completely we have slipped into the same old world of cod,
Our companions Henry James or cats or God.

Waiting for the evening as the time of passion and of verse,
Vainly hoping that at both we shan't get worse:
While outside the demon scientists and rulers of the land
Pile the bombs like busy crabs pile balls of sand.

And the best that we can wish for is that still the moon will rise
Enigmatic, cracked and yellow to men's eyes,
And illuminate the manuscripts of poems that foretold
All the ruin and survival of the old.