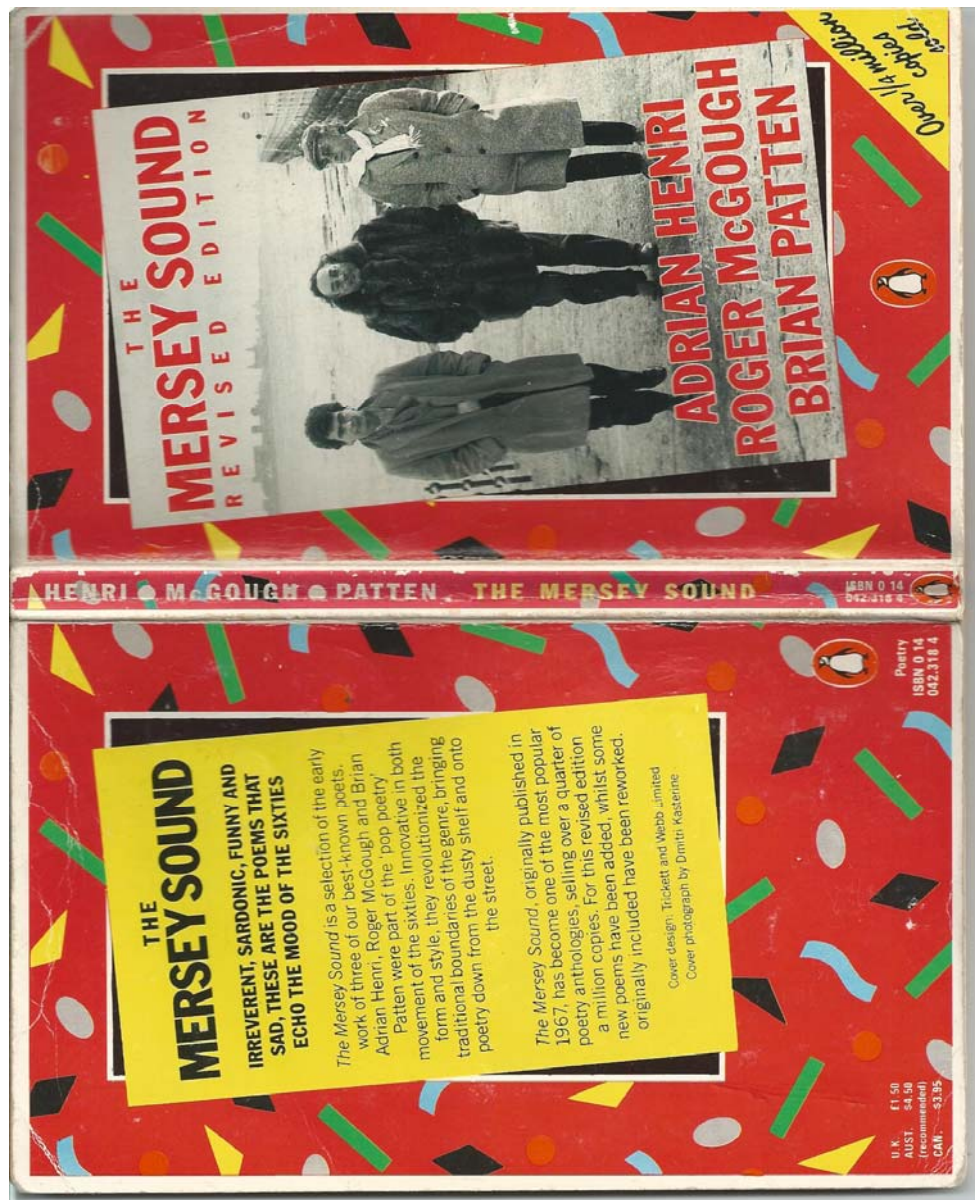




Poetry

Liverpool Poets (1960s)

Adrian Henri
 Roger McGough
 Brian Patten



Wat je in het algemeen moet kennen voor SE's (SchoolExamens)

1. De hoofdkenmerken van de behandelde schrijvers en stromingen kennen en kunnen herkennen in de aangeboden teksten en ook in ongezien materiaal.
2. De vragen en opdrachten bij de behandelde teksten kunnen beantwoorden als je de tekst erbij krijgt.
3. Indien van toepassing, de ontwikkeling van een schrijver of een stroming kunnen uitleggen.
4. Schrijvers en hun werken kunnen vergelijken: overeenkomsten en verschillen.
5. Indien van toepassing, iets kunnen vertellen over het leven van de behandelde schrijvers voor zover dat betrekking heeft op hun werk.
6. De schrijvers op basis van hun werk in de eeuw of in de tijd kunnen plaatsen.

Liverpool poets

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Liverpool Poets** are a number of influential 1960s poets from [Liverpool](#), England, influenced by 1950s [Beat poetry](#). They were involved in the 1960s Liverpool scene that gave rise to [The Beatles](#).

Their work is characterized by its directness of expression, simplicity of language, suitability for live performance and concern for contemporary subjects and references. There is often humour, but the full range of human experience and emotion is addressed.

Poets

The poets most commonly associated with this label are [Adrian Henri](#), [Roger McGough](#) and [Brian Patten](#). They were featured in a 1967 book *The Liverpool Scene* edited by Edward Lucie-Smith, with a blurb by Ginsberg and published by Donald Carroll.

The poets generally came from [a working class background](#) and went to [art college rather than university](#). There was a strong allegiance with pop music, and the values and effectiveness of that in reaching out to a wide audience informed the poetry. Readings took place in a pub or club environment.

The Mersey Sound

The anthology *The Mersey Sound* was published by Penguin in 1967, containing the poems of Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Brian Patten, and has remained in print ever since, selling in excess of 500,000 copies. It brought the three poets to "considerable acclaim and critical fame", and has been widely influential.

Criticism

For

S.N. Radhika Lakshmi observes "the Liverpool poets' approach to poetry differs from that of other poets in that they [consistently give the impression of being real people getting to grips with real and pressing situations](#)." She continues:

Like the French Symbolists, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, 'The Liverpool poets' believe that the [effect](#) that a [poem](#) produces is [more important than the poem itself](#); a poem should be considered as an 'agent' (that conveys the poet's [message](#)), rather than as an 'object'. The poetry of 'The Liverpool poets' is also characterized by the [undercurrent of sarcasm, irony and pungent wit](#), which runs through many of their

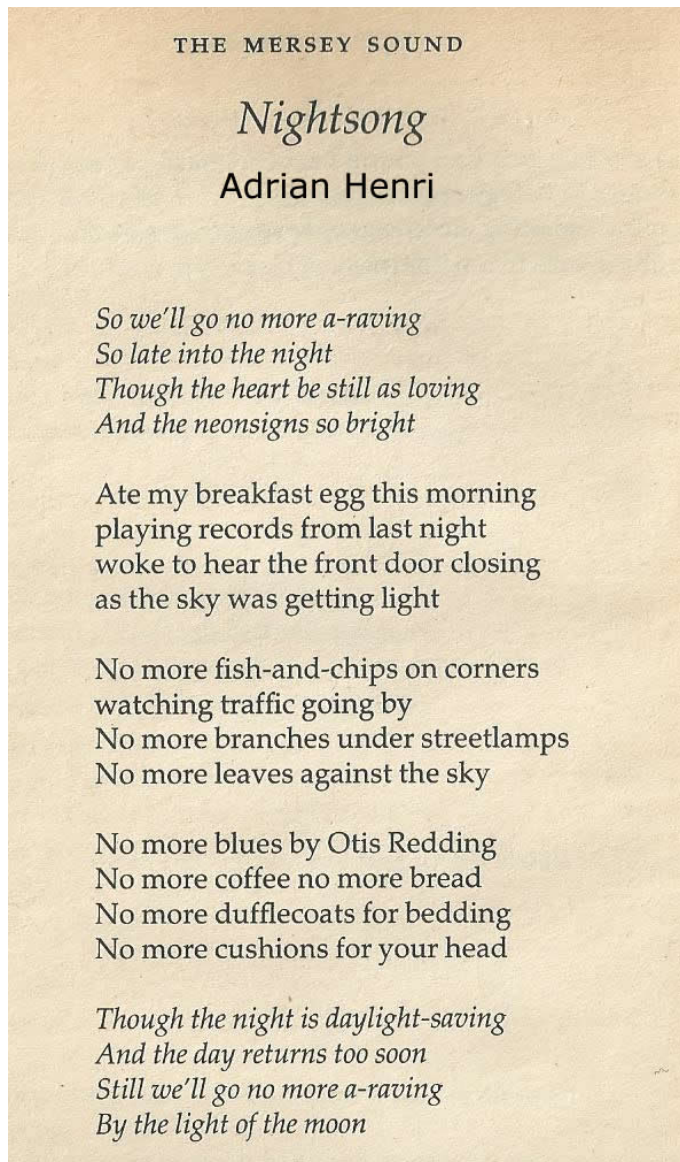
poems. They are also noted for their **directness of expression**, **simplicity of style**, and, (in the manner of Robert Frost), their deft handling of complicated ideas in **uncomplicated language**.

Against

The emergence of the Liverpool poets as pioneers of "pop poetry" in the UK engendered hostility from the literary establishment.

Alan Alvarez wrote about "the fashion for the diluted ('verwaterde') near-verse designed for mass readings and poetry-and-jazz concerts", linking it with pop lyrics as "the logic of a traditional form at its weariest", scolding "the poet resigns his responsibilities" and concluding, "what he offers is **not poetry**", a criticism remarkably similar to that made by F. Dalton in *The Times Literary Supplement*, on 31 June 1917 about "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "The fact that these things occurred to the mind of Mr. Eliot is surely of the very smallest importance to anyone, even to himself. They certainly have no relation to *poetry*...".

Adrian Henri (1932 – 2000)



Assignment 1

1. Look up words you don't understand.
2. Describe the form of the poem by the use of characteristics that you have read above.
3. So what do you think is the poems about? What kind of feeling is being expressed?

ADRIAN HENRI

Adrian Henri's Talking After Christmas Blues

Well I woke up this mornin' it was Christmas Day
And the birds were singing the night away
I saw my stocking lying on the chair
Looked right to the bottom but you weren't there
there was

apples
oranges
chocolates
. . . aftershave

– but no you.

So I went downstairs and the dinner was fine
There was pudding and turkey and lots of wine
And I pulled those crackers with a laughing face
Till I saw there was no one in your place
there was

mincepies
brandy
nuts and raisins
. . . mashed potato

– but no you.

Now it's New Year and it's Auld Lang Syne
And it's 12 o'clock and I'm feeling fine
Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot?
I don't know girl, but it hurts a lot
there was

whisky
vodka
dry Martini (stirred but not shaken)
. . . and 12 New Year resolutions

– all of them about you.

So it's all the best for the year ahead
As I stagger upstairs and into bed
Then I looked at the pillow by my side
. . . I tell you baby I almost cried
there'll be

Autumn
Summer
Spring
. . . and Winter

– all of them without you.

Assignment 2

The message of the poem will be quite clear. Ask your teacher to read the poem aloud. It practically seems a 'talking blues' in the style of Woody Guthrie. (Look up on The Internet.)

To what extent could you call the poem 'romantic'?

ADRIAN HENRI

Batpoem

(for Bob Kane and The Almost Blues)

Take me back to Gotham City
Batman

Take me where the girls are pretty
Batman

All those damsels in distress
Half-undressed or even less
The BatPill makes 'em all say Yes
Batman

Help us out in Vietnam
Batman
Help us drop that BatNapalm
Batman

Help us bomb those jungle towns
Spreading pain and death around
Coke 'n' Candy wins them round
Batman

Help us smash the Vietcong
Batman
Help us show them that they're wrong
Batman

Help us spread Democracy
Get them high on L.S.D.
Make them just like you and me
Batman

Show me what I have to do
Batman
'Cause I want to be like you
Batman

Flash your Batsign over Lime Street
Batmobiles down every crimestreet
Happy Batday that's when I'll meet
Batman

Assignment 3

1. Look up what you can find about: Batman and Gotham City, Vietnam, Vietcong, napalm etc.
2. Describe what this poem refers to.
3. What is the tone of the poem?

THE MERSEY SOUND

Love From Arthur Rainbow

In a villa called 'Much Bickering'
In a street called Pleasant Street
Living with her wicked parents
Was a princess, small and neat

She wanted to be an artist
So off to a college she went
And as long as she got a Diploma
They considered it money well spent

One day she met a poet
Who taught her all about life
He walked her down to the station
Then went back home to his wife

He came from the end of the rainbow
At least that's what she thought
The kind of love she wanted
The kind that can't be bought

But time and the last train to the suburbs
Killed the love that would never die
And he'll find another lover
And she'll sit at home and cry

Now she's reading through his letters
In her small schoolteacher flat
Dusty paint-tubes in the corner
Worn-out 'Welcome' on the mat

ADRIAN HENRI

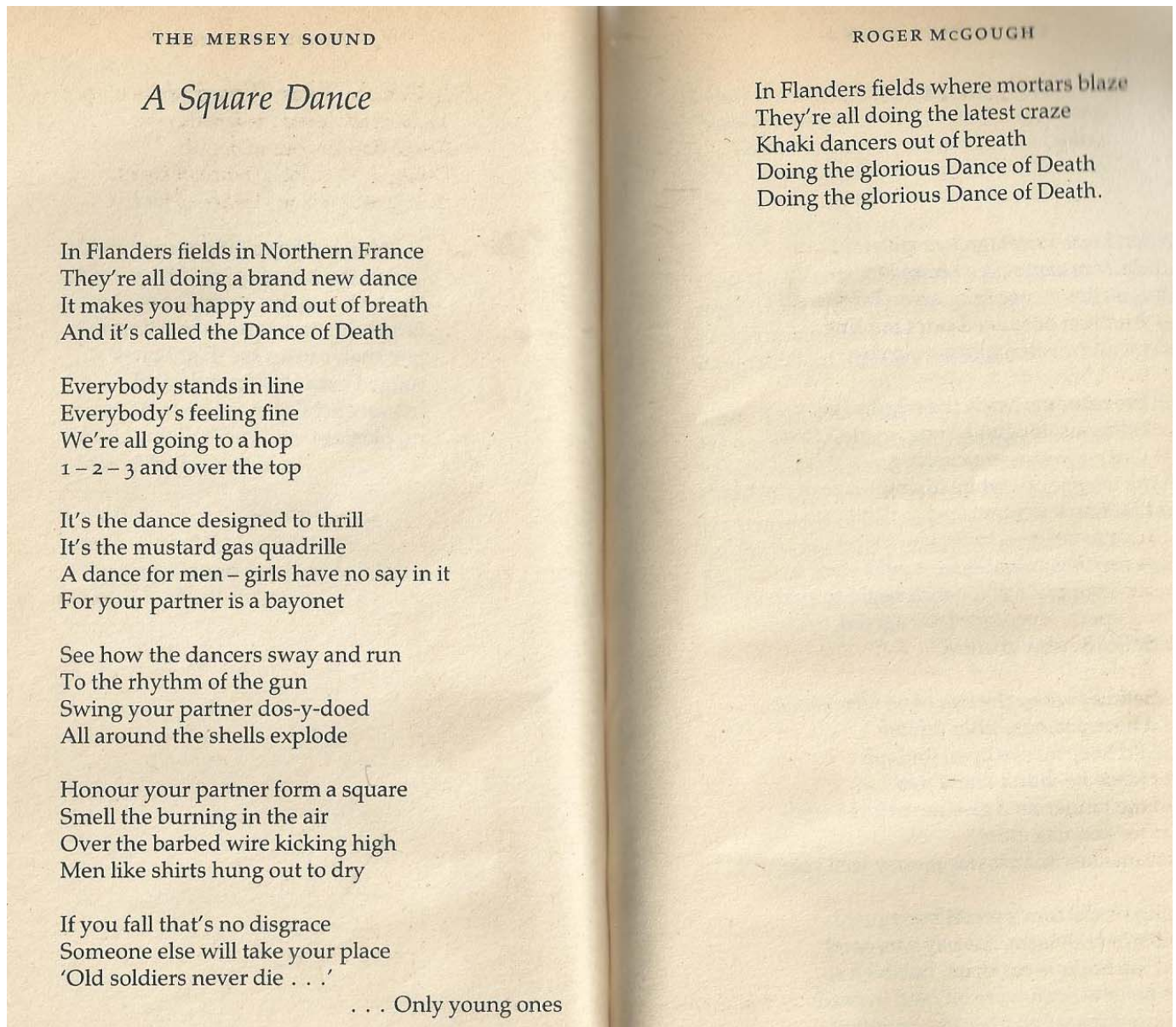
O the day she met Arthur Rainbow
There were roses all over town
There were angels in all the shopwindows
And kisses not rain coming down

Now it's off to work every morning
And back home for dinner at eight
For the gold at the end of the rainbow
Lies buried beneath her front gate.

Assignment 4

1. Mention some phrases where the poet is critical, sarcastic and/ or ironical. Shortly explain what you have found.
2. Try and describe the 'message' of the poem.

Roger McGough (1937 -)



Assignment 5

1. Compare this poem to *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae in your World War I handout.
2. Try and describe the sarcasm related to the so-called 'dance'.

THE MERSEY SOUND

At Lunchtime

When the bus stopped suddenly
to avoid damaging
a mother and child in the road,
the younglady in the green hat sitting opposite,
was thrown across me,
and not being one to miss an opportunity
i started to make love.

At first, she resisted,
saying that it was too early in the morning,
and too soon after breakfast,
and anyway, she found me repulsive.
But when i explained
that this being a nuclearage
the world was going to end at lunchtime,
she took off her green hat,
put her busticket into her pocket
and joined in the exercise.

The buspeople,
and there were many of them,
were shockedandsurprised,
and amusedandannoyed.
But when word got around
that the world was going to end at lunchtime,
they put their pride in their pockets
with their bustickets
and made love one with the other.
And even the busconductor,
feeling left out,
climbed into the cab,
and struck up some sort of relationship with the driver.

ROGER McGOUGH

That night,
on the bus coming home,
we were all a little embarrassed.
Especially me and the younglady in the green hat.
And we all started to say
in different ways
how hasty and foolish we had been.
But then, always having been a bitofalad,
i stood up and said it was a pity
that the world didnt nearly end every lunchtime,
and that we could always pretend.
And then it happened . . .

Quick asa crash
we all changed partners,
and soon the bus was aquiver
with white, mothball bodies doing naughty things.

And the next day
And everyday
In everybus
In everystreet
In everytown
In everycountry

People pretended
that the world was coming to an end at lunchtime.
It still hasnt.
Although in a way it has.

Assignment 6

1. What does this poem refer to? In other words, what period in the 20th century is this about?
2. What is humorous in the poems and what is serious?

ROGER MCGOUGH

Let Me Die a Youngman's Death

Let me die a youngman's death
not a clean & inbetween
the sheets holywater death
not a famous-last-words
peaceful out of breath death

When I'm 73
& in constant good tumour
may I be mown down at dawn
by a bright red sports car
on my way home
from an allnight party

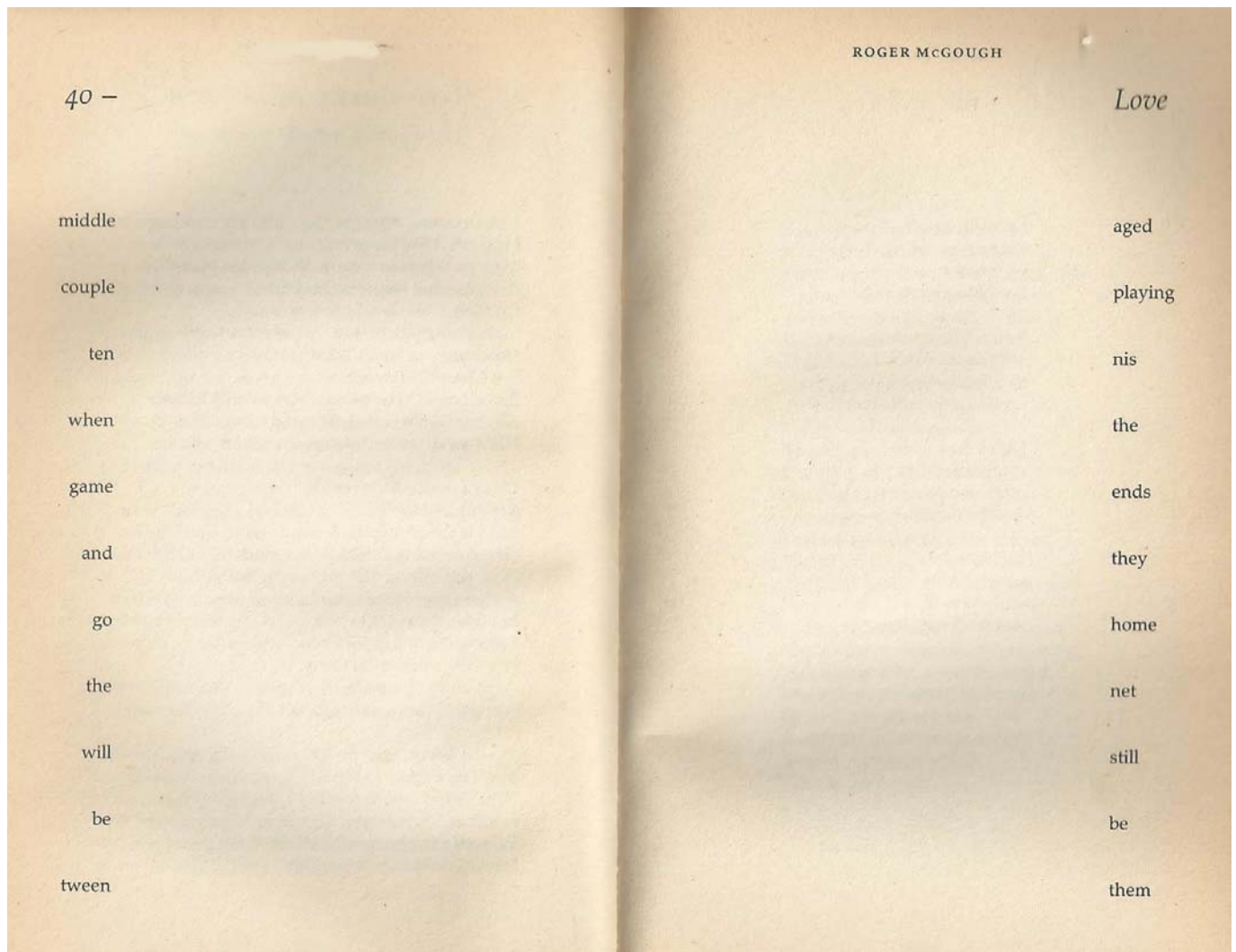
Or when I'm 91
with silver hair
& sitting in a barber's chair
may rival gangsters
with hamfisted tommyguns burst in
& give me a short back & insides

Or when I'm 104
& banned from the Cavern
may my mistress
catching me in bed with her daughter
& fearing for her son
cut me up into little pieces
& thow away every piece but one

Let me die a youngman's death
not a free from sin tiptoe in
candle wax & waning death
not a curtains drawn by angels borne
what a nice way to go' death

Assignment 7

What is the 'undercurrent of sarcasm' in this poem?



Assignment 8

Describe the humorous use of form and message in this poem.

Brian Patten (1946 -)

THE MERSEY SOUND

Little Johnny's Confession

Brian Patten

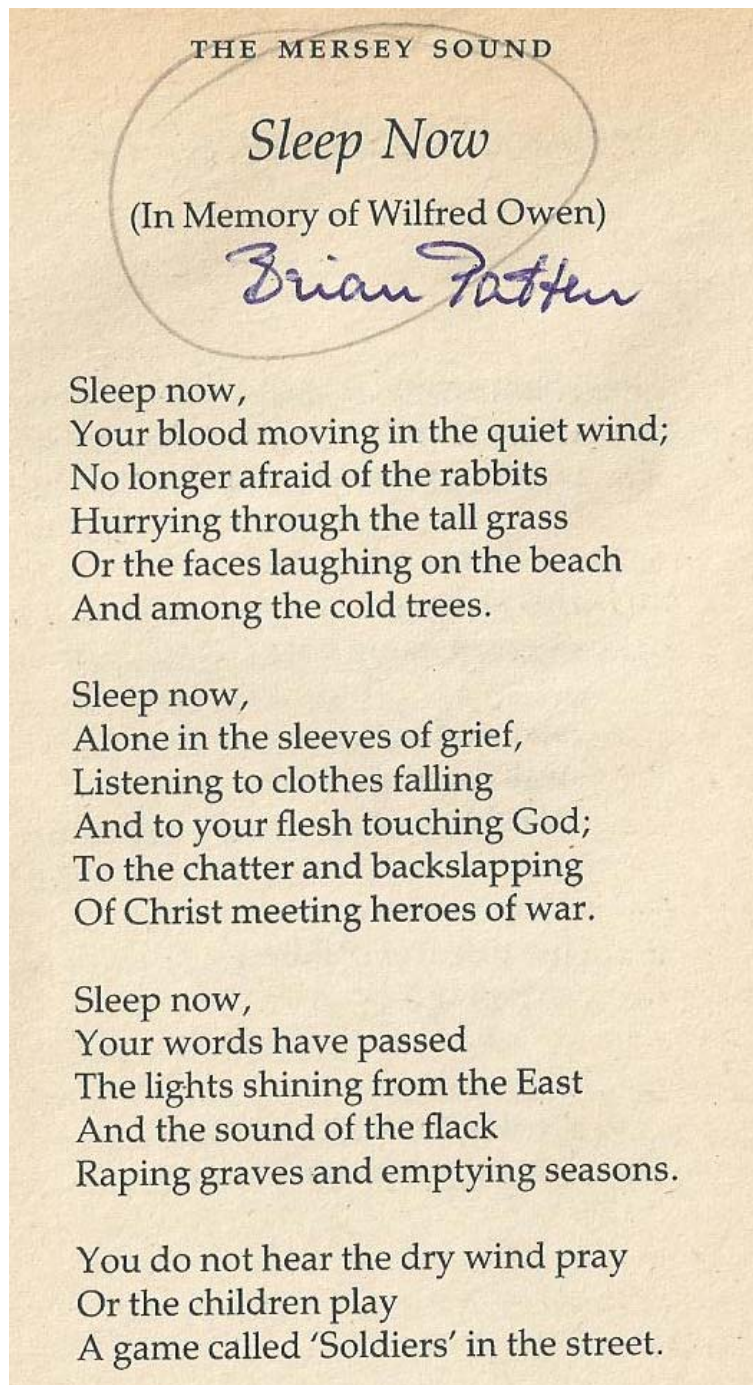
This morning
being rather young and foolish
I borrowed a machinegun my father
had left hidden since the war, went out,
and eliminated a number of small enemies.
Since then I have not returned home.

This morning
swarms of police with trackerdogs
wander about the city
with my description printed
on their minds, asking:
'Have you seen him,
He is seven years old,
likes Pluto, Mighty Mouse
and Biffo The Bear,
have you seen him, anywhere?'

This morning
sitting alone in a strange playground,
muttering Youve blundered Youve blundered
over and over to myself
I work out my next move
but cannot move;
the trackerdogs will sniff me out,
they have my lollypops.

Assignment 9

1. This poem was written in de 1960s. How realistic would it be now?
2. Does Johnny actually make confessions?



Assignment 10

Look up in your World War I handout who Wilfred Owen was. Read his poem *Dulce et Decorum Est*.

Try and work out the lyrical references in this poem.