

W. H. Auden (1907-73)

3 *Miss Gee*

Let me tell you a little story  
About Miss Edith Gee;  
She lived in Clevedon Terrace  
At Number 83.

She'd a slight squint in her left eye, 5  
Her lips they were thin and small,  
She had narrow sloping shoulders  
And she had no bust at all.

She'd a velvet hat with trimmings,  
And a dark grey serge costume; 10  
She lived in Clevedon Terrace  
In a small bed-sitting room.

She'd a purple mac for wet days,  
A green umbrella too to take,  
She'd a bicycle with shopping basket 15  
And a harsh back-pedal brake.

The Church of Saint Aloysius  
Was not so very far;  
She did a lot of knitting,  
Knitting for that Church Bazaar. 20

Miss Gee looked up at the starlight  
And said, 'Does anyone care  
That I live in Clevedon Terrace  
On one hundred pounds a year?'

She dreamed a dream one evening 25  
That she was the Queen of France  
And the Vicar of Saint Aloysius  
Asked Her Majesty to dance.

But a storm blew down the palace,  
She was biking through a field of corn, 30  
And a bull with the face of the Vicar  
Was charging with lowered horn.

She could feel his hot breath behind her,  
He was going to overtake;  
And the bicycle went slower and slower 35  
Because of that back-pedal brake.

Summer made the trees a picture,  
Winter made them a wreck;  
She bicycled to the evening service  
With her clothes buttoned up to her neck. 40

She passed by the loving couples,  
She turned her head away;  
She passed by the loving couples  
And they didn't ask her to stay.

Miss Gee sat down in the side-aisle, 45  
She heard the organ play;  
And the choir it sang so sweetly  
At the ending of the day,

Miss Gee knelt down in the side-aisle,  
She knelt down on her knees; 50  
'Lead me not into temptation  
But make me a good girl, please.'

The days and nights went by her  
Like waves round a Cornish wreck;  
She bicycled down to the doctor 55  
With her clothes buttoned up to her neck.

She bicycled down to the doctor,  
And rang the surgery bell;  
'O, doctor, I've a pain inside me,  
And I don't feel very well.' 60

Doctor Thomas looked her over,  
And then he looked some more;  
Walked over to his wash-basin,  
Said: 'Why didn't you come before?'

Doctor Thomas sat over his dinner, 65  
Though his wife was waiting to ring,  
Rolling his bread into pellets;  
Said, 'Cancer's a funny thing.'

