

## Bill Mycock



Bill Mycock was born at Lower Loxley, near Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, in 1934. He was educated at Bradley Street School, Uttoxeter; Denstone village school and Alleyne's Grammar School, Uttoxeter. Instead of farming, the occupation of all his male and most of his female relatives, he took up aeronautical engineering. He later worked in industrial journalism and photography as an information officer and editor for an international group of engineering companies. He and his wife live at St Agnes in Cornwall. They have a daughter and a son. His first collection, *Keeping House*, was published by fal in 2004 and can be ordered from [www.falpublications.co.uk](http://www.falpublications.co.uk)

## **PENANCE**

*(written for Shrove Tuesday)*

No. All jokes aside –  
we've lived it up like heathens.  
Our bread is baked.  
Tomorrow our backs will bleed.  
We must learn to be lean. And clean.  
Leave no crumbs.  
Be meek as sheep among rocks.  
Is it self-denial or discipline,  
self-satisfaction or what? Is there a difference?  
Denying cravings, binding  
blistered feet, eating no sweets.

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I want to know how you get [Church].

Is it a bit like going to the library  
but with music and lessons?

Shall I tell you what I think: churches frighten me to death.

Libraries lend you things. This soul is long  
past return. Lost in transit.

In hardback, as I remember.

Very clean, a little foxing,  
until the spine fell apart,  
spilling pages in the mud of trenches.

Only the covers remain: black,  
shone like best boots until they got scuffed  
defacing the author's name.

Out of print now. If it's true  
what people say, there'll be one hell  
of a fine to pay. More than I can shell out

*...I lent you last time.*

*Not any more, I hear you say.*

*Bill Mycock*

## **MARIES AU VILLAGE**

I am drawn to the idea of opening  
my arms and flying  
in the manner of a Chagall painting  
over rooftops and church spire  
lambs' wool cockerels and leaping red goats  
in the cool blue light of crescent moons  
holding the hand of my wife

in her bridal dress  
to stop her floating away

But there is such gossip in the village

Footnote:

*Manes au Village* oil, tempera on canvas by Marc Chagall, 1969

*Bill Mycock*

## **THE VERGER SHOWS US CATHEDRAL TREASURES**

### **- THE JEWELLED CHALICE**

Cemented to its cup and stem are stones  
from rings, cuff-links, pendants and necklaces,  
gems parishioners gave - they sure  
of what the wine might hold. Their earthly symbols  
eloquent: *This is what our bones know.*

Today their souls live on in our hands  
as we pass the chalice amongst us. They sure  
that *this* is not their only afterlife.  
But in the blood of Christ  
is the communion of their souls.

*Bill Mycock*

## **BEYOND BELIEF**

Dear God,

Why

after yet another near do

do I look up

at the little cloud

that's gone

and thank you

with every ounce

of flesh I've got left

when I know

you're not there

in your white bearded

omniscience?

Anyway, good luck

in your continuing success

over Old Nick.

Your affectionate atheist

- well, you know who.

*Bill Mycock*