

Is that when the true essence of my life,  
the essence that, as soon as I recapture it,  
spoils even more the weevilled taste  
of growing old?

### THE SHOOTING

I saw a man shoot a girl  
like shooting a rabbit

Calmly he stood there  
on the disused garden wall,  
the rifle at his shoulder,  
sighting down on her,  
along its merciless barrel.

As the bullet hit her head  
she threw up her arms  
and slowly fell forward  
as if she were playing  
cops and robbers.

After the shooter had gone  
I stood hovering over her,  
shocked to the centre of my guts,  
making softly crying sounds inside,  
time one long, endless second,  
not knowing what to do,  
seeing the life ebbing fast,  
the young life that was wasted.

Coming down in the lift  
she had giggled about  
a word whispered in her ear;  
she was not pretty,  
but she was alive then,  
at 17 an unclaimed promise,  
enjoying life as only young girls can.

The terror of death  
meted out so suddenly  
while I thought it was a game,  
tinged my sadness about her  
with fear and apprehension  
until I was unable  
to recognize one nor the other.

An ambulance took her away  
a crumpled corpse under a light blanket:  
the blood she'd spilled was left behind;  
I gave my name to the police:  
I saw it happen right in front of me,  
I was a witness to this murder.

The shooter was declared insane:  
I never got a chance  
to tell the world how sorry I am  
I thought her silly enough  
to play cops and robbers  
in the middle of the street  
in the middle of the day  
there in Spring Hill, in Brisbane town,  
on that bright and sunny day  
in, mind you, September '76!

