

The student in the garret closed
The book whose end he'd never read;
The old man left his pot of beer
Unfinished; man and wife in bed

Embraced one last time: all the past
Evaporated in the heat
Of present fear; and every soul
Stood stripped before the Judgement seat.

So clear, so chilling ... Yet I see
No searchlights, hear no bombs explode;
The people study, drink, make love
And sleep and dream all down this road

Where I too live. And now the siren
Stops. And I'm fumbling jingling keys
Outside my door ... Light spits of rain;
A tremor in the chestnut trees.

Tropics

Books get stifled, too:
Crinkling in the Wet season,
Buckling in the Dry

Breathing easily only
When we open and read them.