**Autumnal thoughts**

*Michaelmas Term, 1984*

Next year, when Autumn’s artist touch anoints these trees with wine and flame;

while tranquil waters chuckle by, and lofty on its gilded height

the stout Cathedral’s sun-warmed stones

embrace the mellow morning light

and distant laughter shakes the air - but gently from a world elsewhere -

I won’t be here.

Three short years, yet half a life; then time moves on, but this place bides

unchanging in its autumn glow.

Like chinks of light through velvet drapes, I glimpse the future’s promised hope

and possibilities and fears.

But here, all is stability, and next year, when the seasons turn

to new beginnings and fresh dreams

it will be other feet than mine that echo through these cobbled lanes

In search of wisdom and of life.

*Autumn 2022*

Near-forty years have slipped away, the future fears lie in the past.

Which friendships held, or passed away?

Which troubles came? which joys prevailed?

Which values formed a lasting core?

Mature anxieties intrude

Displacing those from long ago

Those nervous, optimistic hopes

That launched me so expectantly

into the adult world.

The future never shows its hand

the light-pierced drapes drift back and forth

Revealing or concealing all.

Yet intervening years dissolve with every glimpse of fire-hued trees,

And memories of those golden years when all was future, all unknown.