

## The Reader and The Writer

It always gives me great delight  
When someone reads the words I write.  
Recently a book I penned  
Was bought by someone in Southend.

My friends, however, refused to credit  
That someone had actually read it.  
They said he'd probably bought it as a peg,  
To support a wonky table leg.

To prove my doubting critics wrong,  
I set off on a journey long,  
Determined to find that A.N.Other  
Who'd read my book from front to cover.

I searched for months across the nation,  
Stopping at every railway station,  
Covering thousands of miles of track,  
To find who'd read my paperback.

And after many months of searching,  
Into my carriage a man came lurching.  
Wonder of wonders! In his hands he bore  
My book about a kindly whore.

Hoping his imagination had been stirred,  
I boasted I had written every word.  
Alas, when asked to sign his autograph,  
He said my book was staggeringly naff.

Reading it had been a dreadful strain.  
Once put down, he could not pick it up again.  
And he asked a most embarrassing question:  
"Why does your book give me indigestion?"

With no more hope of literary fame,  
And suffering deep and abject shame,  
I cursed the day I told my betters  
Of my intention to become a man of letters.

Deeply depressed, I returned to London town,  
And informed my agent with a frown:  
"There is no demand here, or across the pond,  
For the paperbacks of Phil Hammond."

She answered: "Perhaps it would be for the best  
From literature to take a rest.  
Listen to music, or make pottery.  
Writing is far too great a lottery.

"If Dickens and Trollope were alive today,  
They'd earn their money in a different way.  
To studio bosses they'd be beholden

And scorned by latter day Samuel Goldwyns.

Go find yourself another role.  
Don't dig yourself into a hole.  
Just because you've been put on the rack  
By someone who disliked your paperback.

Gall and wormwood Thomas Hardy tasted  
When Jude the Obscure was excoriated.  
He said: 'By God, now I'll show 'em,'  
And spent his last years writing poems."

Which example I intend to follow,  
And hoping it will be read tomorrow,  
A monumental saga I have planned:  
Consisting of one zillion verses in longhand.

Fate does, however, grant consolation.  
It is, after all, no great deprivation  
To be among the myriad of unread writers,  
When once I soared aloft on wingèd fighters.

Only one painting in his lifetime Van Gogh sold.  
The rest were rubbish he was told.  
Nor did Moses see the Promised Land,  
The destiny he thought his God had planned.

Perhaps some alien far beyond our reach  
Will one day find my manuscript on the beach,  
And say his story needed telling.  
Pity about the grammar and the spelling!