

# Gavin Ewart

## The Irritation Of Life

The deepest irritation is the irritation of Life —  
what is it? why is it? we all of us ask  
and a million men shout

*The Voice of the  
People*  
'It's the wife!'

but that's the music hall folklore, the cry of a working class  
stuck with a marriage that was sometimes for good  
and quite often for bad;

'Oh, alas,

*Divorce and  
birth control hard  
to come by*

and alack!' was the cry of the poets, the sensitive ones —  
'I suffer!', 'You suffer!' they told us ten times —  
till the War Poets spoke:

'Hear the guns!

*see Tennyson  
and Matthew Arnold  
Wilfred Owen for  
example*

*They can boom a confounding futility into your ear!*  
But it's not so dramatic — it's death by a thousand cuts —  
as the golfers all wail

'The missed putts!'

*à quoi bon?  
Small  
frustrations have a  
cumulative effect,*

and the cricketers pronounced Caught, when they haven't hit the ball,  
combine with the lovers in touch only by phone  
to complain day and night

'I alone

*both sporting and  
amatory*

have the devilish luck!' and the illnesses gather round,  
colds, cramps, cancers, indigestions that creep  
to the low *and* the top

of the heap!

*and not even the rich  
and successful can  
avoid the setbacks  
of the human condition*