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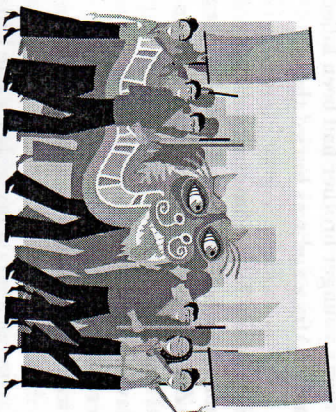
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A hotel near
a Waterford waterfront,
with flags
decorating streets,
small boats
bobbing in the bay.

Toast & marmalade,
coffee & an ageing
Irishman, balding,
on holiday,
re-visiting those
who'd stayed at home.

Worked in Dublin finance
in lesser bureaucracy
on the outskirts
of development

Wit & charm
stayed young
on his gnarled face;
his astute brain
reminded of O'Casey, Shaw
and an IRA land
where - once - even nuns
clapped like
patriots at plays of bitterness.

Irishman, living
the timeless moment, rich
with the comic, tragic
wisdom of the saints,
& Nazareth's poverty,
time-torn men & women
seek your comfort
& your strength.

A Rumanian Count

In a basement flat
festooned with crafts
& luxuriant colours -
blue, purple, violet, red -
two people lived -
the Rumanian count
and his wife.

She'd lost her nerve in a
Rumanian twilight prison,
had found some difficulty
sleeping in Athens
where Greeks had given
them hospitality.

The count had been
high in government;
then sacked, & workless,
he'd lied to find
a job in printing;
discovered, he had work
only through imprisonment.

Released through friends,
his delicate hands now
made fabrics of creation
in an Athens basement room.

'Did he, I asked,
like the Rumanian novelist
Petru Dumitru & his novel
Incognito about
the presence of love
in evil's depths & hovels?'
He said he
couldn't trust his talent;
he'd compromised his fight
against the communists.
'Could I
sell his printed wares
in London?'

They lived, half-lived,
speaking French.

Jesus, sensitive extoller
of lilies in the field,
can a count with delicate
fingers, adorning creation
from a backroom, also find
a place in God's creation?

A man called Willi Brandt

The TV screen
disclosed the news-
then an interview
with a man:
a German man for others.

The sitting-room cracked
with news & views,
the face of a German
who'd put flowers
on Buchenwald,
knelt at Anselwitz,
walked in silence
through the trees of Bonn
& hovering
between life & death,
stood erect before
shouted threats & the Berlin Wall...

The sitting-room cracked
with hidden English emotion,
memories of father's brother
back home from Egypt in '45,
mother's dead young brother
buried unknown in Africa's soil.

Here in the sitting-room
passed over by bombs -
& bombers - bound for
Coventry & London,
a new kind of German,
tempered by Norwegian fjords,
who'd walked quietly
through the 1930s
whilst others roared in crowds,
now was opening paths,
breaking silences, accepting guilt.

History will remember -
as a custodian of gratitude,
the German Samaritan:
we in our sitting-room will remember -
choking- our German TV hour.

Nina Simone on TV

Electric fingers,
tall, thin, aristocratic
-the face of a black woman,
the mother of soul.
Singer for TV viewing,
audience chosen
by sedate invitation,
the world called
for songs of switching mood.

Nina Simone,
eclectic but centred
on race: a piano,
a microphone & a voice
switching from soft to loud,
penetrating hardened hearts
& suburban vehemence.

Her finale quiet,
a song for Martin
Luther King,
a focus for emotion:
'The King of Love
is dead!'

Love, love, love -
the American word,
debased, destroyed,
re-minted by the American
assassinated
for his love.

The black-white keys
her tribute in harmony
- & underneath a touch
- bringing the thrust
of diversity.

Jesus, many mood man,
enlarge the boundaries
of our of our harmonies.

Zacchens

Little old lady,
shuffling by,
turned to see
from the back of the crowd
the head of state
who didn't even notice
those in front...

Fusty old beggar,
sat on a box,
hands gnarled,
matches for sale,
the flashy visitor
stalking by
couldn't see for
the boutiques.

Child of city dreams,
nose pressed against window,
hoping for cash to buy
those toys & trinkets,
the policeman didn't see
the glint of gullibility,
only greed.

Girl in the shop-
selling, selling,
quickly pushing up
her sales,
a job change each six months
- no-one noticed mascara
on a face full of hesitation, hate.

People of nowhere
& somewhere,
come, dine in my house;
see, you are recognised
as a man, a woman,
I love;
today enjoy my festivity -
Zacchens will be with me.

George

Clouds puckered blue,
white houses
flanked by spidery trees;
is this your England,
lover of Brixton
living between Jamaica
and south west two?

Green waves
of cabbages,
a lonely poplar,
edges of dawn
silhouetting a tramp
leaning on a battered
gate - are your
children cosmopolitan
or rural?

They do not belong to
any one's earth,
only to a conning world
of newness, brightness,
rich diversity -
only yearn for a time
when this mottled earth
will be your home
when trees & nature
will unite to declare
the richness of the city.

And I,
with you,
will be a tramp
of the earth,
silhouettes of Christ,
who made the journey
to Jerusalem,
& loved the hills
of Galilee.

Senor Rodriguez

My friend and I stood
at the prison's gates;
the soldier with
bayonet was not sure
we could go in: after persuasion
he allowed us through
to proffer a tourist
parcel for a prisoner
of politics.

The man on the prison
door was ill at ease;
like the frontier police
he wanted to know
the contents of the parcel,
And who sent it.

A friend in England!
No a prisoner
cannot receive gifts
from friends: anyway,
'he's in Madrid!'
"No, you cannot see the
Governor: he is out;
the interpreter is not
here: open the parcel."

Senor Rodriguez,
one day I'll tell you
about the bombless,
harmless parcel which
never reached you in
Madrid: how we came to
remin you of the watching
world of Amnesty, with
its willing diversity
for speech.

One day, together,
we'll hear the laughter
of children overcoming
the cackle of byrnes.
Till, then, spirit of Jesus,
liberate all prisoners
of conscience imprisoned
in narrow circumscribed worlds.

Japanese Man on the Tube

Asiatic,
inscrutable Japanese man
on the tube,
pictures of Osaka, the
choking city where, to set
an example, the mayor walks
to work: Dave Brubeck's '
Tokio traffic'-jazz
impressions of Japan:
Dag Hammarskjold, late on
burning nights, high, in
United Nations' towers -
writing haiku...

Inscrutable Japanese man
on the tube
tea-drinking, expo-trading,
Japan man and woman,
imitated by actors,
defeated by yanks,
cancer incidence high
as the west.

Makers of cameras, knives,
forks, cars, everything
on earth: an ancient
emperor, violent sex;
neighbour for Beijing,
and richest Asians in town.

My Japanese faces
images, or pictures full
of the truth of Buddhist
paradox?

Jew Jesus,
hidden in our images,
why are you so strange to white people,
yet so liked by them...?



A Star is Born

Melody haunting the years
with tinsel, making a 'star'
from 'the Wizard of Oz';
pucker-faced, undergrown
girl, sought only for the
sparkle of your champagne.

Comedienne with, zest,
half-child, half-wife,
here in the Classic cinema,
two miles from the Chelsea
penthouse where you took
the last breath of your life
-both loved and hated -
I watch your screen husband
dive into the sea to save you
from the shame of his drunken
debauchery

In his ennobling suicide,
the irony of your life;
in the reality of your film
you fill the stage with song
as tingling picture-hands
declare 'A Star is born'
again.

Slowly the film lights dim,
the brutal camera moves on;
now you're gold dust,
pin-prick Judy,
fading from life's grim
celluloids.

Your marigold film ends,
but your violet life has
already faded,
leaving a world's childhood
memories wizards, mystery,

magic,
beyond our, beyond your,
evanescent sadness.

Jesus, bright star
burning in our firmaments,
I'm glad you allowed
the unusual women of the world
to be so very close to you



Stefan

Squat, solid Pole
pouring rosé
in a Kensington basement,
chicken cooking,
Mendelssohn & a piano
near a Polish history book.

A loving couple: friends
giving hospitality -
an English lady & the
last, lingering lostness
of an East European history.

A three-way intimacy
reveals a Polish spirit
sapped by the long, listless,
leathsome journey to
Siberia in '44, the
crippling winter snow & the
joyality of Russian peasants
far from Moscow, free from
the ever-nagging criticism.

A Polish yearning
for a loved-lost steppe-land
scars his heart, frozen by
the terror of the past, &
the underemployment of the
years - a London bank clerk
for ever.

A Polish gentleman,
an English typing lady,
aging, alone, majestic &
faithful, yet their
pedestrian life where an
ordinary man loved an
ordinary woman in ordinary
ways, led to a Cana
companionship in their
Gethsemane.

Daddy, you're not English

Daddy, you're not English,
are you? The girl, just
in from school, shy,
reticent, burst out...

A room
in Shepherd's Bush,
a downtown dormitory
where stately-state houses
are decently dressed
by migrants from Serbia..
Daddy, you're not English.
You work in a factory

off the Western Avenue,
keep hours nine to five,
with overtime,
Sundays off,
love your wife,
bring the family up.

You're not English.
You light the candles
at the gracious liturgy,
turn for solace
to its Serbian tongue,
open expansively
with exiles nurturing
Gloria in excelsis,
stoking memories
of Sarajevo & Belgrade...

Daddy, you're not English
are you? Was she ten -
or twice her age?
Fretted by motorway living
or gaily enjoying
Shepherd's Bush Green?
Did her knife pierce his
heart, her hands, eyes,
touch, seem near or far?

Jesus, liberated from
your own culture, free us
to enjoy a child's spontaneity.

Alone in south London

Beautiful woman
in south west nineteen;
slim, gracious,
exquisite in sensitivity,

Touches of Sri Lanka
& Greece, experience
of Strabourg & Perth,
born in India, where
do you belong?

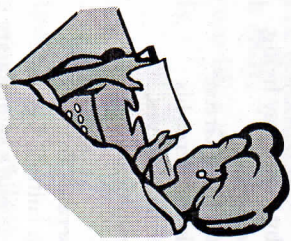
Sad at life, its length,
its breadth, eager for the
unusual in the everyday.

Two-roomed flat dweller
in S.W.19, unmarried,
yearning, reaching out
for love...

Typist, a work cog
with beauty - I love you
when near & when afar;
you cradle my hopes,
nurture my longings...

-But you go your way,
giving
& receiving
alone.

Jesus,
I'm glad
you enjoyed Mary's love
& you did not marry...



'Miss Zambia'

She was sexy, eighteen,
a Zambian white, living
from a British passport.
Education - convent in
Zimbabwe; parents'
background - house-building
south of Purley.

Visited the Portobello
Road, Carnaby Street
(the world knows flashy
clothes not democratic
British life) - and the
theatre.

Outside, one man, drunk,
headrest - a cement step,
drapery for a pavement,
Miss Zambia says:
'We must stop, assist him,'

But what's help?
Tell the police,
he'll head for court again;
ring up social workers
& they'll groan;
leave him there - & what?

Fast forward two hours
& the theatre trip is over.
'A policeman - they're
never where they're wanted!'
Not here, nor the Charing
Cross Road, Trafalgar
Square perhaps - pigeons
& police are always there.

'Officer, there's a man
drunk, anonymous,
dead to all worlds, his
last drink trickling
across the pavement now!'
Miss Zambia had seen the
West End.

Jesus, fancy celebrating
life by hanging there
with down and outs.

Tarcisus

A black face haunted
by human poverty, hands
of finery, delicate yet
strong, rare as fine
lace, sculptured by a
vibrant God.

Asian to the heart,
Buddha's light in his eyes,
the catholic centuries
in his head; trying to
live Assisi's life as
traffic hoots & flows
announce a city world,
tourists by the dozen
under St Peter's Dome
forget Christ's claim
on every living thing.

A tongue of silence
& power in his words,
angry at barren Western
ways, an interior life
of burning fire making him
love the Light in all creation.
Twenty-five & moved
to tears by the broken
Jeremiah, exalted by a
Sri Lanka which holds
him in its power - whose
joys, whose tears, which
person's secrets
will unfold before you,
what hidden mysteries of
Nazareth will God unravel
in you, refining the centre
of your startled life?

Sri Lanka's history, Asia's
socialism may arrest you,
but a Christ of all peoples
has set his unquenchable
flame in the hills & valleys
of this broken world
& asks you now to break
his bread & wine with joy
& root his love in
each one's twisted heart.

John

News bulletins
slowly announced
the last glad hours of
the rotund old man.

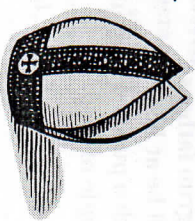
The gathered three hundred
were caught up in radio
reporting life where
there was no sadness only
joy, mixed with gratitude
tears, for the benign old
father's humorous parting
as he left the worldly
people he'd so gaily loved.

The old man's death, ripe
in the wisdom of peasantry
opened a

second Pentecost as
John the twenty-third
walked across Italian
fields & paths of the
far-flung earth- the big
representative of the
little world of Don Camillo.

Slowly he died,
even waking to tell his
troubled confères he
wasn't just yet dead!

Soon daffodils & jonquils,
tulips & hyacinths,
opened in
laughter & applause
& nature was healed as she
said 'Goodbye' to the man
who brought fire to her
hearths & warmth to cold
heads & hearts.



Joyce

American, covered with,
badges of liberation
movements, your heart
afloat with the injustice
of Vietnam-
can you ever
bear the shame which could
bring your people forgiveness life?

Joyce, friend who hates
the American pseudo-
glamour world, will you
ever find an answer to the
un-disclosed mystery of pain
in me - and you?

Confidant of all races,
half Marx-lover & admirer of the
comedy of the Marx
brothers, we are all insane
& in that knowledge of
insanity lies a sanity...

The police who people your
world, the blacks who burn
your cities, the war-
resisters who tear up their
draft cards, the women whom
you encourage to seek a
liberation from the
usualness of men, salute you in
the morning when a New
England fall with russet
leaves clad in gold will
fill your land with singing
& the descendants of the
pilgrim fathers
will be at home
with a purified pilgrim
people of God.

Carnival

Miles away from London
the trumpets are blaring,
resonant & free,
miles away from London
the carnival is over,
cascading across history.

Gone my Tuesday ride,
the nightmare newsman's
cry, when every black
face hid a saint & the
girl in purple, the West
Indian boys in red,
waiting for soul &
reggae life to start,
flashed by in petrol time.

Powerless now - my grief
& hints of anger, the
news-reel shots of a
million African faces
& a Chicago twenties ride;
& the record about this
wonderful world.

Only the scent of
honeysuckle in late
night summer heat keeps
alive the constancy of joy.

Miles away from London
they buried the carnival
singer, who shouted joy
through a century's
tortured history
& proclaimed in jazz
the resurrection story of a man.

The newsvendor's notice-
'Satchmo Dies' - that's
all it had to say - has
other captions tonight
about other people's worlds
miles away from London.

But in a world's heart
Louis Armstrong
never died.



Cana

A blue candle in a
green sherry bottle,
a tankard of beer,
full, frothy;

one cider glass sipped.

A nun, several

priests incognito

& a bawdy Glasgow song

from the swaying

column stacking the

walls, the setting for the

wiry man, in red tie

& elastic fingers,

born from French-Irish

life, with a brain

which could have cropped

degrees, to sing

'Those were the days,'

with the tongue of Piat

The gathering - friends,
at a party, with a five-guitar
backing, blue,
green, orange tie &
trouser drapery,

merging with the straight-
laced hair; distinct only

the firm Guyanese, supple,
willowy, twisting to the

calypso rhythms and
shaming a western world.

A table, left-over cheese,
a polished floor, mired

by black-white carpeting,
a folk singer in clipped

voice & dress & a song
about Belgium's long, low fields

and wastes - a hand empty of life in a
room full of the sparkle of Cana.

Places

Guernica

Children playing
in miniature cars
on the roundabout-
was the waltzing music
Swiss or Spanish-
the tune Clementine?

No Picasso postcards
in the tourist shops,
only views of houses
now rebuilt. Will they
recall Guernica from what
their Grandmothers said?

I who prayed
in the tiny chapel

behind the Parliament

building, where Basques

had pinned their hopes,

symbolised by their
ancient, gnarled oak,

I who smelt the polish on clean

chapel floors, pushed back

my tears, tried to be

Catholic, a Spaniard a

sharer in a town's

triumph & its tragedy.

Could I, a fast-car,
money-loaded tourist,

forget a generation's scruples?

Could I, born when the

fighting was born, be

hunted still by the

international hopes of a

malignant civil war?

Could I see, covered

by fascist temperance, the

joy of a people starting

a phoenix-rise in their

concrete newness as

children played..?



Golders Green

The Hippodrome audience,
mainly Golders Green,
few under thirty;
curtains drawn slowly
reveal the low, blue
lights; the atmosphere
electric with expectancy
from Jews, pagans, others.

A woman, a stage,
a microphone, a glittering
dress & the dusky, sultry
distant voice, the un-
forgettable presence,
the grandmère of glamour.

I'd like to sing some songs
I sang across North Africa,
in Prague, Berlin & London,
songs I sang to soldiers.'

The symbol for a generation,
fabulous, famous,
Marlene Dietrich, your
sparkle, courage, against
Nazi politicians, the
courage of creation.

Incredible German,
inexhaustible woman,
known, yet unknown,
hauntingly singing
'Everyone's gone to the moon.'

You play with the final
curtain, slipping away as
the stage lights go down,
your mystery,
the mystery of light
in darkness,
the mystery of woman,
creator of man...

Redhill Station

The United Nations
local meeting over
I offered to take the
Countess to the station
for her train. How long,
I wondered, could I steal
for talk with this
woman speaking nobility,
reminder of a husband
whose life was taken
by Adolf Hitler & whose
bravery spans the fading
colours of each autumn.

I had thought for long,
I said, Luther's firm
injunction to Germans to
obey the state, the rise
of one great nation from
zones of princely power,
were a painful, linked
connexion in Europe's
scarcrow history.

The Countess von Moltke
thought Luther was in part
to blame, a paver of
the way of errors, a
creator of 1914 & 1939,
where ideas grew quickly
when watered with a
country's blood & loyalty.

The train came swiftly,
went inexorably to its
Victoria home; but Count
von Moltke & his stand
in opposing Adolf Hitler,
Luther & the obedience of
four centuries, penetrate
human lives still, with
darkness & with light.

Belgrade

She covered her sadness
with coffee in a Split café,
knew the Palace of the
Emperor Diocletian
we'd visited in shimmering
dawn from scholarship.

She revealed her appetite
for tourism as tracing, climbing
hills she recalled in pain
& pride a family-partisans,
killed in war.

She showed her present
by her past, this woman
loaded with languages
whose well-known film script
about a Yugoslav partisan
coming out from the woods
to seek her child made
the moon cry & the
flowers fade.

She looked to her future
through her bubbling
adolescent daughter
& a brilliant doctor son
who, on a Belgrade visit,
showed us the memorial for
partisans scanning the
Polish border in a riot
of greenery.

Their present in Belgrade's
drab, monochrome streets?
Only a flat urban world,
where hidden people stood
up to Russians, proclaiming
a life of verve
as they continued to live
out a partisan stewardship
of subtlety.

Ruins at Jumièges

Distant recorded sounds
of the monks of Solesmes-
instant atmosphere
for ruins & visitors
seeing the hidden glory of
God, tossed by time - their
voices caressing the
white stones of history
bleached by deeds & the
blood of centuries.

A lean dog, a fast-talking
guide, cameras,
& lights waiting for the
magic of night under the
blue clouds, puckered
like over-slept sheets.

Birds encircling turrets,
round, encased in moss;
a TV aerial, stark, upright,
starting through the
defiance of the sycamores -
a past which pointed to the
God of glory in the
silences of time's
ambivalences.

The glory, too, of humans -
in the complexity of stones?
Intricate dabs of colour -
purple-like beech trees,
green-cool shades, martins
in flight - the vision of
Jumièges..?

Rather the rhythm of
human angles than the
fantasies on the tongues
of idealists; rather a healing
for the old lady, shuffling
by the ruins, encased in
a black shawl, & the
possibility of Christ's
light in her eyes

West coast

Unloved distant Lakeland town,
Labour Party Whitehaven,
a Chinese restaurant
in the main street.

The ordered meal cooked
by Hong Kong fugitives, part
of Spanish-Serbian, English
migrant life.

Standing before me
a restaurant worker,
misting I come from London
& he knows me. How can I,
a stranger here, be known by
a Hong Kong 19-year old?

Returning, persistent, he says
he worked in a garish back
street in SW1, near London's
smart Sloane Square,
packing parcels
to towns of Bejeman charm,
this New Territories of
China refugee...

Yes: we'd worked together
before he, a Whittington
in Chinese restaurants,
had gone to Birmingham, and
the North; had worked hard,
kept from Soho gambling dens –
was now in Cumberland.

The joy on his face when
remembered fingers still,
the meal he paid for &
two strong friendship hours.

On another holiday visit I went
to the drab Whitlaven street;
but my friend had left for
other restaurants where
hidden fears keep contacts
judiciously at bay.

Does he still find joy
in giving hospitality to strangers,
as Christ's Gospel urges us to do?

Back Street in Clapham

Lights green
pavement people flash by,
suddenly, distant,
an old lady knowing Clapham
like the back of her hand,
stopped abruptly before
an Arab student.

Lost? Hostile?
looking for digs?
representative of an
alien world, tall,
swarthy, distinct, in
this street, part of
Clapham.

Where is he now?
What thinking, doing,
about Egypt's tortured
politics now a dead
pharaoh has become a
legend of the revolution?
Is the old lady
with her tawdry shopping
bag sipping afternoon-tea
in a neighbour's magenta
sitting room?

What does she think about
the cross-roads world
of petrol Middle Eastern
life – and the liberation
drives of the Palestine
freedom fighters

Does he think about
the money lenders in the Temple?

Sloane Square café

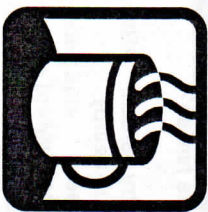
Scarcely noticed
in the one-way system,
ignored by tube tourists,
just off the main square:
Nicos.

Café extraordinaire,
miscible & compelling,
seating cramped,
atmosphere – unforgettable!

Nicos - at heart a Cypriot,
gracious, witty yet wistful,
rich & poor,
director, shopgirl,
actor & worker
caught briefly
in your Cypriot sun & gaiety.

Lotte Lenyer,
friend of Bertold Brecht,
Richard Harris,
actor par excellence –
street lemnings adorning
a small room built into
a theatre of the living,
drawn by a magnetic,
Mediterranean light.

Nicos, Cypriot for whom
human encounters were
a highway, a byway,
for success, compelling
struggling street walkers
to come in.
Did you, like Jesus,
find you also had to rest..?



Notting Hill

The papers say: 'West
London black power fight?'
'Police clash with
immigrants...'

The papers say: 'Race riots
known before; social
workers have been here in brigades,
black power protagonists moved in
by the dozen.'

The papers report: 'What
Labour Commcillors say:
"Note the silences of Tory
men," aver the police are
licking an opening wound...'
Where lies the truth
behind the lies of public
men & women, where the
acid life which festers?
Are police & people linked?

I, holidaying in Madrid,
read 'The Times' report,
recall the daily infighting
in Notting Hill,
& the behind the scenes threats
& counter-threats and remember
the pressures, politicians,
personas, thrusting with
mixed idealism & malignant,
cancerous power.

I, migrant from the suburbs,
see all migrants erecting
walls, as they yet
yearn for openness,
as an unknown Spaniard
wishes me 'Adios amigo.'

Jesus, before Pilate you
also were scorned but
stood with dignity as
another politician asked:
'What is truth?'

Dorchester

A boy engrossed -
I took I've got the Queen
in my book, Alison;
children's voices
wanting to be taken
to the second floor;
books, weapons of war
& a letter from Her
Majesty the Queen to
an over-proud Dorset &
very English regiment.

Humans, warm, friendly;
on the first floor -
unexpected - a Nazi flag
& Hitler's desk sat on by
the blonde with the red bag
& one Dorset boy;
the visitor's book lay
open filled with
pedestrian names & the
tears of innumerable
families.

In 1945 the Russian Army
started to remove
furniture from Hitler's
Chancellery, the letter
from a Mr Bishop read as he
gave his old regiment
the table gift, now polished.

Successors of a post-war,
post-regimented world,
the children buy their
bins & do not even shudder
at the exploits of a
regiment in Japan & India,
Washington - or Timbuctoo.
They see only the frozen
aggression hid behind the glass.
Do they really need
their toy grins as their
price for creativity -
and no sermons
on Jesus Christ the peacemaker?

Holywell

Green-grey willows
protecting water, leisure
boats at rest, The Pike
& Eel proud, standing
for five centuries, lit
nightly by ancient lamps
long since stripped from
London's streets; roses
thrusting upwards towards
the church-spire sky;
a bounteous backcloth
one mile from Holywell.

Village of legend & history
- & a conversation of
terror. The changes in
Kenya - can a white cousin -
a Romanov under a normal
name, with Russian silver
nestled in the White
Highlands - stay in Kenya
& be still Kenyatta's friend?
Is there any longer
for her security, living
between those two revolutions?

The maiden lady,
askance at African rule,
leaves; a chat now
for three. My uncle came
from Irish stock; can I
not have bones of revolutionary
sympathy?

The snapdragons silent,
the harebells blue as ever
as the other lady reminisces:
They say ten cats died on
Hussein's lawn, poisoned
by his coffee man
sent to kill, trying to
find out the alacrity,
cites, of death. Did
Nasser really hate him so?

An English country garden,
an old country pub nearby;
inside, these three -
the terror of the century.

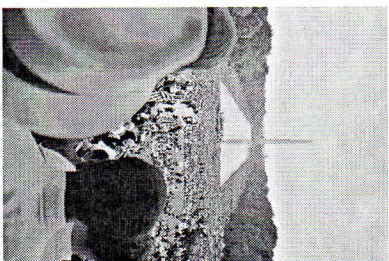
North-west six

Daddy, they've got Luther
King - the cry from the
upstairs flat; the place;
England, a main road, in
downtown London.

Daddy, they've shot Luther
King - the boy in the flat
upstairs, thin, alert,
American cut hair,
education north-west six.

Daddy, we've killed Luther
King; daddy, daddy - a
twelve year old American
boy killed Martin Luther
King? The bitter-sweet
American dream.

Were you there when they
crucified - were you there
when we crucified - were
you there when I crucified
my Lord...?



Calcutta

Teeming ants
across the bridges cycling,
torrid, sweltering months,

rags & rumbles on streets
brimming with life & death.

The old officer goes steadily
from mouth to mouth,
taking food to victims as
they lie, prolonging the
defeat of death.

Inexorably, relentlessly,
methodically, the hours pile
up; his work stretches beyond
even Puritan ethic bounds
to the quiet half-dark nights,
saving lives, stopping chaos.

Thin, tall, steady,
he has a secret - he's a victim, too,
of a Burma walk,
a road where, wracked
with pain, he learned
to live with a work
compulsion mystery.

Now no longer an officer,
merely a servant of
human specks, he works
to placate no faith,
no angry mobs, only a
hidden drive.

His eyes in the film
show a crazed, zany face,
lost to himself & a world
of suburbia & technology.

Jesus, Lord,
how crazy you were to
go to the city, with
calm and even joy
& to use a world's
fallible men & women
in your festive
plan, accepting a
Simon from Cyrene's help,
the forced companion
of your way...

Outside Pietermaritzberg

Outside Pietermaritzberg
black people live,
speaking Zulu, English
& a little Afrikans
to get by, hearing of
revolutionary Africa
only through a
censored press, seeing
no TV & smiling stars.

Outside Pietermaritzberg
workers commute;
pass long, grey days
in shops & factories.
Books are published,
food is eaten,
cherries even grow
outside Pietermaritzberg.

Underneath –
a suppurating sore;
my friends on the M1
tell of subtle ways
for controlling others'
minds, checking human
ideas, stopping
invective. The story
of thrusting hate
unravels as M1 miles
slip by; the depths of
evil in the heart
brings bread with bitterness,
anger, lack of hospitality.

Outside Teesside, a final
stop; an English country pub,
village unknown, people,
Friday-fillers, eating
pasties, drinking beer.

Outside Teesside a toast –
we three - two blacks, one
white, loud 'T' to the downfall
of the Government
of southern Africa.
Who died outside a city wall?

Miles from Moscow

She looked so pretty-plain –
no mascara, only fervour
in a dress of circumspicion:
one of twenty-four equals,
Russians, Americans, English –
a group, but three groups.

Easy to see the culture
cracks despite four
Sheffield weeks work-camp
painting; now, seated
in a down-town room, tense
role play uncovered the
limits of toleration.

Only a talking evening,
a Tory Councillor,
admitting to burning social
fires; a leftwing, activist,
visitor of the prisons of
Her Majesty occasionally!

Downstairs, four Czechs,
sleeping; wondering about
Russians, as their anniversary
invasion slid from
the slippery memories of
people in politics.

Conversation miles from
Moscow, about Pinter &
poverty, playgroups,
avoiding Czechoslovak
posturings.

One Russian tossed aside
the 'Beyond Marxism' book
by the deviant Pole who'd
found an Oxford home.
Who understood whom?
For who can love a Marxist
writing about priests &
jesters - or tolerate Judas
in a group?

Only Jesus the fool
with no boundaries?

Dancers from Senegal

A floodlit stage,
moving from yellow to
red, blue to green:
an ice-rink, flooded
with warmth, from
Senegal's swirling life:
listen to the rhythms
of Africa call.

A frenzy of movement-
men, women caught
in sensuous decorum;
ablaze, untortured
spirits, free only for
the health of emotion:

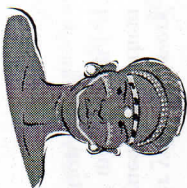
Listen to the dancers
of Africa call.

Wizards, African ballet
dancers, unfreezing the
audience of the nations:
in their clapping listen
to Europe's rigid ways.

Dancers, coxed in life's
harmonies, excited by the
mysteries of touch:

Can you hear Geneva's
painful cosmic toils?

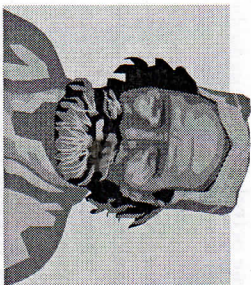
Europeans, bodies, spirits
drugged by the drabness of
arid, religious truth:
listen to hearts in
symphony with the seasons.
Listen to the drums of
Africa call, listen to
the winds of Senegal.



Spy in the Cairo cold

Brows furrowed
by ten months solitary
confinement hid a passion,
a discretion, too.

Fingers finely textured
had been at leisure,
no leaves of books to turn,
no hands for making love,
no tongues for conversation's
fires.



Only a heart, a mind
stretched to Allah
knew a Muslim joy;
God's devoted care
came to illumine each day's
fast as renunciation of the
senses became a way to
temper the bitter twists
of Egyptian law & the
suffering of each minute.

His guards in early
morning's blackness left
his cell door open, sat &
played at cards outside;
for them the two-year
prisoner - the revolutionary
traitor - the judge alleged
he spoke to Jews & was an
agent of the CIA. - had
become a Muslim brother
and from his cell truth & light
took possession of the grim
prison of Egypt's tawdry
patch of earth.

An pair Anna, listening
to choirboys echoing
in unison with the
centuries' pillars
in Ely Cathedral. Former
Surrey barmaid, listening
to the voices muted
by the Italian spy's
long-playing records in the
Colonel's Belgrade home.

Anna, one-time petrol
feeder, English teacher
for a spy in the cold,
visiting together Rumanian
red parades, making Danube
photographic trips –
silent now before windows
shot through with blue-green
light, the boys' voices
singing 'O clap your hands
together.'

Outside the Cathedral
near the hippie couple
making love, the seat
where old ladies meditate,
two Asians drink beer
in the village-green tea-
shop afternoon.

Inside inner worlds like spy,
an pair, intersect – God with us,
we hope, as hearts pray
to be kept from the perils
of the night.

And one wheelchair lady,
serenely at peace,
symbolising in the beauty
of the choir's 'Amen'
a world of hustled tourist
footsteps & political
operator's defeats, joins
worshippers as they seek the
planet's good and give thanks
for creation's joys.

Yoga in Haywards Heath

Absurd anchorage,
opposite detached lawns,
fragrant garden left by
an owner who'd lived with
the widow of Robert
Browning's son.

Here in suburb-land: Yoga –
visitors from Denmark,
India, hippies en route
for pop festival in the
Isle of Wight. Only a monk,
some beads, a carpet, a
floor, & words from
The Bhagavad Gita.

How the feet ache
after the first moments,
the bell rung,
the group in meditation,
joining Maharishis &
cannabis groups – the
world's underground,
East & West!

Outside, domesticated
Saturday, lawns cut,
trimmed, cars flowing in
regulated, respectable
one-way system; in the
heart – Russia & her
prisoners; the Arab-
Israeli gangrene, the
betrayal of one human
being by another...

Jesus, the night you were
betrayed was the burning
light I now feel – in you?

No wonder your followers'
hearts burned within them
when they met You on
a resurrection shore!

Moscow parade

Three black ring attendants,
an audience of Swahili sigils
& American accents, Japanese
sillis & Indian sari robes –
faces, voices,
like hushed disciples, stilled by the
lonely walker
supported by moon music
& two sparkling globes,
picked out from starry lights.

Forgotten now
the trapeze bears,
the Cossack riders,
Popov the clown,
clamberer on lower wires;
scarcely recalled the
solitary woman
standing on her partner's
head, the shimmering music
and the raucous band,
& the only man on the planet
who can balance on cylinders
& feet.

Remaining – the Union Jack, the
hammer & sickle flag,
the green speck circus ring,
as a man high in mountainous
climb tempts his trapeze.

The Moscow circus –
& a man risking death
like Jesus the fool for God,
reaches for the moon,
creates anew the human image
as the parade of folly &
grandeur is renewed again
in town.

Rouen Circus

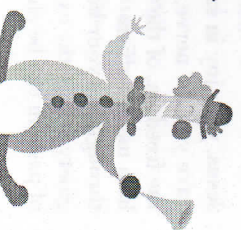
A street for Belgians,
two Africans speaking French
by the gambling machine,
the ancient square

with crumpled roses
near the burning stake
of a liberated Joan of Arc;
two streets of theatre –
Racing, Cornicille, pin-
pointed a past always
present as the Seine
divided rich and poor,
neighbours in industry
from citizenry.

Shop after shop declared
the visit of the circus,
the woman astride two
elephants, another
enveloped in snakes;
a younger Grock in baggy
colours grimaced from
frunter, butcher,
and in the tobacconists:
the expectancy of lions
proclaimed God's glory
in man & beast in the
all too human city
where past & present
ruled in a parade of
salacious sadness
recorded by Flaubert in
Madame Bovary.

It was a second visit
to Rouen; the Algerians
had left the streets for
older Frenchmen, the
tourists had fled to
Normandy; only remaining
a stocky beggar – an old
man asleep under the news
of yesterday & the
innumerable trees
whispering history.

The circus had
passed by
encompassing our
folly –
and our creativity



Montmartre

The city lively spots
lit by neon & a thousand
cigarettes, red table
cloths & white wine,
were surrounded by garish
artists: the smell of
incense still in nostrils
fresh from the Paris vistas
of Sacre Coeur spilled
over into Montmartre's
bohemian vivacity.

Yet in this spot applauded
by artists and stars,
tragedy reveals the haunting
beauty of Paf, a spirit
stretched to limits;
& men who paint, seeking
by sensitive touch a denial
for ordinariness, over-
coming our finitude with an
eternal canvas & a brush.

Look closely under the
pavings when the tourists
have all gone for those who've
loved these streets, the
women who've made these houses
home for countless French &
city centuries; look for
the cellars of gaiety, where
music and cabaret profusely
poured from human love,
lingering, taunt, remind us
of the streets where tinctures
are crimson, violence & violet
are the moods & colours.

Jesus, your joy in sadness,
gave you the nerve,
the freedom, of the Cross;
help us also affirm
through joy your beckoning
gaiety where the exuberance
of passion can be shared...

Everyone Comes to Paris

Coco Cola umbrellas,
a man flashing postcards
of salacious women
outside Notre Dame:
everyone comes to Paris.
The tourist from the USA,
the cultured of centuries -
even a hippie singing
as he crosses the one-way
street in the Ile de La Cité:
everyone comes to Paris.

The bones of Abelard &
Héloïse lie commingled
now in a city grave:
everyone comes to Paris.

The gargoyles, towers of
Notre Dame serve the
Seine in splendour,
radiantly dominating its
centuries & its back-
street people living
near Pope John's Square
& the quiet-hinting
Memorial to the deportation
of two hundred thousand
Nazi transportees,
where, in concentration
splendour, human gargoyles
are remembered in the
silences of guilt.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
how often I would have
taken you to my breast
as a mother bird her
brood! Hitler, Abelard,
singers with a song,
tourists, film directors,
priests & pimps & painters-
all who come to Paris.

Everyone comes to Paris-
even a Man, the creator
of the city of gladness,
even Jesus Christ, history's deportee.

Possibilities

Colours

Streaks of crimson, blue
flash, across the fading sky,
the yellow & garden reds
riot, luxuriate
in the summery heat.
Shades of dark envelop
a varied planet in
tenements & huts,
sidewalks & side alleys,
in the time of autumn leaves.
Snow glistens in steppes &
mountains, descends to
valleys, a predator
in urban fields, freezes
tramways' people in
perplexed praise.

Snowdrops distil
the unbearable beauty,
pain of human carnival,
over, begun anew,
pure, thrusting through
the spring shoots of green.

A kalaeoscopic Christ
summons all peoples
in spring & summer,
in fall & long, low, winter -
captivating, compelling,
calling men & women
from their many-splendoured
cultures to a dance
as he stands on
a resurrection shore, where
stones of glittering hues
sun-sparkle as waves roll,
surf washes a new beach life
like Christ & his universal love,
which smooths, chafes, envelops
the whole wide world -
and a grain of sand.

A Green Hill

Just a party on a hill,
ten of us or so,
a green hill
looking over Dorking;
trees with shade,
a sudden slope,
blackberries.

Just a party on a hill,
one of many; children,
ice-cream shouts, a view
where Sussex downs loom
distantly, jutting from
a quiet temperate landscape -
a party on the
friendly Surrey hills.

Suddenly one broke out
from the crowd of ten,
came up to me,
clasped my neck;
I shut my eyes
as she kissed me with
fervour & with strength.
I remember that kiss still
& the jealousy of the
women with her.

Mary, my friend, said later,
'How did I do it?'
for such people are
usually so strong.

I remember only the
contortions in her face,
the incredible and
overpowering affection.

Jesus, hidden in all,
give me your humility
to accept with gratitude
those who turn & offer
thanks.

Retreat

A sparkling water morning,
the gulls swooping, swooping
over the tripper's boat;
Mull's hills loom from the
clouds. A bright clear sky
over the Mull foreland as
the bus rumbles across the
narrow, stony track.

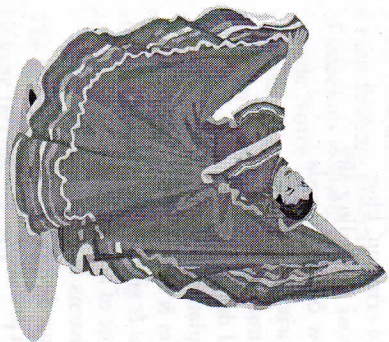
Deer in the distance,
houses - de-populated-
reminders of a past
where men fought, lost,
& left their Scottish island home.

Steep concreted steps
to the dancing channel,
the boat over in minutes-
Iona, cathedral ruins
of a past, blended with
dreams made concrete,
saturated in sun, Skye &
the Islands beckoning.

Iona, rocky island of retreat
storm tossed,
but cradle for hopes-
new life from a distant view,
the concentrated heart-
are the people pilgrims
or predators in the
ice-cream afternoon?

I climb its gentle hill,
behind, the bluish, lapping
sea: from a crag jutting out
a figure, puncturing my
retreat: unexpected, there,
with a stubby pencil, a
Brazilian friend, writing
a talk on the Third world's
poverty.

Iona, island for all creation:
what did I expect from my
desert?



Under the orange trees

In the evening's cool heat
trickling fountain water
gave a hint of refreshment,
the orange trees
a square of shade:

back-cloth for dancers
whose bodies swayed
to the Spanish rhythms
tapped by the dark-skinned
boy, poised, alert, on
the wall, a flamenco fire
in his eyes, a world
away from back-bending
in Andalusian fields,
the tending of an earth
starved of life...

Under the orange trees,
the patios shining white,
under a touch of neon & moon,
there was vivacity
in the face of the girl in red,
colour & gaiety-
new life for a new Spain!

You piped for us -
and we danced!

The presence of Urdu

At the edge of three roads
& unkempt gardens,
a public bar: Sattley, Birmingham -
could have been the wilderness city
anywhere on earth.
An Irish barmaid, West Indians
drinking, a few whites, was it a
juke-box in which I'd put my
money?

A second look disclosed
a one-armed bandit; I grabbed its
wheel aided - and won - only
cigarettes!
The man who'd guided me stared,
downcast; he'd worked for that
jackpot! Said he was a refugee in '48
from Warsaw; I'd a friend with me
from Poland; linked, they lived
Warsaw again for half an hour.

I moved over, sipped my drink,
the air was thick with chatter;
I talked to three Pakistanis
who'd been working there two years
in silent, menial jobs.

'Are you the police?' they asked.
'No, I'm at a meeting' - the useless,
humorous absurdities of
conversations!
We sat, apologies for talk,
their English broken, their
spirits only half alive.

The trip along the side road
revealed more Pakistanis
& the police. The police
didn't speak Urdu. How then
could they follow the Bible truth -
welcome the stranger at the gates?

Black power

'Black is beautiful,'
the century's slogan,
the western colour for
morning, the night
representative. Black
is fearful, the slogan
of centuries- yet
reminder of a lost
sensuality, a lost
childhood of humanity.

Black power, the slogan
of the press, used by
militants for Third
World revolution; where
society cradles Nyerere
not bombs, the rhythms
of the body not Swiss
economics.

Black power,
a European's alien ways
confronted by other
articulate styles - for
redress, for discrimination -
& distinction!

Black power -
a man who frees from guilt,
with a light
'Go, do no more wrong;
my love revolution
opens its arms to all
the peoples of the world!'

White Australia

'Thin, gaunt & young,
a social worker wife,
& half the Australian
newness hanging in his
words - a tourist expecting
English purity free from
history.

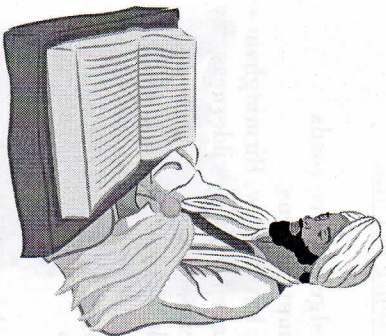
A last refuge from an Asian
future, a kangaroo valley
where rich patriots
settle & complain they
never met an Englishman!

What hidden expectations!
The naive innocence of
Canberra, Adelaide, the
apartheid distance of
blacks, the morality of Moses
from the children of
flower-power!

Yet culture shock can
ennoble, though white
Australia can only live
in its rich houses of
detachment in deserts
miles from Asia, yearning
for a new world where
Chinese presence is
discreetly distanced.

Jesus, the rich young man
had a largesse of creativity
-yet his gaunt face tore
him from society.

Jesus, liberate us
from our purity for
a multi-cultural world!



Yellow petals

Yellow petals, floating
down the Thames,
scattered by Sikhs after
re-committing a friend
they'd loved; committed
to quiet water before
dawn, for peace...

Police had agreed to a
Ganges-style burial;
only one company director
had objected; then two
pressure groups had
complained about new-
style British burials.

I read the press report
in the kitchen: look out
at the pallid sky, the
brown leaves, peaceful,
though wind-distributed,
yearn to smell the three
violent red roses &
the gentle orange blooms,
see the bushes hunched
& a light in a penthouse
room.

Jesus, lover of nature,
& fragrance, did you
always castigate the
pressure group around
you called the Pharisees?

Right Wing

The religious speaker
stood ponderously
to extol a changing world;
his words had scarcely
dropped from his dedicated
lips before the right wing
took their action...
Showers of propaganda
from the gallery, a
deafening roar, killing
point & point & point,
bringing twenty minutes
chaos.

The police, called, acted
as American visitors watched
expecting Mississippi teargas
to quell the shouts of racists
favouring an empire long
since enveloped in shifting
sands.

Egged on by the underworld
of pressure, the journalist
wanting a headline for a
racial meeting had told the
press the right wing would
be there; the Daily Mirror
newsmen now had his photograph
to match his tipped-off story.

Jesus, your name is always
in the news & on our lips,
invoked for past and present.
Jesus, our hosannas are always
heavy with our pomp; be for
us now leader on a donkey,
whose solemnity always verges
almost on the ridiculous!

August twenty-one

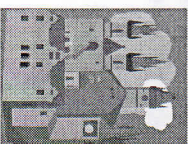
Where is he now
the socialist with a human
face? Where now the hopes
of a thousand Czechs - those

who'd shuffled out of the
Tele chapel after I'd
given them greetings
from some in Britain
who remembered.
Where now the slogans
on Oxford college walls
'Remember Jan Palach',
kindler of burning
hearts towards a more
human day?

Where, too, the artists,
the Two Thousand
words scribbled in back street
cafés off Prague's centre,
where pop groups were on
show & Russia still a
friend for Communists?

Where now the friends
I made on the twenty-
first of August, who
talked of openness,
cracking dawn, new
light. Nameless - they
live & breathe. Do they drive
trams, shine shoes, sweep floors?

One day, in your light,
when dawn is joy,
transfigured, well
know each other; then
communist, Christian
will face a death
leading to life,
irradiating, irrigating
the barren, parched
earth of little people
in their cages.



Suburban sitting-room

Why these tears in this suburban sitting-room?

Why this emotion as writers find new courage from Siberian landscapes and Russia's lonely steppes?

Is it a heart's deep unity with all people, a probing into living matter after the summer's blossoms have fallen & the white lilies bled?

Why these tears at powerful, quick responses in Stockholm, Rome, New York, for the stifled cries of Russia's Samizdat in their underground of hope as they fight for civil rights?

I have a clear conscience because I have fulfilled my duties as a writer in all circumstances & because I will fulfil them even more successfully & indisputably when I'm dead than when alive. Nobody can bar the road to truth. I am prepared to die for its advance.' Was it only Solzhenitsyn, or Christ in a man - this man of cancer & of labour camps, a man of one time, a man for all times, stabbing the scab in Russia with a scalpel stained only by truth...

Why these tears?
Tears of joy!

Dust

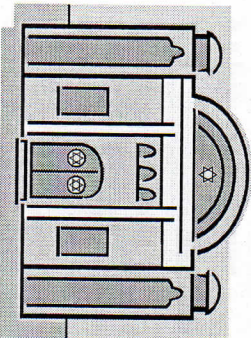
Small back street building off a main square, where beyond the river once Stalin towered & glowered, a friend for Slovaks.

There were only twenty Jews & a ceiling of dust covering Jews' blood, tokens of a past. Visitors, made welcome, required caps for heads; the worship linked Jew, Christian, in an historic past.

Few Jews in Prague & Spain; persecuted in Cracow; repressed by Russians; rich in London & New York - a moving presence across the earth, inhabiting a land where Arabs no longer now belong.

Dust, blood, on a ceiling perpetuating a human identity in history.

Jesus, man of rich identity, compelling us to shake the dust off places of unwelcome, help us hang there with you, man for all bloods and all time



Home of Hippies

A square of Regency pretension, sedate leisure, & deep grown trees near a Brighton waterfront, numbering in sequence. Mary lived on the top floor, a mamma figure, of capacious size and heart, who talked about God's love & had been hallowed by graciousness: these fifteen years.

A strong, silent husband, a cat & a dying mother lived along with a picture of the Duke of Wellington & stylish coffee cups, a young hippie with a Devonian accent sat on a pouff near Mary's chair; their love animated an amazing talk-about 'Cowboy', his size, Mary's fear, where Jill was, what Anthony had done.

There wasn't a hippie in Brighton didn't know & love Mary Walker, friend of addicts, herself addicted to eating food! The young man in the pub, crying out in pain, 'I want a woman,' laughed at, retorted 'No, I want a special woman-she's called Mary Walker.' They flocked to live there regally, on/off heroin, share a friendliness, learn to love & care.

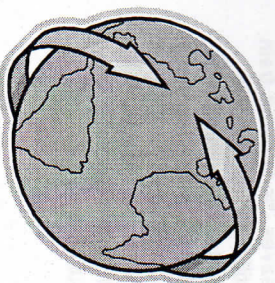
The day I went a thief had taken stair rods from the home of hippies. But their love would overcome even this.

Global village children

Jet children playing in the Geneva room have an East African airways map, planes landing from Zurich, London, Rome, hour by hour. They live at the crossroads of the planet with hardly a window glance as Mont Blanc, the Swiss, French Alps smile distantly with friendly cold on their whirling, colliding worlds. Yet the children playing near their runway home scarcely see a miracle of proximity!

Their father comes & goes to Santiago, Cairo, Singapore as visitors drop in from the four corners of the village globe but their toys are rough enough to keep them from too much excitement at what the travelling man brings home as presents from Samarkand, Rio or Kalamazoo.

Or are they already playing at being a citizen of God's mobile suitcase world?





The programme draws, heavily, to its end; he meets a small Japanese who daily had risked death from discovery to bring drugs in a van through the military.

Why did he do it? 'Well,' he says, 'I'm a Buddhist & my religion teaches me to be kind...'



Inscrutable Christ, light of the world, enlighten my heart with the sense of your image in all & flood this room with the fragrance of your life.

Pushing back bracken, leaves, he finds his train still trundles: rails laid by the strength of arms at work under Japanese occupation & brutality. He recalls what work he did, how, foodless, they built & built...

Spring
A Godalming lounge, spring - crocuses, touches of lilac outside; a carpet, modest, warm, covering a spacious room; the TV Times declared a visit to the River Kwai.

The river Kwai, its famous bridge, its prisoner railway, part of Asia's myths & a war; the screen shows one fifty & balding man, a railroad survivor trudging again that infamous track.

Rainbow

A sarisof Indian, her beauty adorning the Portobello Road; a champion Hungarian show-jumper, leaving the refugee snow of Vienna for the green of an Antrim coast, a sensual Greek, giving affection, kissing even casual friends:

a parade of men & women burning fire & friendship in their eyes.

A tiny Aboriginal, selling earnest poetry for the needy, - one white Russian, his world lost in nineteen seventeen, eking out life in a stinking Salonika home:

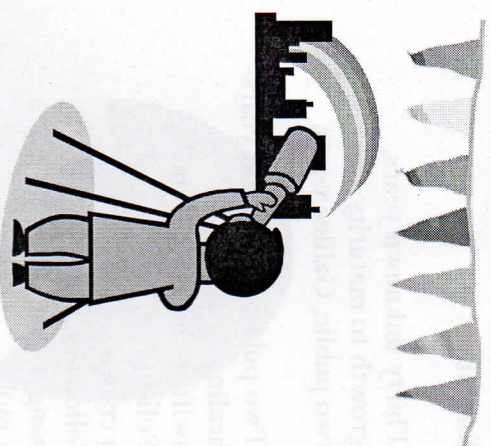
a reminder of casual contacts, hints of human touch.

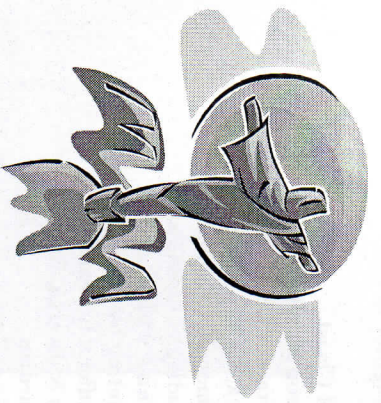
A Hong Kong lover of people, pleading the cause of restaurant workers in trouble with the English law, a fiery, vibrant West Indian in his twenties excited by jazz & Soho's rainbow life - friends, acquaintances, caught on the world's swift roundabout which children clamber on & clamour for...

A carnival of human touch, a hint of human gaiety, a whisper of human sadness, a whirling, a circus, with clowns & fools,

& laughter & tears...

And Christ, person for all seasons, liberator of all, black, a Jew with no barriers, cosmopolitan human, standing at cross-roads, burning with presence, haunting by gaiety, insufferably near rich & diverse, comedian & tragedian, wanting neither puppets nor pumps, only a celebration, a carnival, of all the peoples on the earth.





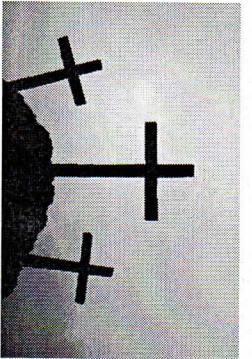
Dead at thirty-two

Thirty quiet years,
no documents to speak about-
what actions remain unknown?

Hiddenness,
silence,
formation.

Thirty unknown years,
growth to maturity;
two public, Galilee years.

Two public, whirlwind years-
healing & action,
swift, swinging dramatic
Politics,
a crowd,
followers,
hangers-on,
a mob,
two thieves...

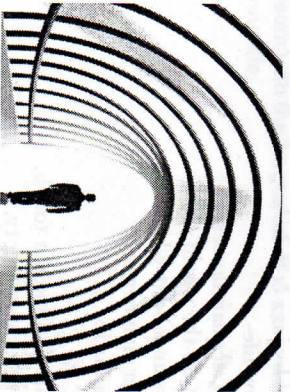


Dead at thirty-two,
created:
the apex of world history.

Old men and women
forget-
in Prague,
Madrid,
Moscow,
& Beijing,
old men and women forget.

In Rio & in Washington,
in Nairobi & Jozi City,
in London & in Rome,
old men and women forget
Gethsemane's fruits of pain.

Dead at thirty-two -
& history
& two thieves! -
changed..!



Endpiece

In the mid-1970s I read, and was impressed by, Naseem Khan's Ethnic Arts: The Arts Britain Ignores and decided I would find a way to allow the complex and fascinating life of multi-cultural London to be high profile. As I reflect in 2007 on all the people in past decades who have thronged my life I realise they led me to the 1980s when, with the help of significant people in the churches and the arts, I founded London Entertains. An annual event in central London, it ran from 1978-88, its last appearance being at the Lambeth Conference of Bishops meeting at Canterbury.

My 1973 South African visit continued to affect me as I wrestled theologically with how Christians could affirm culture and different insights so they enriched and did not deplete faith.

Hence the importance for me of the theological reflections at the end of many of the poems in Carnival, where I have tried to link the human experiences depicted with one aspect of Christ's life. I do not want, however, to deny the importance of other world faith communities and am glad a few of the poems give due recognition to them.

In the introduction to Carnival I pin-pointed a number of events in

my early life which helped me become sensitive to multi-culture. There is a further incident from that time which still tugs at my heart strings. As I write this end piece I still see before me the shattered body of Mahatma Gandhi placarded across the front page of the Daily Express, the paper my parents read in 1948 when he was murdered. I was thirteen at the time.

Gandhi still has power to warn us about the dangers of violence and the power of faith, but also invites us to delight in multi-culture as one of the most significant contributions which enriches our life together on the planet.

