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NOW THAT I AM THIRTY-FIVE

Upon an evening's ride I rode beside the Forth's firth-spray
& glanced back on a decade when I last made verse this way
Since then I've lived with angels & I loved one seven years
But lost her... for the bard inside still yearn'd to join the seers

I have blended song & dialogue across eclectic stage
& thrilled my friends with travelogue-emboss'd electric page
Upon the way I transcreated Tamil Nad's first saint
& learn'd enough of woman's ways to woo without complaint

I have composed in Italian round Egadian seas
Broke bread with young Estonians, beers by the Baltic breeze
I have founded several festivals, for Bacchus, with my lyre
& swapped my native terrace for a palace in the Shire

Where, yes, I am still learning how a poet *must* survive
For the world just keeps on turning now that I am thirty-five!

GENESIS

.... & then there was light

Out of nothing comes substance

A universe is born
Out of something unknown

A galaxy of galaxies
& more matter beyond

Boundless,
Never-ending,

Could you possibly imagine the physical map of infinity?
When aeons live & die in the blink of an eye

& time is only relative
To those daring not to comprehend
There is no such thing as forever

& somewhere in a peripheral arm
Of an insignificant spiral galaxy
Thro a great cloud of interstellar gas & dust

Cocooning a cluster of effervescent spheres

A new star is born,
Like a trillion before

So what makes this one special?

THIS IS MY CONTREE

Good Morning Great Britain
Still great, still Britain
The sun is shining, 10:45 AM
£296.26 pence in my pocket
Time to bet it all on black
& hit the road again

But if time is a mere scratch & life is nothing
& nothing that occurs is of the slightest importance

From Aberdeen to Birmingham, Arundel & Deal
From Dullis Hill to Rotherham, Bristol & Peel
From Inverness to Liverpool, Leeds & Palmer's Green
From Lewisham to Padiham & all the pubs between
From Badminton to Twickenham & Barton-in-the Beans

From mud, thro blood to the green fields beyond
Til my bardic breath expires

This is my Time,

This is my Rhyme,

This is my Contree

TO AN ENGLISHMAN WITH LIBERTY

(i)

Everything you can imagine is real... *Pablo Picasso*

Sir, have you ever seen Cumbria clad in snow
Or Brighton's beaches been in summer's easy glow
& have you ever heard the Cambridge matin bells
Or felt your senses stirr'd when England's anthem swells?

Sir, did you drink the ale brewed for the northern mills
Or watch seafarers sail from Whitby's salty sills
& did you ever feed your thirst in Cornish Springs
Or take the time to read thro histories of kings?

Sir, did you ever take these bright isles in a tour,
The pride of Scotland slake on Hampden's awesome roar
& did you ever stun the herd of Wicklow deer
Or strike a mountain run on Snowdon sloping sheer?

To an Englishman with liberty
What of these coy demands?
"These things, sir, I have known!"

You have? Then let us fly
Beyond these fabled lands
The English call their own

Set sail for Calais sands...

(ii)

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; -on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Matthew Arnold - Dover Beach

Sir, did you ever ride the high-speed Gallic trains
Or climb a mountainside kept by Croatian swains
& did you ever try the tramways of Zurich
Or skiing full hilt fly upon an Alpine peak?

Sir, did you ever tour the fields of Waterloo
Or urge Rooney to score amidst a foreign crew
& did you lap the flow of Castalian Spring
Or seek a fireside glow from Finland's wintry sting?

Sir, did you take a dance with maidens of Seville
Or breathe the elegance of the Avantine Hill
& walk the wylde contree barefoot upon the Basque
Or taste the brevity of the Venetian masque?

To an Englishman with liberty
Italy has it all,
"It does, sir, & does well!"

No finer place to visit
& forge a poet's soul!
Tis where the muses dwell
& welcome one & all

(iii)

Paradise of Exiles
PB Shelley

Sir, did your pallet taste sepia's sable sheen
Or spread green pesto paste on bread like margerine
& steep Collodi climb to read Pinnochio
Or see day set sublime oer Pontevecchio

Sir, did you Lord Byron rais'd through old Venetian lanes
Or fond yourself amazed by Pompeii's strange remains
& did you ever take the waters of Trieste
Or swim Averno's lake without a moments rest

Sir, did you cheer the riffs as Ligabue rocks
Walk Cinque Terran cliffs, or bought Le Scale box
& did you deck the sails round Ponza's pirate isle
Or study Tuscan tayles in Dante's sweet new style

To an Englishman with liberty
Art thou adventurous?
"I am sir, life is good!"

It is? Then reach this sea
The gods named glorious,
Let freedom clasp thy hood
& cross the Bosphorous...

(iv)

On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,
In view and opposite two cities stood,
Sea-borderers, disjoin'd by Neptune's might;
The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight.

Christopher Marlowe - Hero & Leander

Sir, did you feel the heat of searing Rajhastan
Or clad Kimono greet fair geishas of Japan
& did you ever wear th'Atlantic's mistral miles
Or dreams of Zion share midst the Pacific isles?

Sir, did you ever ride the Vladivostok rail
Or watch the proud 'Roos hide from harsh Van Diemen hail
& did you ever climb the Islandwhanan rock
Or hear the lilting chime of the diannual clock?

Sir, did you note the chill of the Saharan night
Or felt your senses thrill with Rio neath your flight
& did you ever smell the waifs of Singapore
Or share a living hell when nations go to war?

To an Englishman with Liberty
With spirit cavalier,
For you the world grows dull?

"It does!" Then come with me
A fresher course to steer,
Launch from Canaveral

To chase the stratosphere...

(v)

Whenever mankind has sought to conquer new frontiers, there have been those who have given their lives for the cause. This Astronauts Memorial, dedicated May 9, 1991, is a tribute to American men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice believing the conquest of space is worth the risk of life.

Mission of the Astronauts Memorial - Florida

Sir, did you foot the floor of dusty lunar seas
Or spread your mind & soar upon the solar breeze
& did you ever sail betwixt the Saturn rings
Or catch a comets tail & tie it to your wings?

Sir, did you abseil down craters of Mercury
Or wander rusting towns of Martian history
& did you pierce the clouds twixt Ceres & Trojan
Or hide beneath the clouds of rain Venusian?

Sir, did you feel winds form on Neptune's azure reed
Or watch the great red storm from twinkling Ganymede
& did you once observe the green Urasian glow
& with Colombus verve pass fringes of Pluto?

To an Englishman with liberty
Have you these pleasures sought?
"I have sir, & have felt!"

God bless astronomy!
Relax, come let us float
Beyond the Kuiper belt

Unto our final port...

(vi)

Everywhere I go I find a poet has been there before me.

Sigmund Freud

Sir, have you ever gone beyond the icy Quaoar
Or paused at Ixion, core of an ancyeat star,
& did you scan the skies from lovely Varuna
Or set your naked eyes on sanguinous Sedna?

Sir, come with us & spin upon this scarlet sphere,
Through head of tiny pin watch our vast sun appear,
Here ye shall find no guide, nor shall ye hear a sound,
From Sedna's swirling side a rocky moon slips round...

Sir, watch the goddess sit, voluptuous & fair,
Beloved Enuit, with starfish dappled hair,
Whom by her husband cruel purged of her vanities,
Now sits she as the jewel of the infinities...

To an Englishman with liberty
What brings ye to this place?
"She called me from her stone!"

She did, then cross this sea
She calls the stretch of space,
Continue, sir, alone
& vanish without trace...

BALNAKIEL

Eurasia, Eurasia, from tip to toe
Men may wander thee forever in vain
From the sensuous sierras of Spain
To the towers of spangling Tokyo
They have stumbl'd thro' Siberian snow
To the jungles where the Ganga parts plain
Enough to send a troubadour insane
For Shangri-La a myth most never know.

Yet here lie the shores of Arabia
& the fjords of the Skull-helms of old
Here, an angel-throne'd high Himalaya
& a castle of Prince Leopold
For here be defining Eurasia,
Reminding us with weathers manifold.

CALEDONIA

Sing the sonnet of a nation,
Famous in her rightful station,
First mistress of Britannia's face,
Where Pictish clansman merge in race
With Viking, Angle, Celt & Scot,
Forever kept in tangl'd knot,
That such a spangl'd nation fills
Beyond the three-prong'd Eildon hills,
Thro Stirling & beyond Orkney,
There is a stretch of endless sea,
Where only Shetland parts the wave;
Brave men nam'd thee Scotland the brave,
Of ancyeut race & noble kind,
More than a place, a state of mind!

SKYE

As Kestrels surf the mountain-fringed spaces
Roads twist between saturnine gargants,
Romantic mounds of monstrous magma,
Marvelous munroes of aulden minstrel-song,
Lost in the moment, eyes keen to the skies,
Hard traveling unravels, sailing above us
Silver-fire mists of the sylvan alpine rise,
& beyond, entering the stunning scope
Of another planet, another Jupiter,
Sodden expanse of treeless waste,
But beautiful land, stupendous Cuillin hills,
Seats of Titans, where thrusting solar shafts
Induce startling notions of timelessness -
Here there is no time, only milky flowing waterfalls.

PAISLEY

I'm cringing every time I see a proper Paisley tie
I'd just popp'd hungry into Greggs a hottish pie to buy
& chose a steak & kidney offer'd up for ninety pee
I took the pie, she took the change & said, "*It's ninety three.*"
I said, "*Love, that's false advertising,*" walking out the door,
But never mess with Weegie Birds for they are all hard-core
& leaping from her hum-drum she pursued me down the street
Looking as if an earthquake were shaking a slab of meat
& panting now beside me squeez'd the pastie from my hands
Smuggling with satisfaction at her petty jobsworth's stand
& turns her tail in triumph, as back to her shop she skips
You could have balanced ninety three bridies on those big hips
Then looking down on what was left, my skin all bruised with mince
I thought I'd catch the first train out – aint ever been back since!

PORT O' LEITH

We do get folk dancing on the bar, but they don't get paid for it
Mary Moriarty

Swamp'd in a sea of impedimenta
Scuzzily creative
All classes of late-night characters converge
For what can only be call'd an UBER-RAVE
All watch'd over by the diligent eye
Of the indisputable Queen o' Leith

What magic myst'ries in her mistress eyes
Puzzlingly elated
Still sumptuous in style, Leith's Lady Ga-Ga,
Like a mixture of the new Leith & the Old
Better than Betty Moss & Bet Lynch put together
& a *lady* to be serv'd by

Pamplona to Napoli, Galway & Colne
It's definitely the maddest pub I've supp'd in

THE '45

Scene One: *July 1745 - The Palace of Versailles, Paris. King Louis X is sat in state, attended by his ministers. Enter the Marshall D'Eguiles with the Young Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart*

L'Envoi

I offer thee, your regal majesty,
Charles Edward Stuart, son of Scottish James
By his mother, pretty Clementina,
Reered mid the Muti Palace of fair Rome
The chosen child of Bourbon destiny
The hearts of half of Europe are in flames
Eager for his sword to start the battle
Well versed in war at the siege of Gaeta
Expert with sword, master of the saddle
He rides to reclaim his ancestral home...

Prince Charles

Your majesty we share a crucial bond
The Bourbon blood flows nobly thro my veins
The Catholic kings rule men, that fact is fair,
But now it is a protestant that reigns
My legal birthright, L'Ecosse Ancienne
With her the rest of regal Albion
Beyond her shores I command loyal men
We sacred Stuarts ready to restore
With me Paris speaks a peace with London
Tis now or never for to go to war...

Louis XV

Greetings, Dauphin, fond welcome here to France
Thy sojourn shall fly well at my expense
& furnished with suitable elegance,
Good tidings my little mercurial
The time has come to seek the recompense
For since we won the field of Fontenoy
The British lodged in Flanders to a man
Barely a musket elsewhere to employ
& now young prince, you may have your battle
What are the rudiments which hold thy plan?

Prince Charles

I am ready your highness & god bless!
Ready to don the native highland dress
Protecting all honour & happiness
& die at their head, not live in exile
& play a role that's worthy of my birth
& lay three crowns before my father's feet
& all those who opposed him grant pardon
Remember Otterburn & Bannockburn!
With broadswords & muskets my mighty share
I take my leave, adeui, I must prepare...

Exit the Bonnie Prince

Louis XV

& there he flies, a charismatic bird,
The British expedition is begun
Let all his naval duties be deferred
Bedeck his galleons with heavy gun
& we shall send his storm across the seas
& move an army to the Northern coast -
Ravishers of the Anglo-Saxon host!
The enemy will soon be on its knees
These days are dashing days to be alive!
This year, seventeen hundred, forty-five

L'Envoi

My name is the Marquis D'Eguiles
An agent of the crown
My chest reveals the royal seal
His sparkling eyes & all their zeal
I follow out of town

Scene Two - *19th August 1745 / Glenfinnan - the Bonnie Prince & his entourage are recently landed from France / a number of highland chiefs await him, including Lochiel with 700 men*

Prince Charles

Men of the Highlands & the Western Isles
Behold your right & proper royal heir
Who since the shame of sick king Billy's guiles
We Stuarts usurped from their regal share
My father's father fought before the Boyne
At Sherrifmuir my father's shafts did fly
When truth & justice was the only coin
When fathers & their fathers took the fight
Thus mid these misty mountains towered high
I raise my standard for the Jacobite

Cameron

Ma prince, ye are as bonnie as the sun
& ahm-a bound with honour to yer course
For now the age of glory hus begun
I offer ye ma heart, ma sword, ma force
As dae the Stewarts & the bold MacRaes
& many other clansmen fell'd in youth
Strong boned & gallus fer the coming days
Fired up fer kennin that we fecht fer truth
& goch upon the loch, there sails a boat!
Och aye! by that MacDonald ah have fought

A small boat lands on the shore - a messenger jumps out

Messenger

Yer highness, as ah bow before yer feet
A' bring grave parlance from the men of Skye
Gallant MacLeod & MacDonald of Sleat
Are not to join their voices wi' yer cry
To gan wi' ye must end up in defeat
They'd rather remain chieftain than to die
& reckon ye shid sail back hame tae France
Fer now yer cause belongs across the sea
Yer venture, altho wrought fae high romance,
Can only end wi' woe & tragedy

Lochiel

Gan coward! Gan back to the Cuillin range
& tae the Campbells, McKays & Munroes
Bide those lads their allegiance flashes strange
When in brave hearts the rose of battle grows
Och! see 'em row, a flight that will be shared
When we cun meet the redcoats on the field
As soon as our braw army is prepared
We'll march wi' musket, claymore & wi' shield
Tae slay the sassenachs of Jonnie Cope
& aw them that survive drape fae the rope!

The messenger rows away

Prince Charles

Your words of gold are stardust to mine ears
& here beneath the flutter of this flag
I sense the passion of these sixty years
Prometheus descending from his crag
Being thy regent in my father's name
Happy we walk the way of victory
These islands shall be partial to his fame
& all our subjects live here tenderly
But first there must rumble the guns of war
Come, friends, let us depart this splendid shore

L'Envoi

The star has landed on the shore
The standard smartly raised
The Highlands are aloft for war
Tho some his prompt return implore
He marches on unfazed

Scene Three - *21st September 1745 / the fields of Prestonpans / the highland army is moving into position against the redcoats / Lord Murray, one of the Princes commanders, rides to the Prince*

Lord Murray

Gorgeous morning yer highness, Prince of Wales
A wonderful maneuver come to pass
As the English sit at their stakes like snails
Yer army made its way thro the morass
Tracked thro the marshes, measuring their stealth
& now rest hard upon his other flank,
But not for long! the boys did toast yer health
& for this grace of god did duly thank
Those men who eat dry crust & lie on straw
Shall fecht like kings, they wait the word to war!

Prince Charles

Good work Lord Murray, now take up the right
A cannonball shall signal the attack
& now sir Jonathan your men must fight
Not slip away as at Corrieyairack
That cuckold march'd two thirds of the kingdom
Not one chieftan has proffered him his sword
Let us announce the end of that empire
Ye gentlemen, ye warriors, now come
Join me in solemnity to our lord
'*Gloria Angele Dei!*' now men, fire!

After an exchange of artillery they highland army embarks on its charge

Atholl

See how they gan! & what a gory sound
The highland roar, as if the Earth did quake
With furious groan, come see their cannons pound
Brave Camerons, line gis an awfa' shake
But on they run! & wi' a mighty crack
Oor muskets reap those eves o' redcoat corn
& now they rush intae the killing ground,
By broadsword & scyth'd pitchfork limbs be torn
Carrying great slaughter to the English
To be in England, aye, their dying wish!

Out of the smoke of battle returns Lord Murray

Lord Murray

Sweet salutations sire, yer battles won
Peer thro the smoke & see those fleeing shapes
An entire English army on the run
Lord Percy shall see none of them escapes
The ghoul of Hanover must bare defeat
The field is littered with his bastard dead
Back to Berwick flies Jonnie Cope's retreat
Wi' not one of 'is bayonets stain'd red
Tae praise this day there is nae better word
Tis Victory! god bless King James the Third

Prince Charles

Ours is the day, the field & the glory
Go spread its fame - fly north, south, east & west
Fly to Vienna, London & Paris,
Fly to Ferrol, Ostend, Dunkerque & Brest
& let us war! but 'fore the march we sound
Carry the wounded to a better bed
From Holyrood let casks of wine be found
To toast our heroes & libate the dead
The motions of destiny are at hand,
Come the morrow let us invade England

L'Envoi

The Bonnie Prince has won the fray
Beside the fair Forth sands
The Highland army in his pay
Has never known a better day
Their fate is in his hands

Scene Four - *5th December 1745 / Exeter House, Derby / the highland army has marched uncontested into the heart of England / the prince has gathered his commanders for a council of war*

Prince Charles

My cabinet, this is the vital hour
Carlisle has fallen, Lancashire is won
The bridge at Shakestone firmly in our power
The road lies open for to seize London
When English Jacobites shall surely rise
& with them all the gallantry of France
The crown soon to reclaim, let's grasp the prize
If we continue with our bold advance
We should be in Whitehall within the week
Come gentlemen, gather thy thoughts & speak

Lochiel

Ah would say march, your presence in this land
Has sparked a widespread panic rarely seen
If hardy Northern folk wo' make a stand
The chances of the South standing seem lean
Friends o' the King were the first dugs to flee
Spreading terror tae London's grave concern
Whose banks are being emptied o' money
Then whit will buy the bread their soldiers earn
While royal armies in their meager league
Outmaneuvered & saddled wi' fatigue.

Lord Murray

My sacred leige, ye are the cavalier
But with an advance I can not agree
At any point the redcoats may appear
We court romance or court reality
Cumberland is at Stone, not long delayed
Bradstreet says nine thousand at Northampton
Between us & the North their tarries Wade
& thirty thousand clog Finchley Common,
With winter coming in, the future blurr'd
Of yer promised Frenchmen there is no word...

Lord Percy

My leige, a' speak for all the loyal clans
Warriors ready to gi ye their lives
It has been many moons since Prestonpans
They'd rather pass the winter wi' their wives
No wi' the English & their crude weather
Gi' us the crystal lochs & thistle wylde
The meadows, the moorlands & the heather
Our hearts are wi' the glens, there let us war
Wi' all those royal clansmen brutes reviled
Settle auld scores & Scotland overawe

The Prince is persuaded to turn back

Prince Charles

These words you bare are arrows to my heart
Why would ye want to waive the victory
If things shall not be finished, then why start
There seems some base betrayal close to me
But very well, tell my heroic men
Being unsure when the French will invade
Let us retreat upon the sad morrow
When I hope this ardour shall never fade
For we may never come this way again
& this day be our eternal sorrow

L'Envoi

Upon the march to London town
The Prince beset by spies
His Highlanders have let him down
He turns back north with weary frown
Hiding his teary eyes

Scene Five - 16th April 1746 / Drummoissie Moor... it is a rainy morning...
the tired highland army is drawn up for battle across the road to Inverness
South of Culloden House... The British army is drummed onto the field in
full order... The Duke takes position...

Cumberland

Come see the Pretender in the distance,
His rascally & ragged rebel bands,
The Irish... & there look! the flag of France
At last those fools are fed into our hands!
From Lancaster, Carlisle & Falkirk Moor
He slipped my net, I thought him rather shrewd,
But this, a broken field of boggy moor,
All credence lacks, his choice seems rather crude,
& should, methinks, have shut up in the town...
Now ve princes contest the British crown!

The artillery duel commences... Lord Bury rides to the Duke

Lord Bury

Most noble Duke, as I surveyed the moor
Close to those blasted pipes of shrieking skirl
Above me passed the first shots of the war...
& as you hear our answer is aswirl
Their lines harangued by wind & hail & sleet
With cannonballs theirs' is a sorry lot
Hastening the onset of their defeat
We rain upon them thick shards of grape shot
But wait! what is that roar? at last they charge!
Our guns shall seek the measure of their targe!

Wolfe

Sir, now your men in mortal combat meet,
All is confusion, noise, concern & heat
On the left the thickest of the fighting
Into Barrel's brave boys their broadswords biting
But of this day the king will never fret
The heathen fall beneath infernal fire
Or spitted on an English bayonet
& on the right their charge shows no desire
Strict discipline & guts rip thro that shield
This godless place becomes their killing field

Cumberland

Orpheus to my ears! the fleeing shout
& come to a decision the matter
Tis strange to see the nation's bravest rout
Those boasted broadswords not as they flatter
Not since Lord Noll had they such a thrashing
Come Lord Ancram pursue them with the horse
Hold no quarter, slaughter, sabers slashing
That race extirpate as a fighting force
We shall destroy clannism & their men
These wretches never to rebel again!

Lord Bury

Great tidings sir, when London hears the news
The oldest wines shall happily be drunk
The Bonnie Prince & all his bonnet blues
Into the freezing Moray Firth hath sunk
The flower of the highlander lies strewn
Upon this ghastly field & down the roads
Fearless chieftains slaughtered by mere dragoon
All to the weeping streets of Inverness
So far we have counted four thousand swords
Now Billy, march for Flanders & god bless!

L'Envoi

The crucial battle has been fought
The tartan torn & strewn
The fleeing rats easily caught
Camp followers cut Celtic throat
Beneath a weeping moon

Scene Six - 20th September 1946 / Loch-han-Uamh - After six months of hiding in Scotland the Bonnie Prince, with a bounty of 30,000 english pounds on his head, is ready to be picked up by a French ship / he waits by a loch with some locals & his followers - the boat comes into sight

Cameron

Sir! look, a frigate - look, tis the L'Heureux
The flag o' France there flapping mid the sail
By heaven's grace the time has come tae go
Frae rock tae rock traversed the tangled trail
Ushering us to safety on this wave -
Nae more camping in the open weather
Nae more forest huts & nae more cave,
Nae more hiding in the purple heather,
Nae more eating cold oatmeal with sea-shell
Sir, did ye hear the splash, an anchor fell!

Prince Charles

My friends, this is the end I do suppose
The end of all our dreams & this the end
Of those brave days, the end of all our woes
& all the glory that we did intend
I beg thee to be free from misery
Tho I more hardship willing to endure
If it would help you & my poor contree
I swear in Paris I shall find the cure
Forever in my heart are those that fell
Good luck Scotland, I bid thee to fare well

Exit prince & companions

MacDonald

Gid luck tae us! aye! that man has a nerve
The gaols are full of aw oor fighting men
The English hae robbed us of aw oor verve
Sae many butchers ride fae glen to glen
Scouring the contree wi' bitter thunder
Razing oor homes, raping oor ain lasses
& chorin cattle... laden wi' plunder
They harry us frae peaks tae the passes
Oor pipes outlawed, weapons seized or hidden
& e'en the tartan whit's bin forbidden!

Lochiel

Calm yersell man, we aw gave fer the cause
& ne'er pretty when men gan to the wars
A' saw yer laughing back at Prestonpans
A' saw yer dancing wi' the other clans
Och! many chiefs have sacrificed their wealth
For yon young man, but still we toast his health
His white rose on oor hearts fore'er displayed
His life jeoparded, dressed as Flora's maid,
Fought battles fer us, aye! that man was brave!
I gan tae watch his boat frae Cluny's cave...

Fisherwoman

Aye! there he goes, & well I hope he flies
His sleekit boat a lucky wind to win
Us kind were blessed tae ha' seen his eyes
Thir are few in this world that are akin
Altho he left the land worse than he found
& half oor lot be rotting on the Thames
The rest a petty word from bein' bound
Only a bitter few his name condemns
For whilst the thistle grows upon the glen
He is a Bonnie Prince among all men

L'Envoi

The Prince exchanges British life
For one of exiled royal
& tho' his coming caused much strife
From highland chief to farmer's wife
Will be forever loyal

DEERPLAY MOOR

Foxglove & thistle empurpling the trail
That modern man in motion wide discards
It was time to return to Lancashire
Across the heights that shadow Calderdale
& I, their poetical passenger
Orpheus pressing hard against my sail
& yes! It seem'd his song had form'd a gale
Why else allude to mythic Thracian bards!
Across the fields I find the Burnley way
Lit by those little yellow birds & bees
That lead me onto Thievelly Pike, among
Such scenes of rugged beauty greening grey
For Pennines sweep the distance by degrees,
& fading far as bard's conclude their song.

THE 'POOL

"Reyt, where next?"

"West Bams on at the Orbit..."

"...Nah man, too late..."

"...The Hac'..."

"...Nah, the beers shit..."

"...Sankeys..." "..." Nah man, it's closed down..."

"...Wigan Pier..."

...Nah, everyone in Wigan is a queer..."

"...Lets hit Blackpool, find a shit B & B,

& pick up fit chicks from some Hen Party..."

"...Nah, bin there, worn the crap hat, c'mon team,

Let's unleash these libidos down at Cream!"

Razzin' the freeway, babblin 'bout the Dam,

With Techno Bangin <Bam-Bam-Bam-Bam-Blam>

"Mint mix, Funkster," "Yeah, Angels ninety-six!"

"...Ee-yar Damo" "..." Ta Mojo, Oos next"..." Nicks!"

We park, *"Oi! Yoo lot!"* Six pissed pricks to fight

Nick goes ninja style...Scousers? Soft as shite!

AMSTERDAMINIT

We trawl'd the long-haul of the motorway
& pick'd up more pot-heads past Birmingham
Jelly wobbles on the waves to Calais,
Mojo puked in the lowlands near the 'Dam.

We rush'd to relax in the smoky cafes;
Tried Purple Haze & buy Sensemelia,
Each coffee & space-cake puff'd up the daze
Of a mushroom-gilded psychedelia.

We tram'd through 'Dam to the sleezy district,
Pluck'd up Dutch courage for 'Sucky fucky,'
Crack head whores begg'd at doors, wink'd to be dicked-
Its a shame when you pay to get lucky...

Skunked-up, smashed to fuck, zombie bus, bongtubes,
Grass stashed up Nicky's ass, Richie's itchy pubes.

THE LOST POEM

I wrote a poem once,
At Hatfield, not far from the scene of disaster
My friend was driving there one sunny day
Smoking reefers & talking about life's changes

We ended up in a funky metal scrapyard
One of those places you never thought existed
Like when you were younger & joked
About where all the lost odd socks went
But this place was the real deal,
Full of Volkswagon carcasses,
Camper vans & Beetle hulks
& a couple of greasy mechanics,
chilling with the sun

While my friend looked at a ninety-nicker bumper
I was suddenly inspired to write a few desolate lines
About the decaying Earth & the dwindling fuel reserves
& finished it off with an arty kind of twist
About discovering an old photograph of myself
Holding a pretty young lady, she was wearing beads
Sat upon the beach of, perhaps, San Remo
It never happened like that, but all poems need an end

So I stashed it away,
A single sheet of paper folded several times
Constantly forgetting to type the blighter up
Until it turned up in a book I was reading
Livy's remarkable *Early History of Rome*
I'd packed it to study on my mission round the Baltic
Where trawling about the soft streets of Stockholm

Wondering what the hell the plastic cows were for
Every time I picked it up the sheet fell out the pages
Constantly reminding me that I should make it safe
It would only take a second, but I never took the time...

I found myself having one of those moments
The sun setting sublimely as I ate my evening meal
Upon the forecastle of the hotel boat I was staying on
The splash-splosh of the waves & a gust of sea breeze
Blew out the sheet as I turned a page
To float on the air like a falling feather
Time was standing still but the paper started F
A
L

To slip thro the narrowest of cracks tween the L boards

To be found one day in the distant future I
By somebody breaking up the hold for scrap N
G

I was gutted at first,
Like the time my girlfriend ran off with a German
But as I ponder'd home to my cabin empty handed,
Past painted memorials of the age of sail
I had a remarkable epiphany
At last my poem had a proper end!

NOW THAT I AM TWENTY-FIVE

Now the landlords shouted, "Sup up!"
At some jam night down Camden
Time has come for me to sum up
Some cool shit which I have done;
I have had a hundred ladies
& some of 'em together,
Played football 'gin the counties
Proudly for my Lancashire,
I have dined in Hitler's eyrie,
Composed posey midst Pompeii,
Trudged thro muddy Glastonbury
Off my nut to see Brown play,
I have master'd Fare Evasion,
Troubador'd thro' all my crimes
(Except for one bottle du vin
They reported in the Times),
I have cream'd my pants at Wembley,
Play'd the champion at chess,
Dodged the workplace prison mis'ry,
Nigh six years now free from stress,
I have writ a wicked album,
Formed a company of kings,
Chased romantic ghosts thro' Belgium,
These & many other things,
For I'm flush with understanding
What it means to be alive,
With a spirit so demanding
Now that I am Twenty Five.

THE FADER CODE

- 1 Remain alert
- 2 Always keep your cool
- 3 Trust your instincts
- 4 Never show your money
- 5 Know your stations
- 6 Another five minutes won't hurt in the loo
- 7 Know your enemy
- 8 Know your postcodes
- 9 The train's going there anyway
- 10 When in doubt, clout
- 11 The train always comes when you're skinnin' up
- 12 It is every Fader's duty to baffle & confuse
- 13 Always remember your free cup of tea
- 14 There's no need to rush - unless you're being chased

VICTORIA EXPRESS

I hop on a train
little fuss
few passengers
watch me sit
a black woman
a young punk
old man twiddles his tash
& in a flash
the train sets off
planes wing over gatwick
& as we reach croydon
my brain
pretends to be elsewhere
dreaming of mysterious fancies

MODERN LIFE

At this stage of mankind's evolution,
We live in an age of air pollution,
Fat-cats & taxes, taxi fares, faxes,
Serial killers, silky leg waxes,
Condoms, modems, gimmicks, gadgets, gizmos
Two rubber ducks & comic book heroes,
Football, rock & roll, catwalk, movie stars,
Recession, depression & wonder bras,
Four packs & prozac, pylon countryside,
Anarchist daughter, schoolboy suicide,
Just-add-water, slaughter of Mother Earth
Death of religion & occult rebirth,
Not one inch left of this globe to explore,
The whole world itchin' for a third world war...

ON LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Being virgin to Eros & his sighs
Spectral seconds attend the growing soul
Hearing a lute-string'd aether-breathing call
I turn'd to see her star-wreath'd, lustful eyes

My Latvian eagle-lashed poetess
My pearl-eyed raven in her Persian dress
My Spanish pea-hen singing as she comes
My nude Numidian banging the drums

Like songbirds witnessing the world's first dawn
Or proud parents cooing their babe's first yawn
Like virgins witness to the breast exposed
Or an exploring of the always closed

We are the music of the finches green
We are two pussies purring by a fire
We are the fragrance of a vernal scene
We are two frogs full throated with desire

Like mountain men & archipelagos
Or young sweethearts sniffing a first red rose
Like money men glimpsing a glint of gold
Or distant kin returning to the fold

We are the thistle of your bonnie land
We are two rabbits sprinting cross the glen
We are the seaweed strewn across the sand
We are two badgers snuggled in their den

We are morning in the Tuscan enclaves
We are night on the sea of Gallilee
We are birds gliding between the white waves
For we are one in nature, you & me,

THITHER THE ABOVE

O knightly lights of heaven, star on star
You never shone so beauteous, we are
The work, perhaps, of some astral being
Or am I him now I am the all-seeing
Acolyte of the lost art of the skies
Painting Orion & the Geminis
Musing upon those long, eternal days
Soar shooting stars, trailblazing my amaze
Mixt with the phantom llumin'd Milky Way
I saw, I swear, the Seraphim at play
Dancing between the planetary kings
Lord Jupiter & Saturn's eerie rings
Venus is beaming streaming dreams of love
Sweetheart come hither, thither the above

GLENDA

you are
poetic clever
sensual-amusing
sweet-sassy-sharing
warmhearted-caring
adorable-decadent
funny-joyloving
inspirational
kittencute
o baby
I love
you
so
!

BUTTERFLY

		*		*
		*		*
		*		*
		*	*	
skoelapper			nipwisipwis	
liblikas	farasha	titli	mariposa	dimago
burabiro	sommerflue	mot'l	petalou'da	paruparo
pi sugnya	<i>farfalla</i>	uvevane	kupu	Iupelupe <i>vlinder</i> pulelehua
txipilota	<i>choochoo</i>	lepke	<i>perhonen</i>	luvivane
pinpilinpauxa		motyl		kwarikwaringa
prajapathi	<i>papilio</i>	flutur	<i>bimbilo</i>	kupukupu
peperuda	<i>huitzil</i>	fuf lao	<i>bembe</i>	gorgoleta
borboleta	<i>kakupo</i>	tauriö	<i>kelebek</i>	babochka
woo deep	<i>zanimö</i>	<i>fithrildi</i>	parpar	<i>fluturi</i> <i>kipepeo</i> bayboum
hevavahkema		fefe-fefe	pepeo	pili-pala schmetterling
peteliöke		skurvefugl	le1ptir	phapharati feileacan
pillango	marlimarlimi		oguyo	shavishavi parvaneh
sommerfugl			fjril	samanalaya

ON VALENTINE'S EVE

My love...

as we drift toward Valentines Day
upon the endless water that is time,
stood here at the edge of my river-barge,
casting piercing glances through the waters
I pause to reflect on the light of your face,
half a light now, then brighter than the evening star...

& it is to there that I draw my memory,
falling overboard into the flow of loving feeling
to meet as spirits, well met,
commingling our essence on many a fine night upstanding,
is to be with a lover indeed
& it pains me to be in your absence
& I am but seaweed on a sad shore,
slowly drying as the moisture of your ruby lips
ascends to highest heaven...

but as with the sea & the waves & all the oceans
the tides of time shall bring you to me once again
when we shall set ourselves adrift for islands of soft exstasi...
two fine liners fluttering the ocean blue,
aslant in elegant luxury...

& on the occasion we dock in the same port,
some shanty of Mauritius or the Harbors of New York,
there we shall float upon times velvet ocean
bobbing together in unison, a special shared tranquility,
til time & life's pathways shall separate us both again
remember kindly always

... you are forever in my heart!

WHAT BLEEDS FOR FIVE DAYS & DOES NOT DIE?

"Varium et mutabile semper"

She moans about her hormones every second week in four
Goes clattering the cutlery & slamming every door
Like when we went to Sicily & found a paradise
But she was full of PMT & said, "*It's not THAT nice,*"
But women are man's reason, so when swings the pendulum
Put on your safety helmet for the fireworks to come -
She sulks & yells, her belly swells, her paranoia grows,
Now fear the snarling werewolf where you once could smell a rose,
Cos' women synch up to the moon, thats just the way things are,
So never say "*irrational,*" or let her drive the car,
& if you feel frustrated in a very vocal war
Letting your lady win will just infuriate her more
Then when the fun is over, son, there's one thing you should do -
Embrace your woman, kiss her lips & whisper, "*I love you!*"

POETICUS

Mine art asleep, yet she dreams in beauty,
Paints tangible scenes to adorn the page,
Aluminous thoughts to milk a mild age
Of mellowing souls, sing a song freely,
Triumphant songs draped in resplendency,
Stars shoot lucid cross an opaque stage,
Rare spirit released from a mortal cage,
I have a new song for thee, poetry!
In raptures receiving the sacred states
Of an enlighten'd mind, virtuous heart
& resurgent soul, we follow the fates,
& tis a fine thing to play at an art,
To champion renaissance, join the brave
Who sought the greatest glory of the grave.

VAGABONDO

Solo, sono stato viaggio,
Dalle complessite senza vita,
Di villaggio a villaggio,
Panarami di vista a vista -
Oh! sospiri del Viarregio,
Oh! scheletro catta di Calcata,
Solo, sono stato viaggio,
Dalle complessite senza vita.

Stelle quando sono campaggio,
Pensiero sulla passagio,
Oh! isola balerno di Ponza,
Oh! piazza confortolvemente,
Oh! bellaza di Portovenere,
Oh! Non complicato mezza-vita!

Alone, I went wandering, from complexities without life, from village to village, panorama from view to view - O! sighs of Viareggio, O! skeletal cats of Calcata, Alone, I went wandering, from complexities without life. Stars when I am camping, thoughts upon the path, O! whale-island of Ponza, O! comfortable city-squares, O! beauty of Portovenere, O! uncomplicated half-life!

THE NAZARENE

Gethsemene

Judas rope

Archmagus

Sadly maintain the scandalised Sanhedrim

Leaning their wills upon the Roman whim

The Pilate's orders murder the son of Him

To Calvary

A Crucifix

Sanguinus

Human sin

Son of god

Devils day

Pious fires

Epiphanies

9 AD

Thro the Teutoburger Wald went the arms of Varius

Arminius of the Cherusci made his excuses

& soon a ghoulis baritas surrounds the sons of Mars

Chaunting for Lord Tuisto & Odin amidst the stars

The chiefs fighting for victory, companions for their chief

They set out all for slaughter, no quarter & no relief

A black storm rages all around the javelins & spears

The fallen Goths are carried off to dry the widow tears

Three days of carnage rampant in the dark & marshy wood

The roman gen'ral cuts his throat & gurgles on the blood

Some men cast off their armour & await the lethal blow

Only a lucky few would safely reach the Rhine's wide flow

The news reaches Augustus, flying thro grieving regions;

"O Quintillius Varius, give me back my legions!"

BELOW SCOPELLO

To become, to belong, bohemian,
So many miles my smitten songsmith sent,
Striving for prospects paradesean
In an immortal moment's monument -
Time carves us this vista Tyhrennean,
Tranquilo corner of a continent,
To become, to belong, bohemian,

So many miles my smitten songsmith sent.
This rocky cove, this tower, this mountain,
Blend in an often prophesied fusion,
Sweet Sicily!
Sat silent & content,
Recently have my dreams increasing seen
Visions of places I had never been
Where I should sit a songsmith & invent

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

Acorn - immortality
Acynthus - artistic
Aloe - grief
Ambrosia - love returned
Amethyst - admiration
Angelica - inspiration
Angrec - finer arts
Apple - temptation
Ash Tree - grandeur
Asphodel - my regrets follow you to the grave
Basil - hatred
Bay Rose - beware
Bay Wreath - record of merit
Begonia - dark thoughts
Belladonna - silence
Black Bryony - be my support
Bluebell - humility
Broken Straw - a broken contract
Burnet - merry heart
Butterfly Weeds - let me go
Cammomile - energy in adversity
Carnation, red - alas for my poor heart
Carnation, striped - refusal
Cedar Leaf - I live for thee
Celandine - joys to come
Centaurea - felicity
Cherry Blossom - good education
Clematis - mental beauty
Cobea - gossip
Convolvulus - a bond
Cornflower - refinement

Cornpoppy - consolation
Crocus, saffron - mirth
Crocus, spring - youthful gladness
Cudweed - never ceasing remembrance
Daisy, marguerite - a token
Daisy, mountain - innocence
Daisy, wylde - I share your feelings
Eglantine - poetry
Eideweiss - noble courage
Fig - argument
Four Leaf Clover - be mine
Forget-Me-Not - true love
Fresia - trust
Furze - enduring affection
Garlic - strength
Gentle balm - pleasantry
Guelder Rose - old age
Helenium - tears
Hollyshock - ambition
Honey Flower - love sweet & secret
Imperial Lily - majesty
Indian Cress - warlike trophy
Ipomaea - I attach myself to you
Iris - eloquence
Judas Tree - betrayal
Justicia - perfection of female beauty
Laurel - ambition
Lilac, white - youthful innocence
Lily-of-the Valley - return of happiness
Linnaea - I wish we were together
Locust Tree - affection beyond the grave
Magnolia - love of nature
Meadow Saffron - grown old
Michaelmas Daisy - farewell
Milkwort - hermitage
Mint - virtue
Myrtle - discipline
Orange Blossoms - bridal festivities
Orchid - a belle

Pansy - a thought
Pea - an appointed meeting
Peach Blossom - I am your captive
Poppy - eternal sleep
Purple Columbine - resolve to win
Purple Lilac - first emotions of love
Red Catchfly - youthful love
Rose, black - death
Rose, blue - mystery
Rose, light-pink - sympathy
Rose, red - love
Rose, silver - sonnetry
Rue - disdain
Stephanotis - desire to travel
Sweet Basil - good wishes
Syringa - memory
Thistle - austerity
Thyme - activity
Tulip, red - declaration of love
Tulip, variegated - beautiful eyes
Tulip, yellow - hopelessness
Veronica - fidelity
Violets, blue - faithfulness
Weeping Willow - grief
Windflower Anemone - forsaken
Wylde Tansy - I declare war against you
Zephyr Flowers - expectation

Part 1
The Stray Cats of Calcatta

Being an account of two cats of Calcata who communicate upon a romantic level by using the secret Language of the Flowers. Upon falling in love as kittens, then getting married, their tranquility is disturbed by the arrival of a young, handsome tom from the nearby town of Falaria. The Wife becomes completely enamored of him, begins an affair & seeks a divorce. Her husband challenges the tom to a duel, but is left second bested & bleeding. His wife sees this & realizes her true love for her husband - but it is too late, for in a fit of jealousy the husband murders her. He instantly shows the greatest remorse, burying his wife at the spot where she died...

Lazing through days of Italy,
O life of lovely hours!
The soft wine & festivity,
The sunshine & tranquility,
Where street cats speak, eloquently,
The Language of the Flowers.

There is a place where you must go
To hear the street-cat patter,
Where sweet Rondini swoop & show,
The river glistens far below
A maze of streets, then you will know
The magic of Calcata.

Upon a soft & starry night
Two kittens kiss'd all hazy
& pluck'd two *Lilacs* flushing bright,
Purple for her, for him pure White,
Love blossoming from first sweet sight
Fresh as a *Mountain Daisy*.

Young lovers grew, through every scene
The cute *Red Catchfly* carried -
Where Spring Crocuses grow serene
& *Orange Blossoms* speckle green,
Amidst the gentle *Celandine*
They were forever married!

Their home a mountain theatre
Sunshine rising to mild purrs -
Each day they found *Veronica*,
Blue Violets & *Ambrosia*
For to bind them all together
On a bed of felted Furze.

Then from Falaria there came
The cat with eyes a-dapple,
& in her heart the strangest flame
Burning so brightly, to her shame,
With *Amethyst* he won her name
& left for her an *Apple*.

They dallied by the old river
Where grow the *Four-Leaf Clovers*,
He plucked the wylde *Justicia*
& with *Peach Blossom* gave to her,
So by the bright *Honey Flower*
They were the tender lovers.

The husband woke that cloudy night,
Went out all wrack'd with worry,
Grew frantic thro the gloomy light
Til shone the moon full beaming bright,
No man should suffer such a sight
Underneath the *Judas Tree*.

Biting a fig between his teeth,
Clutching a Red Carnation,
He gave to her the *Cedar Leaf*,
But she, to his own disbelief,
Wrapt Butterfly Weeds in a wreath
& bid for separation.

The husband's wounded heart wants war,
Throws down the cruel *Wylde Tansy* -
The piazza, as was the law,
Saw scratch & screech & bite & claw,
As lost he left, limping by paw,
From heaven fell a *Pansy*.

To see her first love lose the fray,
By an arrow her heart shot!
She found a fresh straw from the hay,
A dozen *Red Tulips* at play,
Wove them into a lush bouquet
With a fresh *Forget-Me-Not*.

Pressing *Basil* into a wound,
Chewing fresh *Begonia*,
He stood up with a hissing sound,
Sore paws the pretty rooftops pound,
Upon a wall his sweetheart found
& push'd her to the murder!

Distraught he dash'd to where she fell
Weeping for the tragedy,
Kiss'd & buried her spirit's shell,
Cloaked her with Cudweed, as tears swell
He placed a little Asphodel
'Neath the sea-green Locust Tree.

So if you ever take the care
To visit fair Calcata
Go to the walls the street cats share
& pause a while to look down there
Where you should see, come really stare,
The grave *Red Roses* flatter.

Part 2
The Falcon Princes

Being an account of a contest, wherein the princes of five contrees attempt to win the affections of the princees of the king of Sicily's falcons. The tournament is held upon Monte Falcano that towers ovet the island of Marretimo & one-by-one they are whittled down, first thro their personality, then speed, then abilty to hunt game. Finally, the princes of Portugal & Cyprus duel, wherein the Portuguese falcon is triumphant, wins the princess & plants his national flower on the island for posterity.

There is an island you should know
Of sun & sea & showers
Call'd marvellous Marettimo
Where Homer mused so long ago
& all god's creatures grew to know
The Language of the Flowers

Upon this island lives a king,
Lord of Sicilily's falcons,
The Guelder Roses grow each spring
About his Ash Tree, in a ring,
But still the eagles fear his wing
From Scotland to the Balkans.

More beautiful than true Orchis
Grew his beloved daughter;
When she had pluck'd blue clematis
He sent forth mountain messengers
To the royal falcon princes
Inviting them to court her.

A handsome prince flew to propose
Bearing tri-petal'd Iris,
Then came on others, one with Rose,
One clutch'd Lavender in his claws,
One brought Bear's Breech in spiky pose,
The last - Egyptian Lotus!

Each kiss'd the princess with soft peck
& shower'd admiration;
One gave her Mint, one gave Angrec,
One Cherry Blossom, one Garlic,
But to the one with Hollyshock
She toss'd a Striped Carnation.

The king announced a tournament
Amid the mountain bowers;
The goats broke up their government
Assinos braved the steep ascent
While local seagulls squawk'd consent
& scatter'd Zephyr Flowers.

The crowds had gather'd on a slope,
Oer the sea that swam to space,
The princes hover'd at the rope
The king took out a telescope
Salvaged from some ship shorn of hope
Then settled to watch the race

Four falcons flew down lightning fast
From clouds to the low sea-mist,
Touching the lone fuggazi mast
Then Imperial Lily pass'd,
The princess cheer'd, gave to the last
The colourful Amethyst.

Three princes hunted thro the day,
Down they swoop'd on ev'ry kill,
Each filling up a silver tray,
Then when the sun shed last red ray
The princess on the least did spray
The blossom of *Sweet Basil*.

The King announced twas time to dine,
The day's hunt put in a pile,
Wash'd down with wash'd up Tuscan wine,
The finalists both found a sign,
One pluck'd the *Purple Columbine*
& his rival Cammomile.

Two falcons face the final fray
From Portugal & Cyprus;
The evening gloom consumes the day
Up to the moon assinos bray,
The princess keeps the cold at bay
Wrapp'd with warm *Indian Cress*.

Thro *Belladonna*-scented sky
Princes fought with wing & peck,
Their talons lock, they fall from high,
One hits the water with shock'd cry,
Returns, receiving, with a sigh,
The *Bay Wreath* around his neck.

The Prince of Portugal had won
His princess's Carnation,
As is the law of high falcon
The King embraced his future son
Whose flower planted with talon
To join the vegetation.

So if you ever take the time
To view Monte Falcano,
& venture on its verdant climb,
'Tween sea & Sicily sublime,
More fragrant than a poet's rhyme
Does the lush *Lavender* grow.

An oasis they found so calm
As day was slowly dawning
In pretty ruins free from harm
Grew Cobia & Gentle Balm
They found a shade beneath a palm
& dozed right through the morning

Hind legs rose with the mid-day heat
& plunged into the city
From street to roof, from roof to street
A grey, fat, one-eyed cat to meet
Sat in his coliseum seat -
Gave thought & then pawed a pea

Emperor hissed & they were gone
To Forte Prenistina
By *Milkwort* & *Meadow Saffron*
Wise Ginger sniffed the silk ribbon
Gave them a *Hazelnut* & one
Bay Rose to warn for danger

The Tom leapt on a clanking train
Clutching the Kitten tightly
To thunder through the fair champaign
Until the tall, town-topped mountain
& hit the road, where once again
The starlight shone so brightly

They dally thro a fragrant night,
Perfumed with *Convolvulus*,
A restaurant slides into sight
Aroma whets the appetite
They search the bins, a meaty bite
Tasting of Saffron Crocus

Morning covers Falaria
The weather light & lazy -
By hazelnut & gatherer
He purr'd goodbye & gave to her
The Garlic plant in full flower
& Michaelmas the Daisy

Sad Cat mourns by the old river
Beneath a weeping *Willow*
Her lover leaps from Calcata
Clutching their beautiful daughter
Happiness shines from a mother
Whose heart her Kitten's pillow!

37,000 ft

He who tells or hears this tale shall reach the same place

Bhishma

Across Europa we have both progress'd,
By foot, by boat, by tram, by bus, by train,
But this hour, from a cool & pleasant plane,
Sees me sailing air on a higherer quest,
The scenes by cyan skies & soft cloud blest,
How seldom seen & varied the terrain
Of ashen peak, urban sprawl, verdant plain,
Gleaming sea, wastes of sand & wylde forest.

As soon as we abandon Europa,
I could already taste the eastern scent,
The sun was setting west of Syria,
The starry heavens singing its lament,
As somewhere yon the grey Arabia
My pilot was beginning his descent.

OVERTAKING LANES

Two walkers sat by the side of the road
Staring at a truck that had spill'd it's load
By that, an old wreck that just would not start
Bypass'd by a man in an ox-drawn cart,
& faster still; first a cycle rickshaw
A dull green tractor from the days of yore,
Auto-rickshaw belching dirty black smoke,
Bright red scooter missing many-a-spoke,
Some weird lorry's siren psychedelics,
Bus driven by two mad alcoholics,
These by breezy motorcycle bypass'd
Then last, & an Ambassador of Rajput caste,
O lawless highways brave gangs of robbers stalk
You know, it's a nice day, I think I'll walk.

THE TURNING OF ASHOKA

*The year is 261 BC/ After the bloody battle of Kalinga at Dhauli,
Asokha is riding beside the River Nadi*

Ashoka

O blessed day! What glory gain'd, the battle still pounds my senses
& in mine ears still echoes the cries of battle & death-yells loud
Those leonine roars, those clam'rous shouts, the din of drums & cymbals
& what sights - great elephants rent each other with bloody tusks
& great chariots exploding in shorn limbs & wooden splinters
But what is this? a worn woman weeps by the river running crimson
My goodly lady why shed thy tears on this auspicious of days
When I am flush with the victory & feeling very generous
Whatever on this Earth ye need my attendants shall see to

Woman

I hear you, Chakravartin, in thine armour as white as clouds
& yet, ye are a hypocrite for thy palms bestain'd with blood
& yes there is one thing I want upon this Earth above all others
To feel my husband's warmth but his body is as cold as the snows
A broken corpse - if ye have no power to make men, why kill them?

JAIT SAGAR

If India can make a man a man
More than the veshyalay of Amsterdam
If thro the chaos he can make a plan
Respecting Hinduism & Islam

If he can give the beggar his rupee
& tip a tout charging over the odds
If he can read his Rajput history
& choose a god but still bless other gods

If he can sleep upon the railway run,
Find fresh clean waterfalls amid the dirt
If he can wonder how the Raj was won
Then pause upon the horrors & the hurt

If he can haggle down & know his daal
Then does he have to see the Taj Mahal?

TSU-NA-MI

Remember the host of the ghostly battalion
Imagine them drown'd in a growling sea
Beach-huts for driftwood, corpses for carrion
O sing a sad song for the TSU-NA-MI

Sing to the outlying islands of Andaman
As waves strip the tribesmen's neolithic dress
Ripping them out to the mad, frothing ocean
Leaves nothing behind but wasted wilderness

Far worse than the monster that shock'd mighty Lisbon
From the Guadalquivir to the Antibes
Struck by the scope, the proportion of ocean
Forever witness to these biblical seas

Remember the mood in the days after Christmas
When so many strangers shall shun the new year
A new, doleful sound when the river grows restless
As so many tears crystallize a new fear

Remember the grief in the streets of Sumatra
Second Krakatoa rolls in as a gale
The wave left a swathe for the here & hereafter
Of death & destruction on Golgothan scale

Remember them fleeing the huge walls of water
That snapped them & tossed them & made bloody piles
The aftermath pale, she search'd for her daughter
A sad scene repeated some three thousand miles

These scenes a true portent of deadly Katrina
Soon Louisiana would suffer the same
When lives devastated by merciless water
Become bloated bodies of barbaric shame

Remember them flock from the lush Phuket beaches
As in rush'd a storm to destroy the fair bays
Lost in wreck'd Kamala street urchin beseeches
The first waves survivors the oceans still raise

Remember the sounds on the shores of Sri Lanka
The crunching & breaking & snapping & screams
As ships of pig-iron are ripped from the anchor
& pack'd teeming trains flung from bent, steely beams

Remember the shock when the seas were retreating
What nuclear winter on all sides was seen
On the horizon the dark sky now meeting
A vast wall of water of Aegean green

& in the black minute that heaven was swelling
Nature's awesome horror in raw, rampant state
For two hundred thousand the death bell is knelling
What Sayer or Vates could foresee their fate

Remember the trail of those waves of destruction
From Asia to Africa surged the wild sea
Remember, remember the Lord of the Ocean
O sing a sad song for the TSU-NA-MI!