

"Or else you'll find your tongue bleeding."  
"Please, please, who are you?"  
"Who is that woman over there, your wife?"

"What business have you in my affairs?"  
"Any that you might have yourself."  
"Bloody shit! Who the hell are you?"  
"I thought I have already warned you!" the stranger said going to a chair and seated himself.

"Please, who are you?"  
"Fool is him who asks such a question for he is not a man but rather a woman. If you should accept the fact that you are a woman rather than a man, I shall tell you.

A puzzled Londari listened attentively.  
"On a certain day," began the stranger but then looked down and coughed a forced cough, covering his face with his hands. "On a certain day, a weeping woman burst open the door of a building and rushed in. I wanted to follow her in but was afraid of a hot-tempered sister-teacher. I was lucky that the door opened a crack so I looked in and the woman ..."

"My Kembos!! My Kembos!! My Kembos!!" Londari cried, disturbing the stranger. "Do I really see the face of Kembos or is it really a dream?"

Londari collapsed to the floor, weiling like a woman.

When they saw each other's face, the strange had almost burst out crying but playing the man, he had controlled himself. Now, however, seeing Londari weiling like a woman he burst out crying.

They huddled up each other with runny noses and watery eyes. Each cried as if the other had died. The weiling and crying went on as if there was no end to it.

Londari went to Wabag and withdrew about a quarter of his savings. He bought the best frozen foods and other kinds of foods. As Londari bought them Wasowan loaded them in a bilum. Londari bought about fifteen cartons of S.P. beer from a local corporate club.

In the evening Londari and Wasowan became the hosts of the biggest dinner party they ever made. The house was crowded with

a good number of people, including all the teachers and some of Londari's best local friends. The fact that there was no Samboeks present in the party was according to Kembos' wish. Londari had strongly wanted to invite a good number of Samboeks but Kembos had strongly objected to it.

When the foods and drinks were served, Londari cleared his throat and said:

"Friends! I am now the happiest man alive. I have been dreaming for this day, the day I would meet my long — lost brother. At last my dream has come true. However, I am still uncertain whether I am now in the presence of my long-lost brother or a mere dream. Join me, all of you, in the happiest moment of my life."

While Wasowan was busy entertaining the guests the two brothers got into conversation.

"Kembos! My beloved brother! I am very surprised that you have grown big, much bigger than me."

"No time for physical descriptions", Kembos said. "Let's get into business, real business. You see, I have come for two important reasons. Firstly, I had a longing to see you. You see, the day I waved you good-bye through the half-opened door of your classroom I ..."

Londari broke down and wept.

"On that very day I had a longing to see you because somehow instinct told me that I was leaving."

Londari cried even harder.

"Brother! My beloved Londari! Do not weep for I am not dead yet. Control your emotions and listen well. The second reason why I came is, I brought you a message from somebody."

"Who?" Londari asked still crying.

"Someone who is ready to take a long and unknown journey, perhaps on eternal one."

"What is the message?" Londari asked still weeping.

"Well, we are to go to that "somebody" immediately. That "somebody" urgently wants to see you."

"Who might that somebody be?"

"You are the elder brother but you can't even reason out simple questions yourself.

You are not a baby to be hand-fed. You will find out yourself. Now, when is the school year ending?"

"In about four weeks."

"That's too long. Are there any other possibilities of getting yourself off from duty?"

"Well, I'll try."

"Then make it as soon as possible. We must leave immediately. If you are not attached to your duty we could leave even tomorrow."

"Well, I'll try and fill in a "sick-leave" from on Monday."

"If you think it will work, please do it."

"I think it will work."

"Good! Now, who is that lady? Your wife?" Kembos asked lowering his voice.

"Well, not really."

"What do you mean?"

"We do not share the same bed."

"My goodness! How can a dog and a cuscus sleep together in one house?"

"That is what most people think."

"I just can't understand it. Do you mean you are married on a yano basis?"

"Not really! We are just together here. That's all!"

"Oh! I see! When it is time for mating you mate outside but in here you live as though you were her brother and she your sister. Am I not right?"

"Yes, you are not. What you are saying is precisely the opposite. You see, brother, I believe in safe-guarding my purity."

"You have indeed grown into a peculiar man. Anyway, do you like the girl?"

"Really! Indeed, brother! I love her with all my heart and I hope to marry her during the coming Christmas vacation."

"Do you have enough pigs?"

"That's the biggest problem."

"Precisely what I expected! Lond! Don't worry. Don't worry about the damn pigs. Just wait and you will see!"

Londari was in a spasm of excitement.

"Lond! I am very sorry that I almost forgot one thing."

"What?"

"Something about your marriage. I'm afraid you will face a very big problem."

"What kinds of problem?"

"I am reluctant to tell you but you will find out yourself."

The guests sat till day-break the next day over the fifteen cartons of beer. Some had collapsed where they had been sitting, when gripped by the influence of alcohol. The strong drinkers, however, were battling on with the beer that seemed never to end.

On Monday, the thirteenth of October, Londari went early to Wabag and withdrew the rest of his savings. He bought a lot of new clothes and other items. He bought enough to be distributed among the people or the household from where Kembos had come from. He bought a beautifully coloured lap-lap a coloured skirt and a beautiful blouse for his mother. He also bought some coloured blankets for her. On Kembos' advice he bought a big Swedish-made axe and a good spade for Kakale, his unseen uncle. Again, on Kembos' advice, he went to a "children's wear" section of the Cottra store and bought some blouses and skirts for a little girl.

He offered Kembos some money but Kembos urged him to buy some additional clothes and other items which he did willingly.

At last all the items were packed into two patrol bags. The handles of the axe and spade were taken off. The "handle less" tools were then fitted in, one in each bag.

Before they sat off Londari enrolled Kembos on the coming year's new in take list. Kembos had rejected the idea of going to school but Londari forced him explaining that one day he would regret it. He had told Kembos that it was the best opportunity he had, so Kembos had at last accepted it saying, "Okay! What the elder brother says is the best for me! I shall do it."

Londari filled the sick leave form for a week, apart from his four days entitlement for the teaching year.

Wasowan really wanted to go with them but Kembos told her that since they were in such a hurry they needn't be dragged behind by a slow woman. He promised her, however, that they would visit his mothers place sometimes in the future.

They caught a passenger vehicle going to



Wabag and from there they caught another one going up the Ambam Valley to Tsikiro. They left Wasowan at Par and told her that they would come back in or after two weeks.

The vehicle stopped at Tsikiro. Londari ask the driver if he would take them further up to Landor but the driver refused. Londari further asked the driver if he would hire the vehicle at a rate of thirty kina per hour. The driver again refused even at the fortune, saying that the road was faulty.

They proceeded with the journey. It was dusk when they reached Landor. They spent the night there and set off before dawn the next day. They climbed hills and rugged mountains; walked across plains and jungle terrains; across rivers; and along valleys. The journey seemed endless. On an don they walked.

Somewhere on the way it was dusk. They spent the night in a bush house. Before dawn the next day they set off again. By now Londari was utterly tired. His thighs swelled from walking.

Kembos, however, walked with ease. He took the Bag Londari was carrying, thus, doubling his load. Even then he had to wait for Londari who was slowing down. He pitied his elder brother who was begging for a rest at an interval of about half a kilometer. They walked on slowly till dusk. They stopped and stayed overnight in a bush house on the way.

Before dawn the next day they set off, Kembos carrying both the two bags while Londari lingered on, dragging his swollen legs from which the pain was indeed unberable. Kembos assured his brother that their destination was now only half a day's walk. He himself, however, knew that if they walked on the same rate they would probably reach home between dusk and just before sunset.

"Lond!" Kembos called.

"Yes?" Londari asked walking very slowly than ever, almost crawling.

"Do you really want to marry the girl?"

"Which girl?"

"The girl you call Wasowan."

"Yes! Of course!"

"Do you think you will cancel your

friendship and forget her?"

"No! Never! Death alone shall me forget her."

"Why do you speak like you are deeply attached to her? Are there any significant meanings and values in having an attachment for her or is it mere romance?"

"Well, the fact is, I vowed never to marry a girl other than Wasowan for two equally important reasons, for which, the first is my love and the last is a strange case."

"What is the case?"

"We have plenty of times. I will tell you later."

"So it means your attachment for the girl called Wasowan or who ever you call her is very strong, isn't it?"

"It is!"

"Do you think you relationship is changeable?"

"Never! I vowed that if Wasowan should not marry me than no girls ever shall!"

"Brother! You are really a peculiar man!"

It was sunset. Londari hoped the journey would soon be over.

"Kembos is coming!" someone shouted from a garden hut above a sloppy hill. "Hey! Kembos! Kembos!"

"Yes!" Kembos shouted back and led his brother up the hill to the garden.

There were four people sitting on the yard of the garden hut. They were all girls. Three of them were young while the other was a beautiful little child. One of the young girls immediately attracted Londari's attention.

"Meet this boy, all of you!" Kembos exclaimed. "I stole him from the Naili people."

Two of the young girls sprang up to their feet. They both rushed towards Londari and both embraced him and shook hands with him. The other young girl, the one who had caught Londari's attention, sprang up to her feet and dashed towards the two brothers. Surprisingly, she grasped Kembos on the neck, ignoring Londari.

"So you have come back, Tukulo!", the girl said, with drawing herself from Kembos. "I am very happy indeed to see you back."

"So am I, Tukulo!" Kembos answered.

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entrance porch of the garden hut, watching the stranger in disbelief. She was more than ready to flee into the house, if the stranger should come towards her.

"Those two girls", Kembos said, pointing to the two young girls who had embraced Londari and had shaken hands with him, "are from this village — our village."

"Oh! I see!" Londari exclaimed, eyeing the other who had ignored him.

"That girl there," Kembos said, pointing to the one whom Londari had just eyed, "is from the other village, beyond that mountain over there. She has been with us for almost five years. She often goes back to her village to help her parents in the gardens but she never spends more than four days with them. She is, in a way, like a daughter to mame."

"Oh! I see!" Londari exclaimed. "But wouldn't it displease her parents?"

"Wouldn't what displease her parents?"

"I mean the idea of her being with us."

"Well, in a way, her parents like the idea of her being with us."

"Why should they like it? I mean, are they somehow related to us?"

"You should be big enough, I guess, to reason simple matters but I accept your ignorance of the situation because you wouldn't know anyway. The times you should have spent, learning some of the fundamental principles and values of our tradition, have been wasted while learning the white man's ways and teachings."

"You are quite right brother, but please", Londari said, lowering his voice, "answer my question."

"Well", Kembos answered, also lowering his voice, "she is, in a way, my wife, as you . . ."

"My goodness!" Londari bellowed. "Really? What did you say? Why didn't you tell me before . . .?"

"Calm down, you 'woman' of a man. You will soon find out."

"But how . . .?"

"Here is one little surprise for you, brother," Kembos said, interrupting Londari and pointing to the beautiful little girl, who was still standing at the doorway of the

garden hut. "That little girl over there was the one who followed me into the world, just as I you."

"What?" Londari shouted in a spasm of excitement.

"Nepatae!"<sup>1</sup> Come and meet your long lost brother whom you have repeatedly heard of from mame and me."

At first, the beautiful little girl was reluctant but then, surprisingly, dashed towards Londari and got herself engulfed in Londari's outstretched arms.

Londari was filled with a hidden joy. He held the girl firmly against his chest amidst crying. There were the tears of joy.

While the brother and sister were in the midst of joy, Kembos opened the bags and pulled out some of the clothes, laplaps and other items. He gave two of each kind to the two young girls, the ones from his own village. The girls heartily thanked Kembos repeatedly.

"Tukulo!" Kembos said, facing the remaining girl.

"Yes! Tukulo!"

"I am having problems in pulling out yours because they are entangled with those of mame's, so you will get yours later. I hope you wouldn't mind, would you?"

"Of course not! Thank you very much, Tukulo!"

"Good!" Kembos said. "And Nepatae too! Nepatae!"

"Eee?" the beautiful little girl said, now sitting on Londari's lap.

"You also will have yours later."

Apart from the little girl, why did Kembos not give out the presents belonging to the girl whom he called Tukulo? Well, the items were of course not entangled with those of his mother's, but he was disinclined to give them out because they were specially bought for her, and therefore, a bit more valuable than the ones given to the other two girls. If he gave them out, the other two girls would probably have had some ill-feelings against one or the other, the giver or the receiver. However, the two girls perhaps knew the reason behind Kembos' disinclination. Kembos' justification for his disinclination



was unreasonable to them. This is always the case, anyway, in Enga under such a circumstances.

While eating some food provided by the girls, Londari, taking the utmost care not to be seen, focused his attention on the girl whom his bother had addressed as Tukulo. She was now sitting beside Kembos. In the glamour of the setting sun, she was in the splendour of her beauty. She looked graceful, even in her sitting position. The thick hair on her head was of a dark, Waepa<sup>1</sup> charcoal colour. The smooth forehead; the graceful eyes that resembled those of the kepa<sup>2</sup>; the straight, long nose that ran down between the charming eyes; the thin, small lips which, when opened a crack in her smiles, revealed the milky whiteness of her small, straight teeth, and the long, graceful neck were much more than enough to make a man go crazy.

Her laughter and smiles were like flashes of lighting. Her sweet and charming voice which added magnificently to the splendour of her beauty, was not the voice of a human being, but that of the yaka laee.<sup>3</sup>

Her real name, as we shall soon discover, was in fact Laee, which perfectly described her beauty.

"Mame told us that you will be coming today", the girl said in her sweet, beautiful voice, "so we came here to wait for you. Now it is time we should be learning."

They immediately did.

Londari wanted to hear more of the sweet voice but kept his desire to himself.

Londari walked up the steep hill, full of thoughts. Inwardly, he greatly admired his brother for his wisdom. His brother was intellectually more developed than he himself.

A series of questions evolved in Londari's mind. "My brother had indeed grown into a fine young boy and had also developed morally and intellectually — yes — but why the fussiness? Kembos had repeatedly asked questions after questions on my forth coming marriage but why had he grown fussy? Here, in our mothers place he had claimed that the beauty is his wife. Did he really mean it? If so then why had he mocked at my slowness in reasoning things? Surely, there is more to it

than mere mockery?"

A thoughtful walk brought them to the yard of their destination.

"Kaiminao!" shouted Kembos who was leading.

"It's Kembos!" chorused many voices together from inside. "Hey! Kembos! You have come at last."

"Yes!" Kembos said while reaching the entrance porch. "I have come at last — yes — but not alone I am coming with someone whom I had stolen from the naai people."

"Auii!" many people shouted from inside.

When Londari set his feet on the aisle before the five place, many hands grasped him. Ladies from the women's side tried to pull him to their side while crying men from the men's side did the opposite; consequently, a tug of war game was developed between ladies and men. At last the men succeeded. The powerful arms of a man grasped Londari around his neck and both collapsed to the earthen floor, on top of which, were dried sugarcane leaves and husks.

"Auii!" shouted the man amidst crying. "My dear Auii!, My dear, long — lost auii! You are home at last. Do I really see my Auii or is it only a dream?"

"I think you do; Londari said, still engulfed in his powerful arms.

"Come on!" The other men shouted, almost together. "Kakale is not your only Auii! We also are you Auiis!"

"They are right", said Kakale, still engulfing Londari in his arms. "Meet them."

Londari shook hands with everyone on the men's side. Some of them embraced him with tears in their eyes.

"Mono! My dear Lond!" said someone from the rear of the women's sitting aisle in a weak, but clear voice. It was clear that the "somebody" from whom the voice rang out, had been waiting for the men to have their chance. It is usually the custom, under such a circumstance. "My darling!"

No sooner had the words said than Londari burst out weeping. He immediately sprang up and dashed towards where the voice had come from.

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down, made a desperate attempt and seated herself.

Mother and son engulfed each other in each other's arms, both with tears of eternal joy.

"My darling!" said the weeping woman. "The core of the core of my heart started aching on the day I left you. It had been aching thereafter. Now, at last, the aching stops."

Somebody present added more wood to the fire which had by now grown dimmer. The split wood were soon ablaze.

In the light Londari looked at his long lost mother. The face had tremendously changed. She was not the charming, youthful mother he knew of. It was totally a different Mendaiwan. It was evident that she had grown old and weary, not of age, but of emotional upsets. Her face was in wrinkles. She had a forehead furrowed not by old age but by anxiety and emotional upsets. She was only a frail skeleton but her gentle voice and her charming, loving eyes indicated that she was passing away in an early age.

Londari immediately broke down and wept at seeing the sape of his mother.

His mother, however, comforted him repeatedly.

"My child!" she repeatedly said. "Be comforted! Save your tears for tomorrow or perhaps the day after. Now, in the spasm of our happiness, let us be happy and happy we shall be."

While mother and son huddled each other amidst an undescrivable happiness, Kembos opened the bags and distributed the contents to everybody present. There were many people, both men and women, who had come to see the sick Mendaiwan, but Kembos satisfied everyone. He gave the axe and the spade to Kakale who heartily accepted them with joy and admiration. He gave Mendaiwan the parcel containing the items specially bought for her.

Mendaiwan, still engulfed in Londari's arms, got the parcel and put it beside her. Then she called:

"Lae! My daughter!"

"Yes!" answered the beautiful voice which

had made Londari go crazy earlier.

"Come here!"

The beautiful Lae advanced towards Mendaiwan who was still engulfed in her elder son's arms. As she moved forward, she excused the women who crowded the women's sitting aisle. She would have gone to Mendaiwan earlier, as usual, but the crowd had barred her way. At last she seated herself before Mendaiwan and her son.

"My daughter! Take this!" Mendaiwan said, handing her the parcel.

"Mane!" the beauty almost shouted. "Do you think I have been forgotten? I got my share before you got yours. You will need the contents of this parcel in your forthcoming journey."

"My daughter! I guess you are right."

When the beauty was just beside him, Londari was immediately in a spasm of electrical nervousness.

"Mame! Why don't you come here and shake hands with us?" said Kakale's wife, followed by the other women.

"Yes! They are right!" Mendaiwan said, with drawing Londari from her grasp. "Go and shake hands with your mothers."

She called them Londari's mothers because nearly all the women present were either Londari's aunts or the wives of Londari's uncles.

Londari did as he was bidden. He shook hands with some of them but some embraced him. He then went back to his mother at her request. He unintentionally touched the beauty's arms and Oh — the skin was soft, smooth, full of delicacy, and anything else you may think of, which is worthy for her description.

They talked late late into the night. According to Londari's watch, it was one o'clock in the morning when many of the people retired to bed.

For the first time in their lives, the men, apart from Londari, slept in a women's house. Under no circumstances, had they slept in a women's house before.

On either side of Mendaiwan, slept Londari and the beauty.

Before dawn the next day, Kembos woke



Londari up and took him to his house. He had a house of his own. It was located at the rear of the main house. They reached the house which was only a stone's throw. To Londari's surprise the house was filled with the grunts of pigs.

Kembos carefully opened the door and both went in. Kembos expertly uncovered the glowing pieces of burnt wood, covered by ash. He got some dried reeds from the far end of the men's side and lit them. In the torch-light he went into the pigs compartment and bade Londari to follow him.

They went in and inspected the pig rooms. Londari looked at the pigs in wonderment. He counted the pigs. There were fifteen hogs, six sows, and one boar.

"Brother!" Kembos called.

"Yes, brother!"

"You see, all these are mine. Half of what is mine is yours."

"What?" Londari shouted in disbelief.

"What I am giving you is totally apart from what Auii will be giving you, probably today."

"I just can't believe it."

"Save your words. You haven't even seen your own pigs yet."

"What do you mean?"

"In the house we slept, the tumultuous grunts that filled the pig room compartment came mainly from your pigs. You see, Mame always favours you more than me. Whenever I ask her for a pig, she always used to say, 'Anything that I have belongs to my lost Lond.' Nearly all the pigs she looks after are for you."

"But who gives her the pigs?"

"It is a stupid question you ask. Apart from Kakale who else should give her. And me as well. Auee gave me a boar and a sow to start off with. He also gave me the best method in every rea associated with pigs. He taught me how to rear and look after pigs, castrate boars, feed sick pigs, and many more. He also taught me how to cut pork in public."

"Our Uncle must be rich then."

"He is terribly rich! He is, infact, the only man around here. His fame and wealth are far-famed."

"Kembos, you are remarkable. The way you talk and act is extremely remarkable. On top of that I admire your wealth."

"Not me, man! At the moment it is you who is wealthy. Anyway, why don't we slaughter one and finish it ourselves, just ourselves?"

"Well, action speaks more fluently than the mouth," Londari said, trying to make the saying more sensible because he was no match for his younger brother in "sayings" and proverbs.

"I think you are right," Kembos said, untying the biggest hog, fastened to a stake at the door way of the pig room.

They brought the pig to the main house. Kembos pulled two of the stakes fortressing the yard to make room for the huge pig. When they were inside the yard, Kembos planted the stakes again from where they had been pulled out.

At that moment someone else came up with a huge pig. It was the beauty. She had waken up before the two brothers, and had gone to her home. When she came back the huge pig followed her.

A splendid feast was made in honour of Londari's arrival. Apart from the two pigs contributed by Kembos and the beauty, Kakale had contributed the biggest pig. The three pigs were more than enough for the people present.

As evening approached Mendaiwan was already in the verge of death. Many people remained to see her pass away but she struggled on through the night to the next day.

The two brothers, as well as the beauty, had all been very busy over the night, attending to the dying woman. Londari's eyes were red and swollen from crying.

The day dragged on till evening. Many more people came in. The house was extremely crowded. Some had to sit on the entrance porch. Others sat in the aisle between either side of the pigrooms in the pigs compartment.

The evening of the eighteenth of October dragged on until midnight. It was now the next day.

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"But mama! with the idea."

"My darling, Lond!" the dying woman said. "Come!"

Londari was, in fact, already there before the words were spoken.

"Mono! Hold me!"

Londari had, in fact, been holding her before the words were spoken.

"Mono!"

"Yes," said Londari, amidst crying.

"Would you do anything for my sake?"

"Of course, mama!" Londari blurted out the words thoughtlessly.

"Darling! Are you prepared to do the last thing I am about to ask you?"

"Mame!" Londari blurted out. "You should perfectly know that I am able to do almost anything you ask"

"Good! My child, please, vow into my dying ears that you will do what I am going to ask you."

In front of the crowd, Londari vowed that he would, hoping the forth coming assignment wouldn't be too tough.

"Good! Is my child Laee here?" asked the dying woman. "Yes, mame! I am here!"

"Come here, please!"

Laee, the beauty, had infact, already been beside the dying woman before the words escaped from the dying woman's mouth.

"My Lond!" the dying woman called.

"I want you to marry Laee."

"But mama, I already have a . . . . !!"

"Yes, son! You already have vowed to my ears that you would."

"But mama! She is not my girlfriend. She might not even like the idea. Please ma . . . . !!"

"My child! Many, many months before you came, she had become my in-law. She is more than an in-law. She is more than an in-law to me. For your curiosity, I must add that Laee's mother and myself, in our young days, vowed that this marriage will take place. Besides, since I left you, Laee had been my only source of happiness. I regarded her as an image of you, my child. Had it not been for her I would now be a heap of dust. Now, child, confirm your vow!"

"But mama! I shall only do it if she agrees with the idea."

"She has already done her part already. Ah! Laee? What do you say about this?"

"Mame! Have I not rejected the countless number of young man who came asking for my hand in marriage?"

"Indeed! You have, my daughter!"

"Have I not vowed that if your son should not marry me, then no other man ever shall?"

"Indeed, you have!"

"Have I not wasted good young men, numbering the stars of the heavens, just for your son?"

"Indeed, you have!"

"Well, now it is your son's turn to say his bit, I guess."

"Right you are! Now, Lond!"

"Yes, mama!"

"Confirm your vow!"

"Upon the death of my mother," Londari began, carefully choosing the words, "I vow with solemnity, that the girl my mother had chosen will remain with me till death."

"Good! My children! I now declare that you are man and wife. May happiness abide with you."

"Bah! What does it all mean?" Londari asked himself on second-thoughts.

"My son Kembos! My dear Nepatae! Come here!"

They had already been there before the words were spoken.

"My dear children, you need not worry. You have two fathers of which one is your Auii and the other your elder brother. It is up to you to stay here or follow your brother down. However, as far as my truth and honesty are concerned, I must admit that your rightful homeland is Par. Now that your brother is already a man, you needn't worry. May happiness abide with you. Oh yes! One more thing. Tell Kandi, your pig-headed father that I have long since forgiven him."

The on-lookers started mourning, seeing that the eyes had already turned yellow.

"Lond! Hold me!" the dying woman said in a desperate attempt.

Londari held his mother tight.

"In the arms of my long-lost son, I die in peace and content."

Five days had passed since the death of



Mendaiwan. The funeral was still on as usual. Because Kakale was extremely wealthy, he declared that the funeral party would be held on the following day, which was Saturday.

Everyone made the necessary preparations for the party. Londari, however, paid a visit to his mother's cemetery. He made a cross and planted it on the end where the head was supposed to be.

Amidst crying, he battled over whether his beloved mother had really died, or he was only entangled in a bad dream. He then battled over where exactly she had gone. Then, all of a sudden, his fearful experience stormed back to his mind. He looked at his watch and found that it was Friday, the twenty-fourth of October. He counted the days backward and calculated the date. His mother had died on the nineteenth of October. He counted the days forward from the tenth of October, the pay day on which Kembos had arrived. He calculated the date. He was now absolutely certain of the day on which his mother had breathed her last, expiry breath.

"Yes!! What was Kauane's dead-line?"

Step by step, he recalled his past experiences. Eventually his mind rested on the girl who had saved his life. He felt sick at heart at the thought of losing her.

"Hey!" Someone called.

Londari's heart almost stopped beating.

"You bastard!" Londari shouted in anger. "You ruthless, insensitive, Koeapae!"

"I am very sorry, brother! I did not mean to frighten you."

"Okay, brother, come!"

Londari told his brother about the problem he was entangled in. He told him everything about Kandi's brutality, his death and resurrection, and his attachment for Wasowan.

When Londari had finished, Kembos assured him that there was a way out but that they had to tell their uncle about it.

Once again, in the presence of his brother and uncle, Londari told the whole story which was rather unbelievable to the two listening.

When Londari had finished, his uncle assured him that there was a way out. In a few

thoughtful minutes, he worked out a brilliant plan. The plan seemed brilliant but not quite, as far as Londari was concerned.

Because it was an emotional problem, Londari accepted the plan. It was the only way out. Londari repeatedly laughed at the thought of the plan master-minded by his uncle.

The funeral party was held. Kakale slaughtered seventeen hogs, Londari five, Kembos four, and all other relatives one. Relatives who couldn't afford to slaughter one themselves were invited. Laee's people brought four hogs. A splendid funeral party was held.

After the party Kakale told Laee's people that he would pay the bride-prices to Laee.

"My in-laws and all other Mulapini people!" he announced. "Many of you are aware of the fact that your daughter, the beautiful Laee, is marrying me. I am saying that because the poor boy's father is very poor. He has hardly any pigs. He can't even afford to get one. Therefore, it is my responsibility to see that your daughter is well paid and well received. But, my elders and brothers, I am very sorry to announce that the boy is leaving tomorrow. He is a teacher, you know, and the naia people had given him only a week's leave. The dead-line when he should have returned has already gone. The boy is very sorry to have to go. He says that his bride is entirely in my hands until the dowries are paid and the marriage ceremony is over. He says that when everything is over I have to take his wife to him. Elders and brothers, he heartily asks for your forgiveness for the forthcoming marriage without the bride-groom."

Although some people were disappointed, many people bowed their heads in agreement.

Early in the next morning, Londari's uncle and some of his relatives brought Londari back. Almost everybody was pulling a pig behind them. Kembos stayed back with Nepatatae because she was in emotional disorder at losing her mother. On the fifth day of walking, the tired travellers finally hit their destination.

Kakale and a few others turned back while three people, all of whom were his mother's

cousins remained at the event that was

The pigs that were soon according to

"Mr. Ka Henry rang on oath of before God?"

"I am", Londari of the huge of the matrimony

"Miss W prepared to Londari Kan

"I am!"

"Mr. Kan keep the sacra

"I promise"

"Miss Was to keep the sa

"I do!"

After a se respectively, before God, th

"My son a voice, "I decla wife."

Londari an Schoo. The congratulate passed since t physical conta but inwardly p was a remarka

One day, d year, Mendaiw

"Monange! and worried.

worries that yo

"Darling! D

"Of course!"

Londari, w Wasowan tow

him. In the ne against hers, Western film s

Wasowan

Londari's gras her. But then, s

cousins remained with Londari to witness the event that was soon to take place.

The pigs they brought were for the event that was soon to take place. It was, of course, according to Kakale's plan.

"Mr. Kandi! the shrill voice of Father Henry rang out. "Are you prepared to swear on oath of loyalty to Wasowan Tambai before God?"

"I am", Londari said rather shyly in front of the huge crowd in the church, witnessing the matrimonial service.

"Miss Wasowan Tambai! Are you prepared to swear an oath of loyalty to Londari Kandi before God?"

"I am!"

"Mr. Kandi! Do you promise that you will keep the sacrament of marriage?"

"I promise!"

"Miss Wasowan Tambai! Do you promise to keep the sacrament of marriage?"

"I do!"

After a series of questions and answers respectively, Londari and Wasowan swore before God, the oath of loyalty to each other.

"My son and daughter", rang the shrill voice, "I declare that you are now man and wife."

Londari and Wasowan went back to Sari School. The teachers and everybody else congratulate them. A couple of weeks had passed since their marriage, but without any physical contact. Wasowan wondered why but inwardly praised her husband, thinking he was a remarkable man.

One day, during the last week of the school year, Mendaiwan said:

"Monange! You always look thoughtful and worried. Don't you believe that any worries that you have are also mine?"

"Darling! Do you really mean it?"

"Of course!"

Londari, with hidden courage, pulled Wasowan towards him and held her against him. In the next moment he pressed his lips against hers, as he had seen many of the Western film stars, like John Wayne, doing.

Wasowan broke herself loose from Londari's grasp as this was completely new to her. But then, seeing Londari feeling ashamed

and guilty she went back to him. Londari ignored her.

They went back to their village to spend the Christmas break. A couple of weeks before the next school year began, Londari and his wife went to Sari. They still had not had any physical contact yet.

On the second night of their arrival at Sari School, Wasowan hit Londari hard on the back.

"Mono! Our married life looks funny, rather dull and boring! Is it going to go on like this? I mean, well, you know, we don't talk and play and all that."

"All what?"

"Let's forget about it."

The next day, another teacher and his family arrived. The teacher's wife went to Londari's house to ask for matches. Having got the matches she left.

When she was gone Wasowan said, looking hard at Londari:

"Mono! Did you see the thing on the woman's shoulders?"

"What thing?"

"Where you blind when the woman came here?"

"Oh! Do you mean the small baby?"

"Of course! Wasn't it beautiful?"

"I agree. It was indeed beautiful."

"Well, as your wife, I wish to have one."

"Yes, me oo! But I don't want to spoil you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I don't want to spoil you because you will be leaving me."

"What do you mean? Who says I am leaving. I am a respected woman, publicly married in Church, in the eyes of people and of God."

"That's right! But it is you yourself who will decide to go."

"What do you mean?"

"You will be sent away, believe me!"

"Speak up! Don't grumble like a pig! Just what is in your mind? Who will sent me away?"

"You yourself!"

"Just tell me! What is in that stupid mind of yours?" Londari told her.



"Ohh! My goodness. You have repaid my good deeds with evil. It exactly proves that you are Kandi's son. Look at Kandi, your own father. \*He has now turned into a sparrow\*. If your wife comes here to my house, I will kill her.

"You forget one thing."

"What? You everything that is bad."

"The law!"

"If she comes here to my house, I tell you, the haw won't stop me from killing that dirty, wild, kanaka — the dog of a woman who is your wife, you pig of a man!"

"Yes, she is indeed a Kanaka where fore she will be remaining back in the village."

"Oh! You have terribly deceived me! I am trapped! I vowed before God that I would never marry again unless my first husband dies. I wish I had not saved your life."

"Calm yourself," Londari said softly. "I didn't quite mean to do it."

"Ohh! I wish I hadn't vowed to God."

Well, at last Kakale's brilliant plan was successful. Laee preferred to stay at the village as she was a bush kanaka as described and referred to by Wasowan.

Each of the wives had formulated one precise belief. Wasowan thought she was the rightful wife because they had married publicly before God. Laee, the beauty, thought she was the right wife because Londari himself had said so upon his mother's death. Surprisingly, however, they both give birth on the same day.

"Who is the rightful one?" Londari asked himself.

Kanbos means "on the way".

kake-lyoo-kambu-lyoo means "Our mouth and tongue confirms our title."

Kale means "ear".

Waa-gam means "stene axe".

Parekah means "kina shell".

Mena Saipa means "the officially accepted side of a pig."

Lond is an abbreviation of "Londari".

Ambum Koe is a big stene from the Anbum River.

Kauane is grandparent or grandchild.

Mandi is a herb-like tree the stem of which is used for making lows and the leaves for tobacco.

Eee Takatae is a term of surprises is "Ee-tale-tale."

Kau is the verb from kauane.

Yaoal yoke is a casuarina leaf.

Tinulip is a men which announces dawn.

Yongamaao means "Good morning."

Karau is an exclamation of warning.

Opone means "newcomers"?

Yapa Ipaka means "Come! You are indeed welcome".

Timbai refers to the Hagen people.

Apone is used by both father and to each other.

Kamango means "a wealthy man"?

Yano means "debit" or "credit"

Naii is the Enga means for educated or wooden people.

Tukolo is an ill-defined form of address.

Nepatae means "the best one"?

Wanepa is a soft tree producing charcoal for ceremonies.

Kapa is a type of possum.

Yaka laee is a type of parrot.

Kaiminao is a word of warning.

Kaeapae means "everything is bad"?

Mulepini is the name of Laee's tribe.

Sparrow refers to a wandering, homeless man without possessions,

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## PART ONE

- i: T
- ii: M
- iii: I
- iv: S
- v: V

## PART TWO

- vi: C
- vii: I
- viii: V
- ix: S
- x: T
- xi: J
- xii: I

## PART THREE

- xiii: C
- xiv: C
- xv: J
- xvi: J
- xvii: J
- xviii: J
- xix: J
- xx: J
- xxi: J

## PART FOUR

- xxxi: C

## PART FIVE

- xxxii: J
- xxxiii: J
- xxxiv: J

# LAMBCHOPS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by E. A. Markham

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## PART ONE: FOR THE SITTING BULL

### PART ONE: THE IRON HORSE

It will drink the same liquid as the fire.  
The Iron Horse, the Yellow Monster  
rattles along spewing out those bits of road  
it doesn't like. Sometimes, in bad humour,  
it kills our pigs and children.  
It frightens the one who doesn't know  
it's coming — the old man who cannot hear  
voices outside his head. We saw him yesterday  
huddled against the bank, impotent as his stick:  
these things were bound to happen now  
he will take no new wife, four little wife-turrets  
on the hut mocking him.  
The Iron Horse won't hurt those children  
granted a place in its belly: they are different  
from us. Their magic is white-skinned  
and stronger than ours. To keep it they must talk  
to their god in tongues strange to our land.  
Only, sometimes it goes wrong, something fails  
and the horse forgets to obey its nature,  
which is Iron. It attempts, like other horses,  
to climb a steep bank, to gallop  
down a hill not tamed into road: the round  
little legs won't make it. Lamé and shuddering  
on its side, the children lying down with it,  
they will make a big fire together. When we have need,  
we can stop the Horse. Though it has no stomach  
for a real fight, and pulls up, or runs away,  
it can't see round corners  
and will mount a log or bite into rock,  
big enough to choke and mangle teeth. I have known  
some brave ones to defeat it — and its favoured  
children — in this way.

### Not the Heyoka Ceremony

Question of pot calling kettle black,  
they said, not talking of colour but of ignorance,  
when the man with cane-juice on his breath  
described in class the ritual killing of a dog.  
Black Kettle was Philpot's nephew  
who learnt to fight at school in Harris'  
where his father was Teacher-Who-  
Didn't — Believe-In-God. The old man performed  
modified Heyoka ceremonies in the village  
who adopted him its clown. Prominent ladies  
threatened to have him whipped  
for going too far. Their children kept watch  
on his lessons. Among gravestones of the school

or under the lar  
heroic figures, v  
like Crazy Hors  
as for his own;  
man dead at 30  
the master seiz  
and was well pl  
the unheroic wo  
should the lad g  
and become foc  
on his root. The  
by middle-age,  
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Old friends sho  
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later when you  
pressure on his  
In-God hinted  
merely how life  
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parents who slip  
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through middle-  
an old-time cyn  
in a Church; wh  
madhouse and c  
to tell his better  
that all families  
think of Heyoka

### Lambchops' Lo

The man from C  
Didn't he warn  
as you stared, p  
Don't you see h  
to love you, M  
beside George, y  
like any half-bre  
Mrs Bent. Stun  
too-conscious in  
shoes: I would t  
at Sand Creek,  
Veteran. But so  
emulate the guil  
sneak up to you  
or hide at night

or under the large mango tree, he conjured up  
heroic figures, visionaries and madmen  
like Crazy Horse, too big for our time —  
as for his own; how would you like to be a great  
man dead at 30? Murdered. From time to time  
the master seized his own boy's bruised knuckles  
and was well pleased: how good to see  
the unheroic worth fighting for! Later,  
should the lad go the way of the rest, abroad,  
and become foolish with books, he could dine out  
on his *root*. The first Black Kettle,  
by middle-age, was Chief of his profession,  
and then went to Hollywood. Great Father  
Lincoln gave him medals. For protection he flew  
over Camp a U.S. Flag thickening with Stars.  
Old friends shouted Appeasement as they deserted.  
In search of honours, of Peace, this great and foolish man  
was humiliated at Sand Creek and finally murdered  
on the Washita by a thug called Custer: more of that  
later when you come to me for History. To ease  
pressure on his son, Teacher-Who-Didn't-Believe-  
In-God hinted that his namesake discovered  
merely how life is filmed, is written. But Sir was becoming  
unfashionable, out of step with concerned  
parents who slipped African middle names  
to their off-spring to ease the passage  
through middle-class life. Time to retire  
an old-time cynic too frightened still to set foot  
in a Church; who looked on his cramped 3-roomed  
madhouse and called it Palace, and had the effontery  
to tell his betters — whose line went back generations —  
that all families were equally old. They could *all*  
think of Heyoka ceremonies he was good for.

#### **Lambchops' Love-Letter to Magpie**

The man from Colorado made you ugly, Magpie.  
Didn't he warn you to say 'Cheese' or attempt the tremolo  
as you stared, pudding-faced, into his machine?  
Don't you see how hard you've made it for me  
to love you, Magpie, sitting there over-dressed  
beside George, your husband, handsome  
like any half-breed, but not right for you,  
Mrs Bent. Stung by his name into rectitude,  
too-conscious in stiff jacket and two-toned  
shoes: I would take him on, Magpie. For the wound  
at Sand Creek, I salute him — a War  
Veteran. But so are we all, my love. I would  
emulate the guile of High Horse, the young Lakota;  
sneak up to your tepee when old ones are asleep,  
or hide at night by the spring



where you sometimes go for water.  
 Then cornering your father, I would offer him  
 horses. The lover made grotesque  
 with bodypaint fell asleep beside your rawhide bed  
 before cutting you loose. Later, he had to kill Wasichus,  
 become a horse-thief to win you. Like all suitors  
 I will steal horses for you, make you laugh, dammit,  
 for the camera. There will be dancing, Magpie,  
 with no thought of War. But that future is past.  
 You stay at home now guarding the flowering stick,  
 the pipe which gives peace, the herb  
 of healing and the sacred hoop; and I from here  
 send you tales of the pig-kill, the sing-sing —  
 cries from a land very much like your lost home.

### Sir Johnelsom Wantok Rewrites History

(Sir Johnelsom is a British Ex-High Commissioner to PNG)

Other grown men conceal a slim volume  
 of verse as evidence of being young and foolish.  
 Sir Johnelsom retains his dormant passion  
 for theatre, now erupting in retirement.  
 In the lower portion of his great house  
 figures from history learn to revise  
 lessons failed in Life. The guests are assembled.  
 Here we have seen young men grow to *Guardian*-  
 swapping maturity performing the liberated act  
 behind closed doors: *Killing the Father*  
 is what they call it. (The female version  
 is good too.) Last month, in this space  
 where Sitting Bull and Custer walked backwards  
 from Standing Rock to Little Bighorn, undoing  
 a string of tragedies, turning America brown  
 again, we have, tonight, the fighting Highlands of PNG.  
 The supporting cast limber up: these seven  
 well-spoken housewives from the ILEA Class  
 last represented Custer's 7th Cavalry,  
 their high heels showing them to be on horse-back  
 riding over rough country. Who knows  
 what's in store for us? Will the Seven rush to Northern Ireland  
 or El Salvador to support their Principals?  
 But Sir Johnelsom hasn't been PNG High Commissioner  
 for nothing. He knows the difference between  
 a *bilum* and a *kibung*; and now drapes the former  
 round yielding heads of last month's horses  
 bearing up under abuse. These grass-skirted  
 women of the Tsak Valley are not amused. Faces smeared,  
 made sensuous with mud, breasts sagging  
 in grief, they mourn the loss of men  
 in the latest clan encounter. Last month's  
 Stars, Sitting Bull and Custer, stripped

to the short  
 in attendan  
 all leap and  
 Then more  
 the musical  
 in this Briti

### Von Hallet

(with friend

I have com  
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 Toyota wit  
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 My friends,  
 I have seen  
 on television  
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 I can give y  
 In death, y  
 of ailing Big  
 for Dr. Bax  
 and preserv  
 to stop you  
 Later, when  
 near Waba  
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to the shorts are snotty infants lustfully  
in attendance. When the kundu drum sounds,  
all leap and sway in unison — a tense moment.  
Then more drums and singing, a stage full of skirts;  
the musical pay-off. All the world must now join  
in this British alternative to fighting.

### Von Hallett's Penultimate Stand

(with friends in mind)

I have come a long way, my friends,  
by metal bird, by Iron Horse, by armed  
Toyota with Aladdin's cave locked in my head.  
My gods say I must not die while the Far Right  
occupies my country: deny it this hope.  
You have taken my scouts unawares. Both  
the killer of pigs and the preacher  
of sermons lacked induction, paid the price.  
My own pigkilling is behind me, my sermons  
do not offend: The Lord . . .  
*is my bilum filled with kaukau*  
*Mi no laikim wanpela samting . . .*  
I am not a stranger among you. I am  
the man who translated Dave Edmunds'  
DA DOO RON RON into Tok Pisin, into Enga.  
So do not spear the cameraman who keeps  
your record inside his head; do not divorce  
it from the body where they can't remarry.  
Your grandchildren would wish to honour  
this memory without blush. I am not, you see,  
here by accident: my credentials are sound.  
Though I didn't Ping or Pong with MAO  
I have seen the face of Sitting Bull  
on the little legs of Deng Xioping.  
I have talked in Comrade Enver Hoxhaland  
with a dissident who will yet say NO to Hollywood.  
My friends, I bring you knowledge of the world:  
I have seen Alan Brownjohn ear eat *eat*  
on television. And it was good. Be patient  
with me: my grandmother's book is not yet written.  
I can give you the London Address of Josh and ginette.  
In death, you may avoid the indignity  
of ailing Big Foot at Wounded Knee,  
for Dr. Bax will examine your body  
and preserve it in *Ambit*. And should I happen  
to stop your spear, Diana will not like it.  
Later, when I dine out on this incident  
near Wabag, I will embellish your answers  
with wit. I will make you bristle in English.



## PART TWO: LOCAL COLOUR

"What is Local Colour?" Young delegate at a Conference, his voice sharp as a weapon.

### PART TWO: Cousin Philpot's Letters

The first was dated, 1956.

"Our patrol has been here 20 days.

The river is flooded. No bridge-site

to be found. The Strickland Gorge

is wonderful to behold. If I had the camera

I would send you pictures.

One of our carriers drowned yesterday;

but he was headstrong. Rest of us safe:

will write when we get to Telefolmin.

P.S. How do I say this?

Young Terry got on the wrong boat,

ended up in London, England. They say

the fighting there is not over land

or pigs or women, but whether you're the right

skin-clour. Though they have schools

where you study to brighten your chances.

Don't worry about him."

And the last letter, 27 years on.

*London:* "They must have cut down the trees

to develop. Bare, 1st. World look; not like

a jungle. Funny to think of him

buried on barren land. The wife seems

to have gone back to the clan. There's talk

that the Big Man are having their *kibung*

and the result will be terrible. The Leader,

no longer a man, is protected by witchcraft,

and is said to eat people."

### MINI

And this too, is Local Colour —

lunch-time crowd drawn from the market

and waves of children rushing out of school.

The yellow truck slows and stops:

what makes it different from other Highland scenes?

The girl in the gutter twitches a leg,

the man with the stick turns away

content to press his claim no further:

he has not yet developed an ideology.

Well then, let well alone: this is an argument

born of the bush. Him with big stick

hard to satisfy, Warrior — Son of Warrior —

will not now kill daughter.

The cause of it all, a meaty girl who erred

but can't repeat gymnastics of the night,

can't urge flesh into waiting truck

will get no help from spectators to the show.

A Hilux with  
is another obs

Her name was  
no other fact s

No bones brot

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There is promi

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After lunch to

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### Sir Johnelsom

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Sir Johnelsom

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Summer. Runs

A Hilux with clearance for ruts and landslips  
is another obstacle when it matters.

Her name was Mini;  
no other fact survived medical guesswork.  
No bones broken says the man who is no doctor.  
She will not now enter the blue house  
where police, decked in blue, bump blue armour  
along the Highway to burn people's houses  
and relieve them of axes, spears.  
There is prompt action always, somewhere  
in this Province. Life is short.  
The move from village checks and balances,  
experts tell us, gives this urban centre, 1500 strong,  
special licence.

After lunch today a father walked away with friends,  
firewood in his hand, enough to light  
the family for half an hour. Your Mini-  
crisis has subsided, the girl will live on  
to figure in a Development Plan.

#### **Sir Johnelsom Wantok's Favourite Play**

i

Dressed in laplap, an axe in his belt  
Sir Johnelsom passes round *bau* to melt  
well-bred resistance to a communal spittoon  
(He doesn't want blood on the walls of his room).

The set suggests a pitpit hut  
oozing smoke. All are impressed but  
the murmur is, things are getting out of hand.  
Sir Johnelsom and his dedicated band  
of activities will transport and put us down  
in his favourite Oceanic Highland town.

This latest play in the trilogy  
is set, of course, in his adopted PNG  
among fighting tribes he knows so well.  
He expects armchair feminists to dwell  
on the full-frontal nudity, their anger  
doing a good PR job for *The Breasts of Enga*.

From the hut a dainty RP piglet squeals  
like a young girl with danger snapping at her heels.

Then she appears, free hand cupping breast  
to keep it quiet. Unlike the rest  
of her baggage, it stands proud and taut,  
evidence of Elma at 20 much wooed but not caught.

She gives it a fun name which London voyeurs smile at:  
Summer. Runs on the board, your hero next in to bat.



Shame on her bosom friend, the ugly sister  
 pulling a long face, though many must have kissed her:  
 no light in the window now, no milk in the dairy  
 no more old jokes about the Didiman and Didimery.  
 But does she deserve such punishment  
 cruel and unusual, a big boy assaulting what was meant  
 for reverence? He pulls it into string  
 then ties a knot to abuse the woman mothering him.  
 In case his wantok can't quite take it, Sir John  
 suggests a break for wine before going on . . .

ii

The Second Act belatedly, lets ugly sister entertain  
 a lover or two, a big Swede or Dane  
 providing heavy relief — long speeches  
 on underdevelopment and Land Reform the main theses.

Boy-villain of Act One returns, now a Priest  
 trained to woo the breast before he can feast.

He will say Grace, sing hymns and preach  
 in an accent; with billowing purple prose, reach  
 for the silk scraf of his vocation  
 and cumple it gently on a human altar. "Shun  
 the wiles of Aid Officials and misfits far from home,  
 with promises of canasta in Boston *firmilk* in Stockholm",  
 he warns. He must let the stained-glass glow  
 of his sermon play on her like a private video  
 or benign sunbed. When she goes streaking  
 through stadia of lovers, he'll be policing  
 with a one-piece bikini, a handkerchief to arrest  
 and return to Girl 20 her long-wandering breast.

#### Voyages of Philpot: London & New Guinea

(i)

He will fund a *New Commonwealth*  
 Polytechnic in London near Earls Court:

let is be entered in the Log.

In 200 years, in the English way,

a cinema will be added to cater  
 for children and the odd, marooned adult.

Inside, a Philpot look-alike will fake  
 interest in a South Pacific Community

becoming extinct — the rocky coast  
 familiar; a boat manhandled

out to bait the steamer, to idle it. Back there,  
 island life erupts. Stone ovens bellow

smoke and air  
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#### Toothbrush

Picking his n  
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*Raun Raun*  
 Aroused, the

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Yes, another  
 But how? Pu

is not yet em  
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for a Comed  
 mirror is too

smoke and anger; a big-bellied pot  
squats on its randy fire. Fat  
cheerful women are making bread and *duckna*  
the way he remembered it on another  
island. Philpot lost the next bit  
of film but grew alert as men with  
a shot-gun chased three or four goats  
over bare cliff, in and out of caves.  
He missed the shot — no soundtrack —  
but saw the big ewe shuddering on the ground.  
Bread, *duckna*, goat-water — or perhaps  
just plain, roast mutton. No point  
feeling bad about dead goat. In the garden  
of a new explorer, 200 years on  
another Philpot stands with guests, in the drizzle,  
biting into something he knows. The *kaukau* hints  
of it; green bananas, sweetcorn, *kumu*  
and the rest of the *mumu* taste of goat.  
Yet not quite as remembered  
in the earlier life. He's trying to locate  
the place he marked, named,  
on that first expedition. Rain, look-alikes,  
his new name all inhibit thought: did  
the *Polytechnic*, did London really happen?

#### Toothbrush

Picking his nose, Toothbrush  
announces himself the Dissident  
of Wabag, a young man still searching  
for his ideological Toothpaste.  
His theatrical career foundered  
on a too-accurate depiction of foibles  
of the local rich and powerful.  
He won't now tread the wood of Goroka's  
*Raun Raun* to tickle nerves of the guilty.  
Aroused, they declared his actions  
a threat to the State. (That's why he lives  
just outside Wabag where the State ends).  
Yes, another little joke he'll pay for.  
But how? Public Confession, Chinese-style,  
is not yet embodied in the Development  
Programme. He was foolish to think Enga ready  
for a Comedy of Manners: that alien  
mirror is too cruel for black people



who haven't passed through the beauty  
of America. He should have known  
that his *wantok*, like Germans, they say,  
and West Indians, just hate to laugh  
at themselves. To impersonate a great man  
emerging from his Meeting chewing *buai*  
and smoking a cigarette *at the same time*  
was not clever. (To do two things at once here  
is over-kill). Now men with thick folders  
are massing like warriors for the payback.  
The plan to replace the Bird of Paradise  
on the national flag with a bureaucrat  
picking his nose, was a joke, a joke. Others  
in his position can go back to the Village  
for safety; but that's not possible for Toothbrush  
since the time he rashly told a *ninipunga*\*  
during daylight. Is he guilty enough  
to defect to the West and join VIP's  
on London and Broadway? The range  
of Toothpaste is greater over there:  
it is said grand ladies of *style*  
*sometimes marry husbands to pick*  
*their long noses. He's had experience*  
*at that. It could be the way in.*  
*\*ninipunga: A type of PNG story told in the village*  
*only after dark.*

#### Ah, Toothpaste

Reading a newspaper, she sits  
under the the gum-tree, nursing an infant.  
Her breasts are higher than others on show —  
that lucky vandal must be the first.  
Passers-by stop to admire tattoos  
on the gentlest mountain in the Province.  
This is better than the Cultural Centre  
and its Puritan shirt of Sand Painting,  
or of surprising Father Christmasses from back home  
sending goodies through the post.  
Half-a-dozen fathers, husbands, queue  
to claim this Child & Mother, Expatriates  
among them. (Nationals eye the newspaper —  
tomorrow's cigarettes — not the flesh).  
The men will fight for it if necessary;  
for Teethpaste of this quality

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#### Uncles

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is rare in these parts. The chosen hero  
will get a concession for her mouth  
and they will do the trick together.  
Afterwards, when Toothpaste confesses  
to her diary will the details we're not allowed  
to see, Wabag's first indigenous novel  
will result. A broken Toothbrush wakes  
in hospital learning he will mend. (Madness  
to permit the woman to read, to write).  
They used an arrow as warning, not the axe,  
draining some alien blood from his system.  
In defiance, in hope, he begins to bristle  
with activity. He will live  
to clean his teeth another day.

### Uncles

The Doctor landed on his feet in Boston  
and was good to his sisters back home;  
so many widows in America  
and he never married. Yet,  
we grew up prouder of him  
than the long line of preachers  
who found god to help them out  
of local difficulty. We were sorry  
that the uncle who set up in New York as a Lawyer  
was impatient of exams  
and that god punished him publicly with the Wall Street  
Crash. After that we were permitted  
not to think of uncles, till we were older.  
We are older: one got away  
to who knows where. And had a good War.  
Wounded from falling bags  
of brown rive and tinned meat  
on a would-be airstrip, he is thought  
to hang from the local Museum, the axe  
of compensation dangling from his belt.  
And what was his role in operation OVERLORD,  
in the Persian Expedition? There are  
some who would tell you: don't ask them.  
So much for uncles: a failed  
relative explores the river Sepik,  
finds a woman ugly as Bette Davis  
and invests in films to pacify  
the people. Too late,  
too late to rescue him. Look up an earlier version  
(Aren't they tiresome, large families?)  
from misty London this time, crossing  
the Channel on foot. Playful months with the natives



ghosting *La Voix humaine* for a busy Cocteau  
 and nudging a stray Austrian into  
 2Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften failed  
 to elevate the family. Racism, naturally.  
 So, what have we left? Remaining uncles  
 have cut the clowning, lost the style;  
 they've become opening batsmen  
 in an England side dedicated to survival:  
 that way Life won't find them out.

### PART THREE: MELANESIAN (A view from the Highlands)

#### Part Three: Cargo Cult

At the end of the Long Night  
 of centipedes, millipedes and snakes  
 when the Tidal Wave will punish all  
 but the Faithful 6,000\* concealed  
 by the mist of a great mountain,  
 smashing earthenware pots, making ready  
 for dead relatives with metal and money,  
 a great sickness will occur:  
 this is the time of 'Something Different',  
 mysteries unriddling to our advantage —  
*Less in the World and More* —  
 this is the time of the Hawk.

The removal of other men's markers  
 from our Land will bring forth *flight*.  
 The Leader will do his conjuring-trick with dollars  
 and delirium to fulfil the prophacy,  
*and watch the black skins turning white.*

We demand daytime darkness, earthquakes, birds  
 flying upside down and coconuts falling: all this  
 is rumoured to be happening on a hill in London.  
 Before the faithful be discouraged,  
 waving a Bible, worship of agatha Christie  
 and the national building of Chain Letters  
 must commence. Ex-Leaders are to be executed  
 or banished from the tribe  
 to make alliance with creatures  
 from obscure books and ethnic jokes.

The world is not yet empty, we must share it.  
 Ancestors still play the tourist, and come,  
 each with a mate, Spirit-like,  
 wealth growing out of necks and ears;  
 hands and teeth glinting money.  
 They will do, they will do. It is known  
 that these *immitations*  
 pack a solid trunk of wealth  
 which they hide under clothes

to deny the secret  
 Cunningly, they  
 to the tribe of H  
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#### Cargo Cult: Mu

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#### The Black Priest

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 like a Spinster;  
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 a future where  
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 woman, and say  
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 and the tripe to  
 that's how they

to deny the secret to New Guinea.  
Cunningly, they decline to answer  
to the tribe of Hawk. But look!  
the people are not fooled.

\*the number accepted by leaders of the *Mount Hurun*  
*Movement* 'Cargo Cult', in the East Sepik Province,  
in the early 1970's.

### Cargo Cult: Mud

And after all that, we are not rich,  
though coffee and *kaukau* keep us going.  
Money changes colour all the time  
but we are the same. Mud is the in-thing now,  
a resource natural as shit —  
the Highway is nothing without it:  
see how it blooms Toyota and Suzuki!  
That's what makes the Japanese powerful.  
Each day we rub it on our bodies  
and await our Daihatsu from the sky.  
We are becoming impatient.

### The Black Priest

I'm forgetting my history, Prudence:  
which Caesar marched back triumphantly to Rome,  
which potential god arrived there in chains?  
I startle you with God? I'm a Priest, woman:  
I can still, let us say, blaspheme in fourteen tongues  
not counting the dialects. *Tomalup* we called Him  
over there. You remained me of them,  
those Mandobo women, unmarried, preserved  
to be changed, on the day of Resurrection  
into sea creatures, into frogs. One night,  
two emessaries from your heathen tribe came  
after dark and asked for a sign.  
Look at our hands calloused with work.  
Yours, like the Dutch, are Priestly: your magic  
aeroplanes bring cargo without taxing  
the muscles — how can we learn the trick?  
For years, they had awaited the earthquake, the promised  
miracle when a man with one wife only  
would go to the factory and become corned beef  
like a Spinster; where those who had eaten dogs  
would then have to pay debts to the Dog:  
a future where all pigs would be white.  
What makes you resist the Will of *Tomalup*  
woman, and say no to corned beef?  
They drag you out of the pickle with the souse  
and the tripe to be my welcoming party:  
that's how they honour their own in these parts.



I've been away decades, I know the form:  
 second wife and children in their Sunday best,  
 long-limbed, fair-skinned and worth it.  
 Here I am greeted by a servant Emeritus  
 who even in her thieving heyday never had the breasts  
 to start a Cult. Had I gone West like the others,  
 worn famous Capitals on my gown,  
 things would be different: there'd the queues  
 of fresh talent here, with offerings of cake. *There There*,  
 don't be nervous: you wish to alter the tone  
 of the Reunion. Let us pray.  
 You were never at your best standing up  
 or lying down. Better accept God's compromise  
 on your knees. Let me do what I'm good at.  
 Preaching's a hard business, my Sister.  
 Looking onto the spreading mounds  
 of temptation, I sometimes think, this God  
 who is so good to me, will he win re-election?  
 Yet, I'm a delegate, a delegate — your Soldier-  
 Preacher out there, getting mud on his armour.  
 The world is changed, the Spirit now finds it safe  
 to desert the man and to lodge in the Organization.  
 Hi-jack the Spirit. Only then will you *become*  
 the Organization. But let's not drift into metaphysics —  
 my weakness, my Special Paper in College.  
 Tomorrow, I will go to my old church  
 and preach a sermon about merrymaking. Tomorrow,  
 from that ground I will renew my Social Contract  
 with the people. That happens at least once  
 a week and must me one of the most  
 democratic countries I know. Tomorrow,  
 I will seize evil by its, ah, ovely throat  
 and preach the bitch off this land. Let us pray.

### Fight Leader

Olwen sweeps up butterflies  
 and beetles in the morning,  
 the hostees outlasting her guests;  
 the whole town knows of it.  
 Her reputation as Fight Leader  
 of the tough tribe of Expats  
 has spread to neighbouring Provinces;  
 no painted and tusked bush *kakana*  
 inspires such awe. The Riot  
 Squad keep their distance  
 and their hand in, teargassing  
 Sunday Rugby crowds. Only the *Long Long*  
 in tangets, feet bloody  
 from glass, vies for attention.

As befitting a  
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### EXPAT. 3rd

Painted face:  
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 The limp —

As befitting a veteran, Olwen  
from time to time displays new wounds  
without comment. Her weapons are traditional,  
housewifely. For practise  
she turns them on herself: sharp-  
edged louvres, screws  
sticking out of shelves and pannels.  
Her leg-markings by-pass  
tedious innitiation ceremonies  
of the Village: home-made  
chairs and the wood-burning stove  
suffice. Knives and scissors are part  
of her armoury, yet she manages  
not to leave the mark of husband  
and children on them. Will she make a big  
display — The Metal Lady — at next year's  
Hagen Show? Or — as is rumoured —  
enter politics on her reputation?  
She won't say. Meanwhile  
potential victims call on her  
as if transfixed; and children gather  
to see what she sweeps up in the morning.

#### EXPAT. 3rd CLASS

Painted face and a limp?  
Don't over-do it:  
one or other will suffice  
for a VSO teacher  
in Laiagam or Kandep  
who can't cope with this  
bit of England.  
You should have made it  
in your father's time:  
government pathologist  
studying the natives  
for hookworm and malaria;  
or joined the elite Club  
of Anthropologists from Columbia  
at home in *kunai*  
in love with ass-grass.  
Even World Bank stars shooting  
in to evaluate Projects  
they haven't time to see  
will get it right in the MEMO  
and outshine you.  
The painted face  
is common in these parts.  
The limp — *seen it seen it*



is anybody's, everybody's.  
So tell them jokes,  
my late explorer, tell them  
we're here to help them develop.

### After Kurtz

(for Lyn Fues)

At home, the Intended plays  
the window, her authority growing.  
Elsewhere, disciples begin to fall  
off the summit of his esteem  
blinded by the Right Motives.  
The Kurtz knows he will fail to accomplish  
great things, even when his book  
comes out. With all his splended  
monologues on Love, Justice, Conduct  
of Life; and the reciting of his own poetry  
in a clearing in the forest,  
Kings will not meet him at Railway  
Stations on his return; Tribal  
Fighting will continue in his territory;  
and a premature widow  
and a barbarous, superb woman  
will separately issue contracts  
on his life. He welcomes this, musing  
over a footnote, that the successors to Kings  
are equally beyond reach, beyond effort;  
thought the Company will survive. He settles  
down, on a wet afternoon, to an improving  
Mr Emerson. Outside — don't you know —  
rows of heads on a pole.

### The Meeting

(for Mel Jones, Dancer)

*I revealed myself to be both a tireless dancer  
and an unobtrusively learned man Camus The Fall.*

It was the day after the party  
and the Members were tender and anxious  
for coffee; and they practised their jargon  
in payback English to torment the expats —  
while we waited for the Chairman.  
The young dancer sat fresh as an Advert  
shuffling his papers, alert today  
to the Law & Order Problem, and to the siting of Aidposts.  
"Has his display of learning this past year  
been too unobtrusive to note?" is one item,  
with the Agenda, lost on colleagues

crumpled and  
snatches of a  
to the ritual  
For me the r  
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and it's *unfo*  
(*The last pan*

### Waiting For

An ancestor  
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Surviving pi  
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to see Spirit  
At the Bus !  
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to live in ho

crumpled and sleepless. Someone starts to sing  
 snatches of a pig-butcher song, piping in  
 to the ritual splutter about standards and punctuality.  
 For me the meeting is well timed,  
 close to the revels of last night.  
 I hear fingers protest the late start, tapping,  
 tapping away from their Aidposts to a new rhythm —  
 the page turned over — swish of a long dress worn for you . . .  
 And now the glimmer of song beyond last night  
 warms the room. I dare not claim it;  
 for a lady unaccustomed to such ardour  
 might find it suspect, might find it *gauche*;  
 and this audience from last night  
 has had its fill of singing, and is sour with it;  
 except the young man with fingers  
 dancing round the Aidposts, fresh with expectation  
 as we waited for the Chairman;  
 so I began to hum my song. For you are truly  
*Unforgettable, that's what you are*;  
 and I must over-enunciate,  
 like an old Nat Cole; like his counterpart  
 on the New York subway. *Unforgettable*, like last night,  
 where a young man tells a joke that pleases his lady,  
 and another lies about his credentials;  
 and the one-man band strikes up;  
 and the young dog asks an invisible star to dance;  
 and I see you across the ocean . . . *Unforgettable* . . .  
 and the Chairman shuffles in to discuss Law & Order  
 & the siting of Aidposts;  
 and the room swings into action;  
 and it's *unforgettable: that's what we were* . . .  
 (*The last part of this piece must be half-sung*)

### Waiting For Cargo

An ancestor invents the Bus Stop,  
 and is hanged as a deviant:  
 it could be the start of a Cult.  
 Surviving pitched battles and ridicule,  
 a worshipper roofs the stop;  
 a link in the family chain.  
 Then the period of wars we know about.  
 Everyone dies. Their punishment,  
 to see Spirits of enemies running cars and PMVs\*.  
 At the Bus Stop Mammie waits.  
 The sun speaks with God's voice.  
 Buses have not been invented.  
 Mammie recalls the 57th Battle  
 for the bus-shed: is she the last  
 to live in hope?



The shed too needs protection  
from God's voice. His other voice, like rain,  
will do it. Wait for the 59th. Coming.

One day, they say, the bus will come  
And she will not like it.  
And it will not like her.

\*Public Motor Vehicles

### The Coming

The rumours started  
in the time of our fathers  
and of their fathers. A Volunteer  
setting out from this place  
wandered for generations among people  
of no blood, the tribes of the West.  
Due to return in mourning, his brothers  
and sisters long dead, he has learnt  
the terrible magic of those parts.  
A few old ones will know the disguise.  
Seasoned by false alarms, they outlive  
disappointment. Once, without warning,  
he appeared like a vision, in the shape  
of a radio. The voice was not of us,  
generations with them had made if foreign.  
But even masters from abroad  
have to eat. After the first hours  
we brought *kaukau* and withdraw in respect.  
But our food was not to its liking;  
he had been away too long. That was near *laiagam*  
at a younger time. Now there are reports  
from *Porgera*. He comes trailing dust  
like a yellow car along the Highway.  
We can read signs, we know this car  
has a special diet. In the night  
when all are asleep, we will open up  
his secret mouth, and feed him from our garden.

### The Time of Darkness

Mathew impersonates the one-legged  
man who hops to the prod of terrible  
gods, five generations distant.  
It has been three days  
since the Moon and the Sun went to War  
creating darkness and *Oki* — ash  
from the sky separating past and future.  
It rains down on pigs and gardens, kills  
all living things outside the hut: the first-born  
only, foraging for food  
with his umbrella and torch, survives.

Mathew in his m  
this *bubu* in hon  
for out of that ni  
with a new bird,  
and a man with  
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Mathew has paid  
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### Athlete in the C

I had seen her i  
footed, *bilum* &  
and here she wa  
ahead of me on  
I sneaked an ill  
Hanging back,  
game. She was  
from behind, n  
thick. I saw hei  
hurt —  
and brace hers  
the gauntlet of  
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landing at the  
then settled dc  
& child steadie  
When I caught  
I saw the patc  
which was the  
unready, I ma  
of wet, and w  
my bacm, as i

Mathew in his modern office performs  
this *bubu* in honour of the past;  
for out of that night the dawn was blessed  
with a new bird, a new plant  
and a man with white skin whose magic was strong:  
after that the people prospered.  
Mathew has paid homage to the past  
and now dances to protect his children  
from the new threat. A travelling saucer  
landing on his desk takes the shape  
of an English driving licence  
programmed to outlive the world. Valid  
into the 21st. century after the world ends,  
could it know something denied to priests  
and parents? Could a man break rank  
and prepare his children for travel  
into that forbidden territory? Fright  
gives way to hope. Something like rebellion  
stirs in him; so he must dance.

#### Athlete in the City

I had seen her in the Highlands, splay —  
footed, *bilum* & baby oppressed;

and here she was in the city  
ahead of me on her first railway footbridge:  
I sneaked an illicit sense of danger.

Hanging back, I played a secret, a boyish, juggling  
game. She was

from behind, middle-aged, poor-diet  
thick. I saw her stiffen — such thoughts  
hurt —

and brace herself to run  
the gauntlet of alien arrows  
falling without war-cry, without ritual.

No time to fine myself a token  
for hunting with the pack. Faster on her feet  
than I remembered, she took a mighty leap  
(before I could turn the arrows back)

landing at the edge —  
then settled down again as if the *bilum*  
& child steadied her.

When I caught up  
I saw the patch of water

which was the lady's sandpit. Untrained,  
unready, I managed to land in half an inch  
of wet, and walked down the steps arching  
my bacm, as if remembering.



### The Shotgun Cult

The whiteskinned americans, our ancestors  
come back in disguise heavy with cargo,  
now live among us like people  
and must play their part in the ceremony  
to bring luck to the hunt.

This *Kapti* for the community shotgun  
must not be a failure like the last  
robbing the village of meat.  
We will explain all to the ghosts  
who know nothing about guns;  
convince them, with banana and taro  
with dumplings and gingers that we are worthy  
of this weapon; that we are at peace,  
that no one has quarrelled with his neighbour  
that fighting is a thing of the past  
that no woman has stolen *kaukau* from another's garden  
that though ginger hasn't worked on the fiery  
temper of our americans  
their killing is elsewhere, far from the village;  
then we will have meat.

The gun is erect in its harem  
of cartridges. The alter is decorated: sago-shoots  
studded with sacred ginger, red & pink  
hibiscus and leaves of different colours  
attend it. Dishes of rice & meat,  
of traditional food press village favours  
on ancestors reluctant  
to turn the wild pig of the forest  
on collision course with the trigger;  
we renounce the use of guns  
except for food blessed by the ghosts;  
we banish for ever  
dreams of Chicago streets through our village;  
we plead innocent  
to the violence of the world.

### Dispatch

(to a grandmother)

i

We are learning to live with madness  
and the world. Today I suffered wounds  
which you can know about — bruised  
knuckles and a stiff bush-walker's  
knee: dismiss those media fears  
of grandson with kalashnikov, of a place  
where men who are not surgeons, bloody  
the cellar with what once leaked from you.  
No need, then, for your old routine

of brandy  
(dear God,  
edged in b  
'looking lil  
I visited ca  
his *kaukau*  
up and do  
he cut stav  
and showe  
Before slit  
through th  
and noted  
and the ag  
and the cl  
and discov  
splitting a  
and saw w  
and took l

The Caves  
that one C  
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A solitary  
to the nex  
and Lipu

ii

You expe  
Why shot  
where oth  
*he put wi*  
*Those wh*

Charmed  
errand-bo  
one late-n  
send Sara  
Then to I  
on a boat  
to the boy  
he won't  
Minister;  
within the  
Grandmc  
but hung  
in case ne  
to punish  
with the  
and orde  
son, just  
*the flavor*

of brandy drowned in water to cope with  
 (dear God) the telegram or airmail letter  
 edged in black. With friends today  
 'looking like something out of the Old Testament'  
 I visited caves above Wabag. Lipu, the guide,  
 his *kaukau* ready-baked for lunch, led us  
 up and down a path winding like a mediaeval tale:  
 he cut staves for the third leg  
 and showed us where the river was narrowest.  
 Before slithering and bruising our way  
 through the dark hole we played the traveller  
 and noted *details* of *kunai* huts and *kaukau* patches  
 and the age and youth of the forest  
 and the clear passion of water foaming through rock;  
 and discovered the old old man in glasses  
 splitting a log the tourist way  
 and saw with surprise lenses in the frames;  
 and took his picture.

The Caves, wet, muddy, revealed by torchlight  
 that one GEORGE GEASH had beaten us to it  
 by two decades. Other 'paintings' were of the same school.  
 A solitary bat flittered from one marking  
 to the next, like a tour instructor,  
 and Lipu was persuaded not to add it to his lunch.

ii

You expect something more from me?  
 Why should I play your game  
 where others didn't? *A stray relative*  
*he put wickedness in your head . . . call it brains!*  
*Those who know you still fear the worst . . .*

Charmed with notoriety of history's  
 errand-boys, I hoarded the old Lists:  
 one late-night sugar-cake from Mr Lee —  
 send Sarah and cover her absence.  
 Then to London, three weeks  
 on a boat: is it necessary to get message  
 to the boy Philpot, by 1956? If not  
 he won't meet the girl, won't become Prime  
 Minister; if not there'll be a race riot  
 within the year. *Risk it Risk it. Do it differently.*

Grandmother was given six months to live  
 but hung on, they say, for decades  
 in case news, this news came through  
 to punish rumour. She has forgiven the lapse  
 with the sugar-cake  
 and orders one each afternoon from Mr Lee's  
 son, just in case. *But you no longer like*  
*the flavour of home.* She sees grannie-glasses



supporting your face, and is not flattered:  
do not grow old like that  
in a land unkind to you.

I am lucky she will live forever,  
like the Chinese, and have World Leaders queue  
for audience. Sovereigns will call  
and speak her telegram in deference to an old fear,  
and she will thank me.

Nothing for a long time; bad dreams, anxiety.  
Using the old magic over distance  
she *contains* enemies I can't see — the drunk  
in charge of a weapon, on four wheels:  
Wake up, Wake up before it strikes. She sees  
the rascal with bush-knife raised  
and, a world away, turns over, checks his arm.  
Again, she was saved life. *Thanks* sounds inadequate.

In France I met your messenger. She  
was well chosen. She brought me olives  
and two languages; but lost your name  
along the way. She was human,  
it's been a long time,  
you may have died. Or (did we dream it?) mourning  
in Germany draping their language  
around me like a black coat;  
in America, too, where some of us are buried  
(not true, then, that family in the ground  
gives you root . . .)

I'm in a place you do not know.  
I carry a Doctor's badges as you would wish,  
and a tight-packed shelf of books in my head  
as you would wish.

This Report, tailored to one growing  
116 years out of humour, will seem thin.  
This morning to compound what might be guilt  
a sugar-cake was delivered to my house.

iii

Grandmother, he says, please read between  
the lines. The boy's a little too keen  
with all this P.S. in the middle of the Paper  
to soften the blow of what coming later.

A style they develop abroad, like bringing a new wife  
into the family who can't 'pon her life  
manage the language. 'You'll find her idioms strange'  
he said last time. We know he not goin' change.

The pinched face of the stranger, his odd accent  
can no longer be obscured by a clerical collar.  
We have sheltered him long, let him clown elsewhere.

This family,  
56 years bef  
34 years aft  
has earned  
his punishm  
this precari  
With a mini

*There's som  
Fancy sayin  
Know what  
whatsisnam*

*Synod, ther  
who food h  
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who so slac*

*more than  
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His sister is  
in the fami

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still taste g  
don't starv  
letter full o*

*of loose tre  
one way o  
to spite the  
on this pic*

*'ass-grass'  
showing a  
'Marching  
it says. So*

*And here:  
bearded b*

This family, seated round its table since it mattered —  
56 years before the reat Hurricane,  
34 years after Emancipation. —  
has earned the *style* to indulge a child past 40:  
his punishment is to endure a while longer  
this precarious state of grace.  
With a minimum of conditions, his Report will be read.

*There's something here about false starts.  
Fancy saying that to us! So much like boasting.  
Know what it remind me of? That parson  
whatsisname screwing up he face like he toasting.*

*Synod, then cussing everybody  
who food he used to eat. Now we're the enemy,  
my dear, like the low types in the congregation  
who so slack and worthless, you tellin; me,  
more than they mouth want washin' out.  
Well . . . this mister man start thumping thumping pulpit  
like nobody business, the fire in Hell getting  
out of control. Teeth flash like they can't fit  
into the monster mouth anymore. And before you know what  
he calling down on them the wrath of something something 20  
and the latest Yankie CRUISE to clear up  
a point in Deuteronomy. Yessir. They abuse we plenty.*

Generations of contact has/have programmed the air with learning  
and now all are knowing, if not wise.

Facts pile up on empty surfaces, not like dust,  
not even like serving platters from the kitchen,  
but like a noted batsman displaying all his innings without break  
colouring our image of the game.

That said, the last child to play here took Mr. Einstein's  
*Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Rorper*" to his room.  
His sister is thought to be blaspheming in a Northern Choir  
in the family line of Show Business.

*\*On the electrodynamics of moving bodies  
This grafted mango from her tree  
still taste good, praise God we  
don't starve. Pity about the boy's  
letter full of wilfulness, preaching the joys  
of loose travel, 'trekking' you'll note  
one way only, 'back into the Stone Age'  
to spite the family. As if we're the type to dote  
on this picture in a trench, shameless among  
'ass-grass' and the girl with all her breasts  
showing and glistening in the rain?  
'Marching like Pilgrims to the Sing Sing',  
it says. Some people still don't have no shame.  
And here: 'little greasy men, like painted,  
bearded boys, stamp, stamp in the mud*



or huddle under umbrellas, yodelling'.

What nonsense it this? Filthy-sounding thing.

Here at base, we play a dull part, no stopping  
for rain, bad light, low politics, invasions  
that drive friends out to join the world's majority  
without past, without privilege. In this Theatre  
without exists, we are content to age. Round the table  
where Philosophies of other families have been passed on  
with the suckling pig and back again  
to be erased gently on napkins,  
we must change and not change Parts. Plans resurface  
with the swet, and linger as crumbs on the table-cloth.  
In this modern age everything is a mystery.

### WORLD BANK MAN

now you  
see me  
now you  
DONT. I'M  
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der from  
WORLD BANKia  
come to  
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that the time?)  
now which one is it,  
whatsit to you/  
in it for you  
PROJECT.  
No time  
to see  
you see  
whatsisname  
DETAILS (for  
Enga's a  
Four-letter  
Word a Four-  
letter word  
you know:  
we're BUSY  
in the fast lane  
hustlin's the name

name o'th' game.  
So now to work:  
that thing  
you're doing,  
why aren't you doing it  
DIFFERENTLY?  
I mean  
to say  
can't stop  
chop chop  
must get back  
long nudge nudge  
CITY. For  
ENGA's a  
Four-letter  
Word like  
no other  
Four-letter  
Word I KNOW  
(heard of  
BONN, heard  
of ROME, heard  
of OSLO?) So,  
Go to go  
now, End  
of Show, now  
Read the MEMO  
now, Lukim  
yu nau.

### Love Amor

(For the E)  
or for some  
or for one r

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behind a ta  
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of last nigh  
Too late, to  
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Outside, we  
while they  
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### End of a I

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### Love Among the Experts

*(For the EYL external evaluation team,  
or for some members of it;  
or for one member of it)*

She is one of the panel, professional  
behind a table. The talk is, as always,  
how to develop (has she been told  
of last night's rape?) something hidden.  
Too late, too hot, too lacking  
in interest to come up with definitions today.  
Outside, women feed their children  
while they wait. Here, on the panel,  
the lady's breasts are covered.  
We fumble and stumble and rising to a past  
occasion, rifle the blouse for a nibble  
of what the past holds. Less than before, dear God;  
but this, this is the recipe that can be expected.

Outside, women with long breasts  
sustain the crowd, Will it to sleep,  
stir it to violence. So like the book  
falling open at a page marked in youth.  
Nothing has gone wrong except our lurch  
towards ambition. Not true and yet,  
good still to sit back  
in official chairs, and pretend to think again.

### End of a Project

The Assessors have come and gone:  
the Project has been completed.  
She looks at silvery bits of his garden,  
rusty now: why are these statements so obvious?  
The child, not quick enough to draw back  
from a wish, pricks herself, bleeds.  
Her mother, relic of the Project, remembers medicine.  
All's not lost then, the brothers are wrong.  
They distrusted a lover who brought books  
instead of pigs, and now keep her reading  
as a penance, long after the habit has passed.  
Careless in victory, they're again waving  
axes, connecting with an enemy at random.  
It is true though, that books are going damp,  
their beauty is fading.  
But not memories from B4: *who's a brave girl, then?*  
(Easy to make the child vanish. Time, remember,  
was *his* obsession, not hers.)



"Time is your obsession, not mine."

He doesn't want to be bitten by me,  
not like this, this, having heard of certain practises  
in these parts. Am I offended?

I am offended, I think,  
for like cannibals from his time-&-motion land  
I distinguish between living, dead flesh,  
and he is not to be killed if he pays  
the bride-price: all the brothers have been informed.  
From now on I will hunt heads in much the same way  
as your pale ladies in foreign novels —  
though mistakes cannot be ruled out:  
we are apprentices on your Project."

We were apprentices on the Project.  
Did I doubt it? Others remember him as the *bikman*  
without strength to grow grass on his face,  
a strange *dimdim* offering drinks other than beer;  
though his smell, they said, wasn't as bad as others;  
and better, better than the brothers. It was good  
to take his skin hinting of soap, of something  
not promised from abroad, out of its package of clothes  
that harmed him, that harmed them all  
so they became unused to a naked breast,  
and made promises to it they couldn't keep  
and had to scurry back where what they prayed to  
was covered, hidden. And now the Assessors, like others,  
have gone, the Project buried.  
And the silver garden rusts: how long  
will this child be allowed to bleed?

### Shoes

They go with the job.  
They squeak out of you and crunch  
under foot all that was *bush-kanaka*  
before this Highway to cash economy.  
They go with the job, to reward you,  
sweating that last hour's penance,  
connecting when it mattered  
with the dead man, big as in life,  
who glided your pen through  
the open Public Service door.

At first these shoes, skins  
of an animal foreign to the village  
keep you afloat, unsteady,  
like balancing on a cow slain at your feet.  
You must make the effort in this job  
not to fall off, to ride it like the expat.

And now these shoes  
growing used to feet, separate

you fromg r  
above the k  
praise be to  
in death. As  
you yearn  
under foot.  
into high cc  
Like an ath  
on a surfac  
toes won't r  
for power.

### Philpot in I

The mirror  
he was not  
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for skin wit  
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for him —  
her woman  
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one of then  
— ah, but  
Perhaps so  
ready to cr  
of blacknes  
of capital l  
The crowd  
in a mirror

you from round, from mud, raise you  
above the *kunai* dreams of parents:  
*praise be to ancestors generous*  
*in death*. As shoes lose their bounce  
you yearn to inflate the big pig  
under foot, for the spring, *spring*  
into high company; to shoot you overseas.  
Like an athlete you bear down  
on a surface (shit and broken bottles, scurrying  
toes won't matter now) coiled  
for power.

### Philpot in PNG

The mirror lied to him again,  
he was not the clown of yesterday  
pining for active duty in Zimbabwe,  
for skin without blemish, without  
shadow. He struck unfamiliar poses giving  
it a chance to correct itself. He  
had done nothing credit-worthy, performed  
no desperate act since the world's mirrors  
last pronounced him clown: he was still  
unable to support such of his family  
as he recognized. Thinking otherwise,  
made him distrust his senses. Perhaps  
there were colleagues working behind the scenes  
for him — the old neighbour with a hoe taking  
her woman's complaint to the fields  
refusing to die of it: could she be  
one of them? He saw someone's daughter offering  
— ah, but that was an old disease . . .  
Perhaps somewhere here was the brave lad  
ready to cross the frontiers  
of blackness, backwardness, depriving them  
of capital letters, crimes answerable for.  
The crowd stared back at him: old faces  
in a mirror he had tried to smash.



**PART FOUR:  
GRANDFATHER'S SERMON &  
MICHAEL SMITH**

*Let the cow, the horse, the camel, the garden-bee — let the mud-fisk  
the lobster, the mussel, eel, the sting-ray, and the grunting pig-fish  
— let these, and the like of these, be put on a perfect equality with man and woman!*

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

i

Echoes of the Hymns return,  
the frayed little knot in a cemetery,  
people standing as if in need  
of practise: is this how to outlive  
something dead of natural causes?  
Somehow it was better inside, sagging  
with the weight, bending a knee  
to the strange little god of a grandfather  
whose voice lacked timbre, the highish pitch  
right for the man's unprepossessing  
look. His favourite hymns, Nos 182 and 527  
in the Methodist Hymnal  
come back now with the whiff  
of these unnatural deaths, these killings  
of near friends, this contempt  
for what it takes to live.  
The killer, the new god of power  
will claim to be a man like other men  
babbling, from a script, the language of love.

ii

The clans are fighting a mile away.  
They paint their faces, wear bits of grass and bark  
to tell us this is happening at an earlier time.  
Do not believe it, this is wishful thinking;  
they wear suits and conquer the centuries  
by aircraft. In capital cities  
they shake each others hands, careless  
of what smears them.  
They are what old men fearing, feared to predict.  
A familiar animal lives on this hill,  
puts on clothes during daylight  
and affects human speech: you know him.  
Dangerous to women after dark, particularly  
those he would own: one returns from his embrace  
with a shattered jaw, ribs broken.  
Why do we pretend not to recognize him?  
These are your grandchildren, old man —  
lay-preacher, taylor, Overseer, modestly  
letting the horse outlive you —

By croakin  
you have r  
Sometime  
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But what i  
To march  
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saying

By croaking out that ancient song, by pleading asthma  
you have not prevented them inheriting your earth:

*Sometimes the Light surprises  
the Christian while he sings . . .*

is a coy way to approach you, Michael Smith.

But what is strange to a dead man?

To march in the street in his cause is strange.

To live with his death is strange.

To play the poet, imperial in arrogance,  
and colonize this *subject*, is worse, ridiculous  
as reading a few lines, in a public place,  
for Peace. *Vanity of Vanities, Saith the Lord:*  
*All is Vanity.* Yet, we must do it.

You are ageless, Michael Smith, grandfatherly  
when it suits, you are anybody's.

The men in suits have given you away.

Don't let their dupes turn you into a hero.

iii

And will they now name a bookshop

after you, a mini-shrine

where we can come and salve conscience,

the pious and the hypocrite among us

oozing virtue and well-meaning,

and let the killers off the hook?

Some who wished you dead will buy your poems:

no one will stop them.

iv

Older, from the death of friends

we are the old men now. We preach

when we can, not knowing how to lament

those many, many dead unknown to us:

so we abuse you, Michael Smith, with excess  
of sentiment.

My voice is no sweeter, my command no surer

than a grandfather who for an hour stayed

God's hand and stopped a hurricane which threatened genocide:

his voice is now mocked by bandits who rule this land

killing for the people's good.

If you could believe it you would return to misquote  
godless lines;

to turn Whitman's 'heresy' into an island's hope

and demand with us

that some be hanged by their ties,

their well-pressed suits and fake dashikis.

But who will prevent killers in the congregation

saying *Amen* to this?



## PART FIVE: THE COST OF LIVING

### Dancing

She doesn't sing,  
she would make it sound like something else,  
a Hoover, late enough to be housewifely.  
Neighbours would not like her dancing  
them to bed. This is perhaps her twelfth day  
on the floor, up a bare wall  
and her gloves, the gloves have become black skin  
difficult to peel off:  
her hand betrays the building-site with pride.  
She dances along kitchen floor  
on a carpet of grit, pleased  
with the new wall, brick-like, home-made.  
Upstairs, there are no explanations.  
Upstairs, the absent man's gift lies sleeping.  
She is mad, they say, to dance without partner  
through door, along corridor without risk  
of censure. All the surfaces come out in sympathy  
with her face and film over — a benign rash  
she could pout her lips and disperse, she could caress away.  
The spluttering, coughing, cleaning device  
too-easily becomes the man preparing for exit:  
it is late, time for a pause, the neighbours would wish it.  
She has learnt from this too-familiar  
experience when to change tune,  
to switch to something subtler, more personal  
like the soothing, pure spring of tapwater  
streaming into bath, rinsing dust from a happy memory.  
No one will deny her this dance  
though they jump her in packs, heavy bodies  
after a Match causing the knees to buckle:  
she is weightless in water, bruised fingers now  
cheating a little. The song is of a startled  
infant: the Lady is wet with dancing.

### The Cost of Living

*(A New Girl to the Club)*

Half-way through the evening she starts  
looking at her watch. To the outsider his story  
is far from over. That he will die violently  
has perhaps been made known. She won't be heroic  
but wait the required interval  
before remarrying: will she be blamed  
for his death by the two or three (millions?) who matter.  
Without her — it has been whispered — he would

have yielded, to  
to die of natur  
is ready-made  
as a matter of  
before this br  
as the right o  
to be talking.  
From now on

### The Cost of Living *Nixon's Alive*

She's the wor  
and perhaps  
took them ne  
not to define.

Now she was  
she never qui  
and got tired  
to belie the o

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of Nixon, he  
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All but one

have yielded, compromised, lived out two decades  
to die of natural poisons. Her defence  
is ready-made: she will use it for a few years  
as a matter of taste. Only to look back on a life —  
before this break in the story —  
as the right one to have lived. He appears still  
to be talking. She looks at her watch.  
From now on her life will be unremarkable.

### The Cost of Living

#### *Nixon's Alive, Lennie Bernstein's Growing Old*

She's the woman he might have married,  
and perhaps did, at the time when travelling together  
took them nearer the goal they preferred  
not to define.

Now she was in danger of losing that humour  
she never quite managed to perfect  
and got tired of trying. So her friends had been summoned  
to belie the occasion.

When she recalled again that summer of the death  
of Nixon, how her companion passed the evening  
affirming the balance of nature,  
the rightness of things,

then the holiday island seemed a good place  
to be. But Nixon, of course, through U.S. power  
transformed himself into Nasser  
and the local radio went along with it;

and a decade later far from home  
she recognized that the little house  
which contained what was left of old habits  
was familiar as the husband one deserved,

and she called it Nixon. Friends wrote  
to reassure one another that the lady's mind was sound;  
but now she was teasing them with silence  
causing little rashes of doubt which embarrassed them;

till she suddenly leapt up like the invalid they knew,  
distracted that Lennie Bernstein  
was growing old: life was a bitch.

And her friends clutched at this sign of relief.  
All but one; but who learns lessons at his age?



### The Cost of Living

*(Holiday With Friends)*

She is far from the man who will beat her in the stomach  
and kill the child. Though, it is said  
they do it differently now, she has outwitted him.

For that she is granted beach and sea  
with the tired rich; where young things too  
who must be clever, come for sun.

She is to forget the weariness of long assignments,  
put out the campfires of all those eyes  
bright with malice, but no warmth  
from a world without nostalgia, a world lived in.  
Over dinner, she may admit to being contented  
for her children haven't died,  
and she was the sister lacking in ambition.

Bodies washed up on the beach shake themselves  
and walk away, unmutated. How good,  
how good to be counted among the idle!  
Yet she thinks of one who was ambitious, driven  
to test the logic of their lives —  
like wading out against this gentle warning  
discounting rumours of its might.  
But the sea will not be hurt, my brother, by a drowned man.

So, one of us is here, survivor among many,  
among few. She will train her face to blend with company;  
and use old words that friends can live with;  
and not put on the white jacket labled mad,  
which some think hers: she will keep  
what must have been a promise made in passing.

Among olives and cicadas the toast tonight  
is of a partner who can't be here. She thinks  
she sees him return, like so many others,  
a cripple with a gun. But that can't be right.  
That is the wreck of someone else's dream.  
And she is not a predator. And she is here with friends.

### The Cost of Living

*(Another Part of the Field)*

*Anne, Anne*

i

The flat in Montparnasse outlives you.  
The school-uniform, truant of '68  
will be rags tomorrow: so short is a life.  
I try to think of you as cork  
bobbing with wine, drifting  
from a casual hand as if it didn't matter.  
A year ago from the outside

you looked in  
where a sister g  
seemed clear: V  
She had taken  
and we couldn

ii

When friends  
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### The Cost of

*(Sour Nothin*

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you looked in on a flooded chamber  
where a sister gasped for breath: her message  
seemed clear: When we need them our friends are elsewhere.  
She had taken something bitter of the world  
and we couldn't share it.

ii

When friends need us are elsewhere.  
I'm chanting these words for you now.  
In less than a year two or three have died,  
some murdered, and the armies  
have again made us look foolish.  
I see you on the edge of a chamber  
no steadying hand on the elbow.  
*Is this, then, how it is with others  
long prone to the bitter taste of day?*  
They are not wood, though they age slowly  
without blossom; like family.  
They would not admire you for toying  
with that chamber, for falling in.  
From here, I speak to them too.

iii

I do not know which of us needs this. *Dear friend . . .*  
I have taken my anti-malaria pill  
and feel a bitter taste in the mouth:  
it will pass. It might not pass.  
From this distance, I am a man talking in tongues.  
Perhaps this is better than silence . . .  
*You must not die in the middle of things,  
While this book is half-read:  
That 'it begins badly and will end well'  
Can no longer be certain. Yet,  
I have two, three journeys to make,  
And a detail to attend  
Before it grows life-size to menace  
And discredit us.  
Then I will join you, lessening the odds —  
(By how much? And who will measure?)  
Why have you then, died, needlessly?*

#### The Cost of Living

*(Sour Nothings)*

Should the day pass without self-  
consciousness I might have,  
in retrospect, to run suspicion over it  
like a magnifying glass  
on the prow for evidence.  
It can't be the worst, then, of those days,  
when you sit down to tea with a bore  
thinking the ritual so much better



with any random acquaintance on three continents;  
better even in that once-loved book  
full of clever people, young and dated.

Sitting down to tea contentedly  
with a bore to weigh alternatives  
against your life, against Life  
hints at hospital corridors, eyes  
of a special friend grown hard  
and unforgiving, news of little killings  
regular enough to string on your necklace  
of memory-beads. So you finger it, finger it.  
And opposite this bore you sit, growing  
relieved, tending the frayed thread  
of conversation, determined not to let it snap  
and expose you just yet to the true cost of living.

### **The Cost of Liing**

*(Man a la Mode)*

An internal complaint he couldn't  
pronounce: he began to look  
after his appearance, to polish  
his shoes. He could have died  
in a random private war to sighs  
of what-might-have-been; or done the thing  
more publicly in a group motivated  
by what others would accept  
as a cause; or gone out in a treacle  
of self-pity and heroism, stripped naked,  
having dug his own grave: 30 years  
later, his name on a monument.  
Instead, he goes out like somebody's  
parent, known at this address, disguised.

### **The Cost of Living**

*(Fish)*

Then, aware of food-poisoning,  
we threw back the culprit disguised  
as a fish — and watched  
it drown. We cleaned the nets.  
Yesterday, we were still watchful  
and dumped most of the catch  
on waste ground. A gimmick, you say,  
with the water teeming.  
Now, because of pollution,  
we must give up fish.

### **The Cost of**

*(Two Hail)*

Third-Wo

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inland, dry  
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### **A Famili**

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### **Self-Ad**

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## The Cost of Living

(Two Haiku)

### Third-World War

The beach, walking off  
inland, dragging its bed of  
sand. And look, no guns!

### Food-chain

Feeding over:  
one eye hard and accusing —  
fish out of water.

### A Familiar Man

You fake the necessary sense of humour.  
They make you live up to it, family  
with sly references to feet and clay:  
a joke as wife & daughter  
press advantage at the dinner-table,  
dream alternatives behind your back. You aim  
of course, to protect them from wits who,  
unlike yourself, cap sad endings  
with applause. You are an addict now, you've become  
a known thing, a fact about our time —  
like a plastic bottle outliving a man:  
where's the humour, then?

Today a daughter of eleven suffers exposure  
by a man (They won't tell you yet  
till something worse threatens.) Teacher  
and mother comfort her and recall  
that the world is no different from when they were young.  
You sense at dinner you have fluffed another duty.  
Chill from the shoes spreads upwards:  
sagging clay, buckling man. The women  
you protect are practical as admiring.  
They take in hand those bits of you they can reuse;  
and with outside skills come up with something  
which only just fails to amuse.

### Self-Addressed Letter

And after this time of Self-  
reproval, poisonous hovering  
tongues spitting your name,  
after this risk of exposure, the postman  
shakes his head, becomes another  
dull plodder in your game of self-  
conceit. The letter comes at last  
and says — like a rakish question mark



temporarily unzipping your fears  
 proclaiming you permanently  
 open — the letter waives the usual  
 obstacles of getting the children  
 off to school, of the dutiful neighbour  
 well-wishing at an awkward time,  
 of chores for the body, for the mind.  
 The letter is shameless, shameless  
 like the newly re-enstated lecher  
 who knows you must finally agree  
 to his plans, the sex-weary, arrogant  
 mask, comic and pitiful. 'Whisper me'  
 it says, 'in rooms that are out-of-bounds  
 by Law, friendship, taste. The children  
 like illegal immigrants are proscribed  
 by mothers on updated wedding-  
 nights: *now* is the time of the fabled  
 wild man, *yours* is the key to the door.  
 Call in your credit before they declare  
 you bankrupt'. The unopened, question-  
 marked letter goes back to be ammended.  
 'Not Known At This Address'. *Was that wise?*  
 It hovers above the ceiling of your  
 wish, and leaves you prone: the mal-  
 functioning of your body still channelled  
 into safety by old-fashioned plumbing.  
 It bears no reference to the rough  
 young tongue on the breast; of confused,  
 ambitious scaling the heights  
 of a steep education only to fall back  
 wounded, to stamp on prediction's  
 failure, to blame the world's bitchiness  
 on a woman. A question-mark  
 on a letter opens up the peep-hole  
 to memory: the musky web where old  
 school-mates, adventurous nuns etc.  
 and unshockable aunts in another country  
 begin to find their focus. You are open  
 to receive them all, generous host fingering  
 himself under a coat. Then, they will,  
 won't they? jerk your life into a future.

## Second Letter

Dear X . . . As they say, older & if not wiser, sadder.  
 Phrases between us have gone rigid like a ladder  
 Over the street. There's fighting down there:  
 Bombings, *murder*. From my up-in-the-air  
 Cage, I decline the temptation to direct these scenes  
 Learning prudence of a fighter with limited means.  
 Our own wars, planned in the library, were less bloody than we thought.

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Because we are tired, we must claim to have fought  
 To prevent all this — this latest clash  
 Where those without power are so rash.  
 To stage our lost cause with lack of finesse.  
 Aimed to discredit us: my present view, more or less.  
 What do I say? The people are badly housed, ugly.  
 And those who kill them pay no attention to us. We  
 are not entirely the fools we seem, you and I (Better  
 Say that): I toy with ways of dating this letter.  
 To make it credible. Small changes to get it right —  
 Scribbling in the margin, preferring *fore-* to *hindsight* —  
 Taking the long view as if this was History: 1788?  
 Any pre-Revolutionary year will tempt me. Any early date:  
 How about the Rome of our favourite Gracchus.  
 Two now-ancient B.A.'s ago? In reply, you help me, help *us*.  
 To continue. You write to say, *als*, alas . . . then mention.  
 The birth of a daughter, a minor operation,  
 Acquisition of glasses for reading: It's easier for me.  
 Now to keep you informed. You will see what I see:  
 War, corpses in rubble, *mass* flight.  
 The people are badly housed. That's what I write.  
 You know the rest. The street is ugly and those who kill  
 (is this fear or hope?) pay no attention to us, still.  
 P.S. Let us now and then turn away from the slaughter.  
 And drink with abandon toasts to your daughter.

#### Coming Out, Older

i

Like my friend from the village who wished  
 to write a sermon, I vowed  
 to live to 20, despite premonition,  
 and thrilled to the challenge of the next five years.  
 They passed soon enough in an acne  
 of exams and girls  
 showing favour to others: Now we are facing  
 the opposite direction looking back  
 at what might have been missed.  
 Who doesn't read in the eyes of a stranger  
 recurring statements  
 that hint at a bargain you failed to keep?  
 Some land on their feet, friends settling  
 for more than seemed possible —  
 second families thriving in the sun  
 (reading Krishnamurti, sharing privileges . . .  
 And towards the end of a century indifferent  
 to succession) the issue today:  
 how to express love to a son too heavy to be carried,  
 too big for the breast?

Ah, but there are the rest of us: a colleague  
investing in his blackness  
waves success like a policeman armed  
with an in-joke. I do not resent this, we validate one another.  
Women, still more promise than threat  
have sent one (or two) of their number  
to allay fears, to arrest me with kindness  
— a prudent thing to do kindness  
— now it's your turn kindness  
— we're not getting any younger kindness  
even — I can't live without you kindness . . .  
I resolve to wear my life where it can be seen.

ii

The world is full of sermons waiting to be preached;  
of men whose mothers never read to them;  
Gays coming out, fat people being fat:  
the colleague without pride who accepts this constituency  
will not now be offered torture-chambers.

Here is a look-alike  
who travels on Public Transport,  
a way of life now, almost a science:  
his railway-ethnic prevents the world from falling into confusion  
(Paris is the place that smells of cigarettes.  
Far-off Toronto reeks of innocence.)

The National Museum of Art in Lagos is the smart place to meet . . . )  
How they get on, other people, with neglected parts  
of my life: London's West Indian  
and his milkman find accommodation;  
one sees a fascist who wishes to poison the milk,  
his restraint, a National tactic  
soon to be acknowledged by the Queen.  
The milk-drinker is a snob who takes whip to the enemy  
in his own way  
by kissing the fingers of a concert-pianist  
under the bedclothes, and teasing a mouth  
into intimate things, words other than English.  
Between 15 and 20 (this is an old, old voice)  
you collapse a decade dutifully  
by thought, maybe by its opposites. Now you study  
how to stretch 40 to the full limit of 50  
without recurrence of amnesia, without the aid of surgeons.  
Sometimes you envy the energy of a Macbeth choosing to go forward  
making waves . . .

I number among my clones, a Philosopher of Accident.  
At 16, young, and in possession of a car  
he managed not to kill his colleagues.  
Later, in methodical London, a stranger returned  
the compliment. Then, as a student

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**From the**

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attending the factory where workers knew their lessons,  
he offered his hand to a machine which ate fingers  
(With discrimination, it declined — Two cheers for Prelude)  
Now he counts them all intact, adds here  
or subtracts there a phrase or two from his Philosophy.

Too late, I think, to hide behind him, behind them.

Without sermon, without Philosophy, I look back  
on the London West Indian and his fascist laughing  
at the same joke, which they conspire to share  
with me: a chance to come out  
and surprise us all.

A chance to come out, older.

### Concessions

A year ago she was a lady  
whose husband was travelling,  
then she seemed weighed down  
by heavy pauses — a Winter interlude —  
sailboats far from land. Answers  
about her mate got lost at sea.

But another year has passed.  
Cleverer women confess mistakes  
they marvel at, their fury  
now directed on those who called them clever;  
a few well-meaning armies have turned round  
corrupted by television and Reporters.

Elsewhere, stray acquaintances have not aged well  
this year. A year ago she was a lady  
whose husband was travelling,  
and she has treated herself to a cure  
rigorous as sisters fighting flab.  
Now she is fitter, fit

as a sailor rowing towards new land,  
as an athlete throwing balls in the air  
to mock a rival. Her sky is full  
of balloons, brightly coloured like summer  
at the resort. A husband sails,  
sails on one of them. He's travellin',

### From the Building-Site With Love

(Recalling the *Cooperative Ouvriere du Batiment*, Alpes Maritimes)

#### Poet at Work

One of them they say is a poet.  
After much ribaldry the fat man  
emerges as a candidate.  
He crossed Niagara yesterday  
two storeys high, a split pole  
of *baguettes* ensuring survival.

But all is prose today. Another man  
 feeds the cement mixer with simile  
 challenging me to take him on;  
 yet a third writes the poem  
 and eliminates himself. But the fat  
 man scores again. Reverting  
 to landscape — generous host, a rustling  
 of leaves — he gently masturbates  
 a colleague's pet: later,  
 a strange dog identifies him  
 in the crowd and passionately mates  
 with his leg. This we reject,  
 this trick by man and dog  
 to start a Cult.

Elsewhere, a Toyota takes the mountain  
 road, screaming round and bends.  
 The driver, in his element, high  
 on *buai*, cannot decide  
 which *meri* called out thus: he whips  
 the brute into gear till it shudders  
 back a memory, punishing this gash  
 in the mountain, still raw and rough  
 like evidence of rape. The trees  
 play their usual game with cars,  
 rushing past like witnesses, busy  
 with gossip. Hearing of this,  
 a forgotten candidate will write  
 that the man had discovered rhythm  
 in the machine, rhyme in the times.

Another house finished, the fat man  
 only, feels loss for the *site*.  
 The ritual of possession is under way,  
 music not from this place,  
 the stranger inside reading  
 from a foreign language: before he is through  
 a driver will bring the lady  
 from beyond the mountain road.  
 She has been initiated *has she?* part  
 of the house built elsewhere.  
 The fat man suspends all dialogue  
 with himself. Alone, he squats  
 in front of premises he won't  
 now enter, trousers round his ankles.  
 He urges the wind to blow  
 in this direction, not really wanting  
 to bring the house down.

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**From the Building-Site With Love**

(the NEW SITE philosophy)

A glance

the second glance is deliberate:  
an approving nod.

All this, behind my voice  
is beautiful.

Words fit awkwardly into months ...  
are cut away, trimmed;  
they fall among the trees: bricks  
on the site.

Workmen bring bits of other houses.

It begins to take shape,  
the shape worries us.  
It ceases to be *this* house.

A foreign accent beams  
from the window.  
The world obeys.

(End-of-Job philosophy)

From the road, a house  
'nestling' as they say

among olives — yet casting  
a shadow. A familiar sign:

solid, immovable phalanx mocking  
your defeat. Another 'fact'

to overwhelm you? No,  
do not accept it. The house

is new (we put it there). Approach  
it with confidence

before it settles.

**Reflecting on the Sensuality of a Shower in Wabag (for Diana)**

My love, it's Sunday morning, still  
and the shower is generous and warm —  
*blessed be the wood stove. Amen:*

mixed with soap and shampoo  
it tastes good to the skin.

I let it pamper me  
and think of our brunch-hour in Boston,  
of champagne breakfasts in Koln  
where everyone claimed to be young and healthy,  
to be part of the music only slightly dated —  
not yet the champagne breakfasts in Koln  
served by the State, up-market  
lubricating oil to soften joints,



to unlock plumbing in the gut.  
 This warmth is not from the water only  
 but from children in the outer room  
 still playing games we know and love — Bob Dylan  
 trapped in a '60's echo, Rod Stewart  
 in his innocence wrestling with Amazing Grace.  
 Soon — I have predetermined the order  
 of these hymns — George Burns will wish  
 to be eighteen again. I am ahead of him  
 with warm water on skin  
 on this perfect Sunday morning in Wabag.

I won't listen to the News today,  
 in case the world runs true to form  
 and makes a stronger statement about age.  
 It is the hour when looking down at the town, clean,  
 I can believe that men have done  
 with battering their wives and are still drowsy  
 from Saturday night stupor;  
 and that a bruised and tender woman in a certain house  
 will consider evidence on her body  
 and think of the new doctor from abroad  
 who it is said opens his magic bag  
 and transfers something invisible to his lips  
 and bends low to kiss the spot  
 which erupts tingling, howling;  
 and she looks at the still-broken skin and thinks,  
 on this Sunday morning in Wabag  
 with all things in life briefly possible,  
 will the good doctor's thoughts come to heal her?

My love, I'm sitting in clothes that are fresh  
 and like being with me; I'm putting marks  
 on clean paper, dressing its nakedness  
 to call on you. From the balcony  
 I can see a stranger, late arrival from England  
 letting the gentle Sunday-morning sun  
 toy with her newness. We wave. Soon,  
 she will be the lusty mother singing  
 to a young man whose face is dirty. I return  
 to complete this sermon to you.  
 The time is still all those years ago. Bob Dylan's  
 musical wall-paper hangs in our room.  
 Now, I'm asking you to dance . . . dance. My love.

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