

THE GIRO YEARS



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POET'S CORNER

Can we hear your poems, John
Wordsworth so much fun
We are all ears literally
Please excuse the pun.

Anyone for Tennyson,
Homer, Clare or Shelley?
With my verbal benison
You're more turned on than telly.

I got Yeats among my mates,
He made this bugger rhyme.
I'm among the laureates
You see, it did this time.

Dante digs the words you use
Colourfully written
With their many varied Hughes
We're completely smitten.

Just like Dylan Thomas
Betjemen will read them out
You're in Poet's Comer
Stop Larkin about.

Signed with ciggy Burns, who cares?
Switch off your TV
Don't put on those silly Ayres,
I recite for free.

ALMOST EDEN

It is an August evening, hot and still, obscured by streaks of vapour white hot ribbons of light hem the burning sun to sky yards from the horizon. Dressed in a shirt of shimmering heat, yellow and orange, radiating like fretwork on an old art deco radio, direct beams are caught on corners of cloud glowing luminously like molten metal. The landscape is bathed in yellow and purple light with soft pink and a faded midnight above - it is a glorious sight, Tiepolo's ceilings come to mind.

In the distance lush oaks are blue and misty as if a veil has been drawn over them, an ocean of ripened wheat stretches from my feet out to where they stand and beyond as far as I can see. Every hue is in harmony, nothing is gaudy or discordant, even the scarlet poppies are not too much, not too many to throw the natural symphony of colour I long to paint.

As the sun sinks slowly into dusk it is almost Eden... as if the earth has a soul that is complete in itself, a wholly satisfactory life of it's own and that no man has the power to reason it away because God himself has made it so for Tiepolo and I.

ILLEGAL DRUG

As I creep down King Street late on Sunday night I utter a foolish prayer -
It seems to me that even the chains round the Methodist Central are rattling in sympathy.....

I need a shotta love for sure
I'm hooked on the stuff- I'll soon get some more Got such a bad habit- there's only one cure.
Love is the drug and I need to score. Maybe Jill is in The Ship
Maybe she's in the Mariner's Arms Sure as hell she's in somebody's arms I'd like to fix things up with Jill
For three years she's been addicted to me, And I to her Expresso.
We are emotional junkies in life's drug den; It's dangerous but we keep going back to it.
Sharing my works with her and Paulo from Portugal is no joke, I must be a class 'A' dope.....
Illegally I'll inject her soul with some born again boogie woogie and black budget beer -
So Jack Up Jill the East Coast blues band are playing acid rock in E; Would you like to dance the night away?

You with me
Rockin' and reelin'
Wishin' and hopin'
Perspirin' and a prayin'
Neckin' and a nudgin'
Smoochin' and a swayin'
Kissin' and a'not tellin' Paulo
But no... she never showed up, bad deal.
I need a shotta love for sure
I'm hooked on that woman, don't see her no more
Got such a bad habit I'm crawlin' the floor
God knows the craving that cuts to the core
Love is the drug and I need to score.
Kissin' and a'not tellin' Paulo

JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

And did those feet in ancient time
Press the accelerator through the floor
Of England's ethereal wasteland?
And was the Holy Lamb like we,
Setting out in a Gas Board van
Only to find a discontinued no-place?
In a chariot of fire
With sleeping bags
My paints and your diesel
We went in search of England.
We who cannot raise a family,
We, who are your lover's
We, who are crazy with the boredom
Of television tranquilisers and kamikaze courtships.
We two, like gangsters of God
Robbing time of it's devastation,
Lost on the wires that clatter through
Pylon-strung, past endless housing estates
Leisure complexes and idiotic shopping centres.

The moon, wild behind the dunes,
Towering over the wet night
Yet hiding.
The lights across the confused water
Gleaming naked and shivering
The night ferry taxying over the Tyne
As songs from your clapped out dashboard radio
Spit from the speakers.

Diana Ross, Dave Clark Five
Dusty Springfield, Dave Berry
Dave Edmunds, Dave Dee
Dire Straits, Donovan
Derek and the Dominoes
Dylan, The Grateful Dead
ABBA, Status Quo, U2

Mick smiles and starts up the motor
Albion*, Albion, look up over the landscape
Tonight we rendezvous with your sons and daughters
Over rice and Tesco's wine.
Help me plough through the glove compartment
For dog-ends, tea bags, fragments of dope
Motorway maps, money, chocolate
And anything else that's left to eat.

Albion, Albion, Albion, we salute you
Though your landscape is blurred by redundancy and robots
Though your houses are made of plastic and sticky tape
Though your whiz-kids wolf-whistle the golden calf
And whisper 'Thy will be done' all the way to the Swiss banks.
While homeless huddle in corners
Hoping for a mouthful of McDonald's
Or a mug of tea.

Albion, Albion, your children are criminals
Hatching hair-brained schemes
For the cuckoos in Parliament
Howling about it, won't stop the rot.
Take the only treacle tart that's left
And stuff it up the hole in your culture.
I vow to thee, my country
That I will stamp out my solitude in Spud-U-Like
Spray graffiti on your wailing wall
Stick two fingers down your throat.
Fuck Jerusalem - go ahead build Disney World
For Mickey Mouse and Goofy
O everyday Eden with your eight track motorways

From Glastonbury to Gateshead
You live like a lemming
Come forth like Lazarus.
Let's fight this holy Armageddon now –
Before you cock things up properly.

Here we are like David and Jonathan
Thronging the huddled heathen towns

(Deleted from life, I wore my black beret
Tightly against the misty clouds)
Our breath like cooling towers
Staggering like smoke stacks
Our stomachs filled with entire factories
Of mince pies from Huddersfield market
And armed with only a Carlsberg and a can of beans,
We slew the enemy hordes of darkness, with a glance.
Goliaths of Gath though they were
Hunting them down in bars and back streets
Hunting them down on markets and moors
Where the bogs and heather sit.

What it is to be a Brit.
Regular Coke, Regular Pepsi
Regular fries, regular stops for a piss
All the way up the Great North Road
This is my land, the wasteland of Britain
Where mad dogs and Englishmen
Go out over the Myra Hindley moors
With us and get knifed.
While in the driving rain.
Angels of death bury their defeated, philistine champions
In the crater of Britain's cultural graveyard.
And the world screams out in pain
Albion, don't close your mind
Though the sun don't ever shine
O'er dark satanic streets of crime.
The Son of Man came here to find you
Soldier of fortune on life's front line,
He trod those feet in ancient time,
Just like Mick's did beside mine,
He, too, journeyed to Jerusalem.

**Albion - William Blake's poetic name for England*

WEDDING IN BABYLON

We got wed in Babylon
Putting on a show
It seemed such a good idea
Why I do not know.
We got wed in Babylon
Wearing trendy clothes
Friends had tried to warn me
Too late for told you so's.
We got wed in Babylon
Birds in the car park sang
But I was hearing alarm bells ring
With a deafening deadly clang.
Wed got wed in Babylon
With a registrar
It's a bloody wonder
We ever got that far
You don't believe in anything
You don't believe in me
I should have told you long ago
That I wasn't free
There were wedding gifts and wine
Honeymoon in France
Stop this crazy music
I don't want to dance.
We got wed in Babylon
Just before the Fall
I was seduced and I never got used
To the fact that we did it at all
All the same we played that game
But I'm wiser now
No more weddings in Babylon
Make another vow.

WHY THE DICKENS ASK FOR MORE?

St Francis was a beggar
He had change to spare
Courtied holy poverty
Called her lady, thought her fair
Obvious to his concern
Was some folks can't eat and earn
Buying souvenirs in Rome
Think of him without a home.
Like our Lord; He too was poor
Picking people off the floor
Living like a social leper
Never had a proper shelter.
Beggars need respect from us
Why do people make a fuss?

She stood outside No.10
Margaret Thatcher - back again
Quoting to the TV crew
Prayers of Francis that she knew
"It's in giving we receive"
She said it plain and loud
But her policies don't fit
Such proclamations proud
Governments are talking squit
Heads to mammon bowed
And now John Major's telling us
Begging's not allowed.
Your ruling John has left me flat

And filled me with alarm
St. Francis knew where askings at
For God's sake where's the harm in that?
St. Francis lives in heaven now
Untroubled by police
But once he begged Italians
To share the Saviour's feast

He never felt the slightest shame
To kindly ask, in Jesus' name,
And nor should we
Because you see, He came
From want to set us free
And I say begging is allowed
'cos Thatcher said it on TV.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

There in the orchard apple trees sway
Where the Lord walks,
In windows of morning, each day
In the October light and your habit of grey,
That's where I saw you making your way
Waltzing with Jesus over the hay
How lovely the stepping
Of your sandalled feet
As you wave from the washing line
Calling to greet
This stranger in paradise
Here on retreat.
Sister Christina, is that your name, madam?
I cannot compete
You don't you know me from Adam.
I'm a man in the street
With a canvas and colour
A world to defeat,
A life to discover.
Don't clothes peg my heart
As you hang up that cover.

Like Venus, your glance
Is an orbiting light
Restlessly radiant,
Beautifully bright.
Your hands like Veronica's
Holding so tight
The towel that wipes clean
The face of the night.
You've a luminous vision
Of love in your eyes
That's blinded my sight
Like the sun in the skies
Don't gaze at me glowing
And turning clockwise

Tie on an apron
That's too big a size.
Don't look at me longing
Like sweets in a shop
Don't stare my direction
And make my pulse stop....
Midst sparrows and starlings
And burnt bacon rind.
A close encounter of the third kind.
I had no idea what my fate had in mind

Soppy old fool but I might be a winner
I haven't a hope as we go in to dinner
I hadn't a clue that you'd pull up your chair
Unknowingly answering my foolish prayer.
The nuns have said grace and finished the meat
As in the great silence divinely, discreet
You pass me the custard making complete
A dessert that's not mine but tasting the treat
Is like apple crumble, tempting and sweet.

Christina, you're canonized queen of these lands
You're known by the fruit dish in your holy hands
I'm a churning urn of burning funk
Who smokes in the bedroom, tobacco and skunk.
Tired of the tedium, lives like a monk
Turning out pictures that people think junk.
Don't lock up, leave me and climb in your bunk
Don't turn out the porch light tonight I implore
I'm like a shipwreck washed up on shore

You're like a lighthouse I'm like a bore.
Climb in the ark with me, sail past my door.
I'll bring blue forget-me-nots
Honey from the bees
Weed the nettles, fetch the milk,
Get down on my knees
I could get you all washed up
Chase chickens round the kitchen

Fix the DIY you botched up
If you let me pitch in.
Waltz to Walsingham with you,
Dance you on the breeze
You can say your rosary
Any way you please.

There were bells upon a hill,
But I never heard them ringing
There were matins in the chapel
But I never heard the singing
I more concerned with your portrait to frame
Bored you with bible talk
Boasted of fame.

I altered your altar and shifted the cross
Struck matches, lit joss sticks, not giving a toss
You came in the chapel I stood with a grin
Confessing completely my terrible sin
You put things back neatly and emptied the bin
I was really repentant for being a pain
But you hid in your room I drove you insane.
Somehow you surfed the emotional strain
As I surfaced each morning and tried to contain
The natural feelings I couldn't explain....
We'd fix up a date for a tea break at ten

Discuss women bishops and gay clergymen.
Flick through the War Cry, talk about Zen
You'd fill up with laughter, look up and then
Put on the kettle and do it again.
You made taking tea like World News at Ten
Screened on a Sunday with chiming Big Ben
Beautiful nuns always fascinate men
But why nuns become nuns is beyond all my ken.
Jehovah's gypsy cross my palm with your silver teaspoon
It won't do me any harm Jesus Christ is coming soon.
I know there's a false alarm once in a blue moon

But I know you love me true though I act the goon.
Publishing your virtue, Ma'am, I'll advertise the chilled out charm
Of your metric plainsong psalm.
Like the dinner gong that calls,
Like a wired up smoke alarm ringing out
On hollow walls of monastic monotony.
I'll construct a canticle extra-ordinary, ecstatic
While you study botany and clear out the attic.
Pin a hymnal to your heart and adjust your veil
I'll send the rock of ages in the morning mail.
Shout to field and farmland from uncomfortable choir stall
Write sympathetic sermons where your shadows fall.
Praise you with my poetry, preach you like St Paul
Scrawl the Song of Solomon on your bedroom wall.

Slowly love's coalition grew tight
Blame it on compline and coffee one night.
You're a nun, I'm a painter, so what, I said
I'd just like to get something straight before bed.
You chose religion, it's God's will you say
Cooped up in a convent it's God's will you pray,
But I think the scene around here has gone dead.
Perched like a pigeon, the bridegroom you wed

Don't look like a prospect, it's such a damm shame
The deal is so slim but you upped-sticks and came
To a singular life that looks pretty grim,
Devoted to Francis and poor fools like him.
Vous etes comme notre dame ma belle
Extinguishing the fires of hell.
I just cannot cope with you being a saint
You're such a distraction, I'm trying to paint
When you went to Sunday School what did you gain?
What's love got to do with it, poured down the drain?
I'm not like the Saviour enshrined in your name,
Stumbling upon you I played at love's game.
Absolve the intrusion forgive me the blame.
But you knocked on my door on the first day I came
I fully intended to love you the same

But that's a temptation I soon overcame.
If you ask me, Sister, your loss is my gain.

You languished in solitude filled with despair
And later left Suffolk for Wales, to live there.
Lugging gallons of goat's milk round Rhonda in pails
Treading the valleys to some hippie fair
Treading so lightly you try without fail
Not to spill contents or crush some poor snail.
Do you still read the War Cry?
I'm willing to bet your life of religion still ain't over yet.
If you re-cross the border come back and declare
The Prayer Book in Welsh as you glide up the stair
Hang time's dusty dreams on realities nail
Peg out the washing. chanting your prayer
Waltz in the orchard with hay everywhere
But remember the love that we once used to share
For remembrance of you never fails when laid bare
Nun yesterday, nun today, nun forever I swear

I'll never forget our Autumn affair.
Or close up the memory of meeting you there,
Kind, courteous, celibate dame.

When the Son of Man comes back for His earthly reign
You'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me.
All the way down Draper's Lane
Administer the kiss of life, make your feelings plain
We could live just like ex-Pats on the coast of Spain
Cuddle and hold conference take tea, and sane
Waltz beside the swaying trees,
Eat the apples that remain.

In the orchard we shall find
Close encounters of a third kind

IT'S A GAS

A garage mechanic called Bart
Couldn't get my old vehicle to start
And so in frustration
He released flatulation
Letting out gas in a fart.
The force that ensued did as well
As a tank full of BP or Shell
But such jet propulsion
Filled me with revulsion
And the driver's seat stunk to high hell.

EXTRA MURAL ACTIVITIES

In disco bar I am enthral
Lipstick lip marks on the wall
What an art work - I enthuse
While Eric Clapton plays the blues.
Maria kissed the bar room wall
Never noticed me at all
She was having such a ball
It must have been the ouzo.
She was drinking orange ouzo
Feeling fancy free
Snagging everything in sight
Everything but me.
Don't be shy Maria
Plank your lips on mine
I got orange ouzo
And the night is fine.
Here's a surface you can print
Mark me with your rosy tint
Turn the volume of the blues up
You're the tonic that I choose,
Sup with me this foreign booze up
Like the orange juice you use up
Mixed up with your ouzo.

Alas, the passing years have shed
The main impressions from my head
Lying here upon my bed
I realize before I'm dead

I should have took the time and read
The writing on the white-wash wall
That marked the plaster neatly wed
And made a mural with its fall
Those lipstick lip marks painted red
That preached with passion like St. Paul
Daringly on disco wall

That caused the painter's heart to stall
That made him turn to drink instead
But inspired him after all
It must have been just like I said
It must have been the ouzo.

FOR MICHAEL

On the wire I'm like a bird
Telephones are quite absurd,
Train my brainbox with your word
Talk about salvation.

Speak, illuminate the night
Give me words when things ain't right
Into heart and into sight
Pour your revelation
Let the thunder of your voice
Leave my heavy heart no choice
No more resignation noise
Drifting desperation.
Speak to me the words I thought
Were only found in books I bought
Read to fill the empty nought
Of hope's anticipation.

Utterance of utter truth
Or cosy conversation.
Speak to me the words forsooth
That got lost in translation
Casually quoted, seldom meant
Platitudes of preaching sent
Out of habit crooked, bent
Prattish conversation.

Words of iron, words of gold
Words that bend and shape the mould
Utter what remains untold
To imagination

Big words, small words, long words caught
In the crossfire of your thought
Words of speech that touch and reach
Don't say I'm too tough to teach

Give me explanation

Speak to me, I wait in hope
Treat me like you would the pope
Stamped with words that help me cope
Wrapped up in the envelope
Of my situation.
Speak me words that ring so true
Words that stick in me like glue
Speak- there's nothing else to do
Why the hesitation?

POVERTY KNOCK

Poverty, poverty knock,
Keepin' an eye on the clock
I always come guttle
When I hear me shuttle
Go poverty, poverty knock.

Poverty, poverty knock,
Me loom is a-sayin' all day
I'd like to be posh
But I haven't the dosh
The Government's frittered away

Poverty, poverty knock
Gaffers too skinny to pay
I go in rags
And do without fags
And you make a profit, you say.

Poverty, poverty knock,
The lotto of life seems a riddle
In a world so abundant
You've made me redundant
While you count your cash up and fiddle.

Poverty, poverty knock,
Better to sign on the dole
Better to beg
For a crumb and a dreg
Than to work for you selling my soul.

Povert, poverty knock
Your flippin' well skint me old cock
You ain't got a dime
It's the same every time
Poverty, poverty knock.

Poverty, poverty knock
You got the benefit blues
You've run out of gas
And you can't phone your lass
No twenty pence coins you can use.

Poverty, poverty knock
Got plenty of pasta in stock
I'll fulfil my desire
Collect wood, light a fire
And boil the lot up in a wok.

SNOW AT LENT

As down Regent Road I go
By St Mary's - walking slow,
Seagulls in the icy blow
Blown like litter to and fro
Ride the switch back of the snow.

Alf, the purse king, sells his stuff
One-armed bandits call my bluff
Elvis' til I've had enough
It's so cold and I feel rough
As down Regent Road I go.

Silhouetted in the snow
A wooden crucifix, I spy
The carpenter upon it sigh
Hang on nails and slowly die
In imagination's eye.

No cost or coin in slot is due
Entrance fee or standing queue
No credit card or cash, it's true
Jesus dropped the charge to you
Paid the price at Easter.

Secretly without a sound
Snow at Lent comes falling down
Resting on His thorny crown
And the pavements of the town.

Head and shoulders, hands and feet
Sky and crucifixion meet
Making all the world complete
In one holy winding sheet
Sanctifying every street
And the passers-by I meet.

None so blind as cannot see
What it is you did for free
So long ago, so lovingly,
And just what the snowfall meant
Falling on your cross at Lent.

RISE AND SHINE

Silently, Dawn, the new mum of daybreak pushes the pram of morning over the horizon, with his shining majesty Sir Brother Sun. Helios of hope - heat hanging in the heavens held by ribbons of glory on a wall of solid air, shining shekel in the sultry sky. Great orb of God, fiery gold, blushing with incandescent splendour, rising in sure and steady steps on to yet empty streets which when clear can be flooded by it's flaming silken colours, charming, the sleepy even before coffee, cigarettes or whatever.

I like to start the day with Dylan, Demis Roussos and porridge oats; but you will have your own way of getting into condition before the day begins for you.

It is just as if our souls were expectant mothers in the pre-natal clinic of dawn's first light, waiting to push the buggy of day's big promise into the streets with his shining majesty Sir Brother Sun tucked up in it like a bowl of ready-brek.

FISH AND CHIPS

Visit the chippie, do if you dare
Too much cholesterol, but I don't care.
It gets in your fingers, It gets in your hair
Thank the good Lord for meals so square.

Thank the Good Lord for triers of fish
Thank you cod roes
Thank you plaice
Thank you haddock
Thank you saveloy sausage and pineapple fritter.
Thank you fishing boats bobbing and ploughing over the North Sea.
Tonight of all nights the boiling fat smells good enough
To ease the mid-life crisis on Mill Road,
And in the middle of me
I need your fish and chips
My need for your fish
Is not like your need for my money
But you must understand
My need is carnal
Your need is God knows what
Like the folk that you serve
Like the sea and the sand
And the bundle of paper
You put in my hand.

Fish and chips so fine and so rare
I'll cook something up for tomorrow I swear.

When the chips are down and the fishing is fair
My cooking to yours Just don't compare
Thank the good Lord for meals so square
Greasy, glorious, great Yeah!

WHAT PRICE BEAUTY NOW?

I wish to be united in love with my brother man, I want to stand in the market place of life's retirement and drink tea with him.

I want to love him wholly as much as I love myself.....

The stubble on his face, the grease on his hands, his clothes, his shoes, his hair, his eyes as they pass me the spare change of his soul; the bits and pieces that make him uniquely disreputable as lam.

When I see bin men, Bernard Matthews workers boarding a bus, taxi drivers, street sweepers, tea stall holders and men grabbing breakfast before their daily labour, my self-righteous anger and pride shuts down.

I realise that I am nothing, and worth nothing. What price beauty now?

What good is my religion?

DACHAU REVISITED

I will always remember you like a skinny Jew in a faded striped suit
Or naked, hanging from a cistern pipe by pyjama cord...
How could I forget?
I still see the trees ring fence the ragged electric wire
I still see the vase of daffodils placed awesomely
On the oven that incinerated your family
And I wondered how the hell could anyone get through this and still
pray to anybody's God?

These January documentaries on a small grey TV sharpen the mind
wonderfully,
We wind up with our own kind of hunger

The commandants, the orderlies, All the other skinny Jews
Did you die for the bloody lot of them?
Did the sight of those vicious dogs extinguish every flicker of
redeeming love from you or were you pleading in the guard's mess?
Sharing with them that one thin carrot slice of a meal hand to mouth

Your last supper before being horribly gassed and tossed like a rag
doll into a pit?

FLOOD WARNING

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave
Who bad'st the mightly ocean deep
It's own appointed limits keep,
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril by the sea.

It was half past night in the morning
And the siren bemoaned with a wail
And the hail and the rainfall covered the houses
Including the ones up for sale.
The east wind was blowing a hell of gale
And the state of the sea was outrageous
The high tide took hold, and the river grew bold
More so than it had done for ages.
And the people of Cobholm said 'don't come in here'
And the water staid 'stand and deliver',
So, I had to go over to look at the show
To see just how far from the top it would go.
With this kind of thing - you just never know,
So I stood there and gazed with a shiver.
Now the level of Cobholm is low, as you know,
And the level of river you don't need to ask,
So the height of the wall has to hold back it all
And that is one heck of a task.

O Saviour, whose almighty word
The winds and waves submissive heard,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep
And calm amidst its rage did sleep.
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril by the sea.

The flood warning came in the fifties the same
And the streets were immersed in the brine
The risk of it came of it flooding again

So we sand-bagged our doors just in time.
I was hoping defences were high enough now
I was hoping the east wind would stop - God knows how
It's much more than we who live here can allow
We who live here by the river.
In conclusion I'd say
That we got clean away
And the sacks that we filled were not needed:
But the swell of the tide cannot be denied
It's a natural force to be heeded.

O sacred spirit, who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude
Who bidst its angry tumult cease
And gave us light and life and peace,
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril by the sea.

THE FINAL CUT

Relationships don't have to flop
If the fellow concerned gets the chop
The relevant section
Still gets an erection
When the heat of the moment won't stop.

I know that I've been through the mill
And the stitches are hurting me still
Low the sperm count may well be
On account of vasectomy
But at least now you don't need the pill!

TWO LIMERICKS

A keen evangelical Sven
Was into the study of Zen
One hand happy clapping
Was better than rapping
On an' on about God now and then.

A feather-brained dick-head from Leicester
Was condom production line tester
The absolute prat
Wore one as a hat
And called it a pixie sou'wester

STAG NIGHT

To usher in marital bliss
I went with my mates on the piss
I drank bitter beer
And felt very queer
And thought of the old times I'd miss.
Everyone said I was mad
I'd end up in a rut like my Dad
But I was unmoved
'cos my parents approved
So I did it but felt I was had.....

VALENTINE

To write like the immortal bard
Would prove to be terribly hard
But to say I love you
Is easy to do
So I said it right here in this card.
I have purchased for you (as a wheeze)
Lacy lingerie (hoping to please)
It won't cover your form
Or keep anything warm
But look great when you do a striptease.
If you put on this outfit for me
I will pop in the bedroom and see
I'll try to be good
And behave as I should
But I can't give a firm guarantee.

THE GIRO YEARS

Sublime and ridiculous

I loved you through the Giro years

Through the sacred and profane

Through the special brew and the marijuana

Through your strange heart

And the last page of your benefit book.

I love you now as I loved you when fifteen or sixteen you walked past hedges and bracken, cliffs and the deserted beach - you were part of my existence during the timeless period of life's dancing journey into the world.

The wakening of God's great shore

And unplanned happenings in summery holidays,

Take me back to those summer months of July and August The quickening pulse and throb of youth

Life seeming eternal like the end of all days at the beginning.

I love you now like this,

When sun tanned and terribly thin you lit up ten No.6 at one-and-eleven a pack.

First born of the earth, I was an officer in the bunker of adolescence and you sherry trifle with evaporated milk.

Asking your parents for permission I peered at the brambles and cow parsley, I noticed the mud and the puddles; cotton clouds gusted overhead -

My heart on fire with passionate hope

I loved you through the Giro years

Through the culture and the crap

Through the ciggies and the sadness

Through evenings in your bedsit

Through interludes in the Anglo coffee bar, where the lights below the juke box flashed purple and yellow, where UB40 sang Ivory Madonna very loudly over the sound of frying eggs, and every teacup on the table had been kissed into submission by your lips.

I remember

There was the beach

There were the holiday camps and the caravans

And in the caravans there were girls
And the girls tasted of cherryade and Babycham, their eyes like
Twiggy's and their pale lips surrounded with acne.
None of them compared,
They couldn't hold a candle to you.
Uptight and outasight up rubbed your round cheeks onto my nose
And I now you like this.
Branch of love, your fruit looks good again, to taste each other
finely,
Branch of love, waiting patiently at the WH Smith post office
counter, with your benefit book, UB40 and fags
Take me back to those summer months
I love you now like this.

MORE THAN MY JOB'S WORTH

Vincent van Gogh
Didn't live like a toff
As Damien Hurst does, I reckon
He behaved like a saint
When he ran out of paint
'cos he heard holy poverty beckon.

He had problems and couldn't untie 'em
And so he was granted asylum
Where he worked away frantically,
Painting fantastically
In case someone wanted to buy 'em!

I know he got shot in the chest
But in colours that still stand the test
He painted the sunflower
That was the one flower
Vincent van Gogh loved the best.

I hear that this painting with ease
Was sold to the rich Japanese
But people still jeer
'cos he cut off his ear
They can't see the wood for the trees.

Although you may scoff
At Vincent van Gogh

And call him abit of a nutter
Although you may sob
He was doing his job
'cos painting was his bread and butter.

I have tried every which way to paint
In styles that are funny and quaint
But I take my hat off
To Vincent van Gogh
If you think that it's easy
It ain't.

TILL-GIRL

There's no sweeter till-girl in the Cobholm Island Co-op
Her busy hands so delicate and sure
When I make my shopping list out you're the one that's at the top
And I wish to purchase goods from you, Yes Sir!

You're the sweetest till-girl in the Cobholm Island Co-op
As on me you your worldly goods confer
You give me such a thrill
As you stand behind the till
And pressing buttons make the damn thing whirr.
I think it's quite incredible
How you add up the decimals
But how the hell it happens I'm not sure
It seems to me so funny
That you should handle money
So carefully, and yet cause such a stir.

There's no sweeter till-girl in the Cobholm Island Co-op.
The special offer is her lucky charm
I need your kind assistance
To eke out my existence
As I walk towards the freezer take my arm
Sweeter than the sugar
That's stacked up on the shelf
Sweeter than the apples in a pile
Sweeter than the biscuits
When I buy them for myself
As I queue up with my cash
In single file.

There's no sweeter till-girl in the Cobholm Island Co-op
I could easily work overtime with her
My heart stops as her eyes drop
In the Cobholm Island Co-op
As about the price of coffee we confer
There's no sweet potato

Like the till-girl in the Co-op
I go bananas every time we meet
I need your help and ask it
As you empty out my basket
You till technique just knocks me off my feet

There's no sweeter till-girl in the Cobholm Island Co-op.
I'm gonna buy the shop up that's for sure
When I make my shopping list out
You're the one that's at the top
And I wish to purchase goods from you, Yes Sir!

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO COBHOLM

At the lights between the Two Bears and the Bigmen's Clothing Store Community Support Police struggle to hold the traffic back.....

It's Jesus

He arrives riding a Harley Davidson His disciples have borrowed from a biker in Belton, there are licks of orange and red flame painted on the fuel tank and his sleeping bag is stashed behind the seat along with his bible and a spare pair of sandals.

Various followers and hangers-on bring up the rear on foot,

People are looking

"Who is this guy? Isn't it that preacher who's 'sposed to have raised someone from the dead - didn't you read the Mercury?"

Jesus waves

A crowd gathering on the pavement to watch start chanting

"Long live Big J! Hosanna to the Son of God!"

Enthusiastic Pizza Hut moped riders scatter take-away menus under the tread of His tyres and join in the procession, cruising slowly past Kazzies.

Suddenly the sun bursts out from the clouds overhead, Seagulls flutter and swoop lining up on the roof tops Cats flip from pavement to wall to make way.

As He revs towards Whites second-hand shop mothers and children appear at doorways waving flags and let off party poppers in every direction

Jesus smiles

"Cobholm Island welcomes Christ" they shout "praise the Lord"

The entourage passes the Tabernacle, couples on the terrace of the Lady Haven put down their drinks and stand up in amazement. A worried looking man dashes out of Futters betting shop with his wallet wide open..

"Help yourself Jesus " he exclaims and then disappears...

Jesus rides on crushing last night's greasy litter under His wheels
Now practically everyone is coming out of their houses waving

newspapers, Union Jacks, football scarves, cigarette lighters and baseball hats in the air.

Kids are texting each other about this cool guy on a chopper who

seems to be new in town and two teenage girls loitering near the monumental masonry outside the Cobholm Tavern start to worship from afar..

"He's mine, I saw Him first" says one "Maybe He'd give you a ride on His bike" says the other "Ask His mates"

There is public disorder, copies of the Parish Magazine are being thumbed through quickly in front rooms to see if there has been any advance warning of what to do in this eventuality.

Mill Road is seething with people

The till girls in the Co-op are trying to get out but the doorway is blocked by the mass of humanity, dogs bark, people clap, Beatle's album covers, shredded bank statements and polystyrene packing rains like tickertape from bedroom windows and falls to the street at His feet.

Meanwhile, food is being brought out of front doors and backyards, sausages, burgers and spare ribs sizzle on Winifred Road BBQ's, nobody has seen anything like this since VE Day.

Allied Carpets closes early and gives the staff the rest of the day off for ever...

Back on the main drag, stoned hoodies, schoolgirls in white blouses, Elvis impersonators and Jehovah's Witnesses jockey for position to get a glimpse through the crowds of what's going on.

The triumphal entry of Christ into Cobholm.

Pansies and peonies spring up through the cracks in the pavement

Guitars are brought out

Old men kiss children

Policemen hug each other

Big Brother is switched off for good and a bonfire is made of television sets in Beavan's Court.

As the evening draws nigh twelve tired men and their leader cut loose from the crowds and head for a first floor flat in Coronation Road to keep the Passover, Crack open a few bottles of wine and clean up a bit.

It's been a long day...

THE MYSTICAL LOVERS OF BREYDON WATER

O let us be lovers
By Breydon's bright shore
I would willingly go with you there to explore
The watery wilderness
Right by my door.
Then lingering there
As we did once before
Discover the landscape
Of loving once more.

This garden of earthly delights we adore
That even St. Antony couldn't ignore.
Where moorhens whose feet
Tread the mud call to greet
The marshes surrounding
The place where we'll meet
And heralding us, the tansy will hurl
It's bright yellow colour
At you and me, girl.
In a cobalt blue sky
The seagulls that fly
Will hover right over
The water close by,
And wetlands that orbit
The sun's sultry stare
Will light up with lustre
When we wander there.
Through soggy and boggy

The heron and hare
Will dance and delight in
The pleasure we share
As we walk past the mills
In the heat and the haze

A man and the maiden

Whose beauty I praise.
My intention is sure
And this is the plan
To picnic in paradise
There if we can.
So write me a letter
Drop me a line
Love needs a rendez-vous
Just for a time.
For the season is right
And the weather is fine
In the Herbert Barnes' Park
By the banks of the brine
You bring the sandwiches
I'll bring the wine.

O let us be lovers
My instincts implore
O, let us lie down
On it's green grassy floor
We can spread out a bed
By it's long winding shore
So that clouds of recession
That pass in procession
Won't obliterate passions
Prevented before.

With poetry perfect
I'll quote you a line
Your dark eyes, gazelle-like
Will twinkle and shine
And silver-ringed hands
Surrounded with bangles
Will comb through my unruly beard
And it's tangles.
Your cheeks will collide
With a kiss from my lips
In soft fellowship
Of the flesh - like two ships

I, like a Ulysses,
You, like a gypsy,
Our limbs will entwine
With desire that is tipsy
With tasting the sweetness
Of Beaujolais wine,
I'll fill up your cup
If you fill up mine
In the Herbert Barnes' Park
By the banks of the brine

I've had the idea now
For more than a week
Of leading your modesty
Right up the creek.
I'd 'phone you to ask
But you might think it cheek
And frankly, I haven't the courage to speak.

O mystical muse of mine
Do not delay
We're two refugees
From the world you could say.
By the edge of estuary
There we can play
Making sweet music
Along Weaver's Way
'neath the shadow of God
On a hot summer's day
Seeking it's secrets
We'll try to explore
The landscape of loving
Together once more
The mystical lovers
Of Breydon's bright shore.

BARRIE'S WORLD RENOWNED BACON ROLLS

Lonely I wandered the early morning streets
Floating past the market stalls
Past the litter bins and seats
Past the crumbling old town walls
Where beer and busking is not allowed
Where gulls the cobbled pavement peck
I wandered covered in a shroud
Broke and hungry - what the heck!

Torn and tired of being thrifty
Plunged into my pocket
Pulled out roughly one pound fifty
With a mind to madly hock it
Never known to be so shifty
I shot like a rocket
On a sudden_ spending spree.
(Money talks, so please don't knock it.)

Tea and bacon roll - far out!
Tasting such a damned delight.
Steamy and succulent, there's no doubt,
My expense account was right.
Barrie's bacon in a roll
Marmalizes lucky me
Sizzles to my very soul
Like my magic mug of tea
Helps my day get off the ground.
O what a place to be
Barrie's bacon world renowned
In Yarmouth by the sea.