

COMMON

# VERSE

Celia Roberts  
John Koziol  
Phil Boyd  
Steve Marland

Some poems from the Commonword Writers Workshop

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

At the heart of Commonword is the belief in the fundamental importance of language. Commonword contends that all people have a unique creative statement to make about themselves and their place in the world; the supposition that poetic language belongs only to an elite group of gifted intellectuals is a false one.

Commonword exists to help ordinary human beings discover the imaginative areas of their language; to bring them together to celebrate their joys and their sorrows; to accept the way others use language, not to deny it or attempt to reform it; to encourage cooperation rather than competition and to give the creative arts a central position in everyday life.

Many of us are put off poetry at school and become increasingly reluctant to make creative statements on paper, fearing that others will think us strange or pretentious. We grow defensive about our work and are rarely willing to show it to anyone else in case they say it is not up to so-called standards. So we write in isolation - needing to share our poetry with our fellows but feeling unable to achieve this simple end.

Commonword does not aim to provide expert advice for aspiring professional writers, but to encourage ordinary people to write as freely and honestly as possible. We believe that everybody has a unique poetic language in them which should be nurtured and not suppressed. We are also equally concerned with helping people to start writing and with providing an outlet for those who have already begun to do so.

Writing as published here helps to underline and illustrate vital issues of real life at the same time as it gives expression to the writers own imaginative needs. These poems are just a small sample of the work being produced at Commonword. I hope that you enjoy them but remember that you too can write with a little bit of encouragement.

Fran Kershner

### Thanks:

To the ratepayers of Manchester, and to the taxpayers of Great Britain and Northern Ireland who unknowingly contributed to the publication of this book.

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# Celia Roberts

I have always been interested in writing, using it mainly for expressing thoughts that I couldn't express out loud. My earliest influence was the Noddy Books of Enid Blyton when I was five years old and I have been unashamedly influenced by everything that I have read since. My view of what is true to life did not always coincide with what I read and it came as a shock to me to find that the written word was not sacrosanct. I now believe in questioning basic assumptions and other people's value judgements. For example in MARRIAGE LINES I mean to express my view on what I think marriage is all about and not that which is portayed in 'True Confessions' magazines. I find nothing degrading about the body and its natural functions and in my poem AUNTY DAISY try to express my opinion of the myth that we are surrounded by about our bodies. The poems in this book were written over a period of several years and are indicative of my many moves moods.

## Marriage Lines

I think of you on the toilet  
My heart opens with my bowels  
My love for you makes me bleed  
Like blood on sanitary towels.

## You are the one

You are the one through whom I pass  
Into the light behind your eyes  
Into the dark forest of your lashes  
Into the pool wherein peace lies.

Hand in hand soaring together  
Over the yellow brick road we fly  
Through the widening panorama  
Into the distance of the sky.

But when you close your secret land  
You post the demon legions strong  
Forbid my entrance with red mist  
I am nowhere when I am wrong.

## Stones

I remember a solitary child  
Who kicked a stone  
Around the playground  
Round and round in circles  
Her eyes fixed to the ground  
And a teacher asked  
"Have you lost anything?"

Today, a woman grown  
She kicks at heavy stones  
Kicks to the shops and back  
Down concrete pavements  
Down chip-worn steps  
Only nobody will ask  
"Have you lost anything?"

# Merry Go Round

When I am low  
I go down to the pub  
And chat with friends  
And get drunk  
Then I feel great  
And start home laughing,  
I fall asleep  
And wake up bad  
So I go and take a pill  
That calms me down  
And stops thoughts jangling  
Like keys on a jailer's chain  
I then quietly sit  
And fall dopily asleep,  
I wake up depressed  
So I go down to the pub  
And cheer myself up  
Having a drink with friends  
That's my secret  
For always staying happy

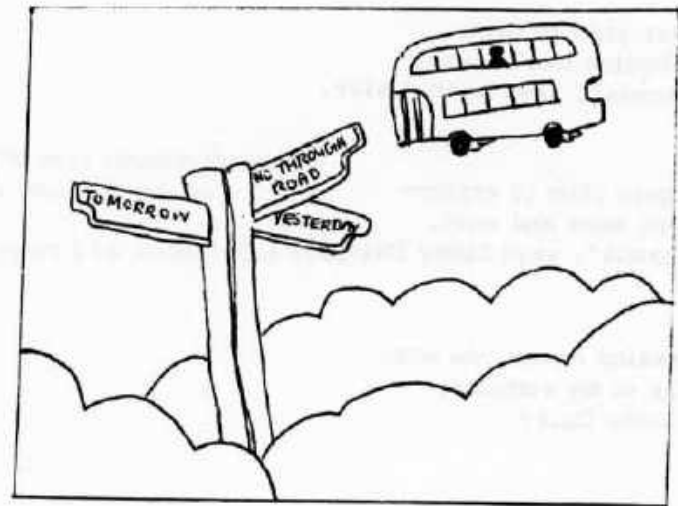
# My Faith

I believe  
That the No. 13 bus  
Will carry me from  
Kersal  
To Victoria Bus Station  
As it has done for many years.

I fact I can say  
I know  
That the No. 13 bus  
Will carry me from  
Kersal  
To Victoria Bus Station  
As it has done for many years.

But I do have doubts.

Once the driver  
Took a wrong turning  
And we ended up  
Down a cul-de-sac.



# Aunty Daisy

When belts and pads are supplied  
Now that womanhood's arrived,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

When the streptococci start to breed  
As the womb begins to bleed,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

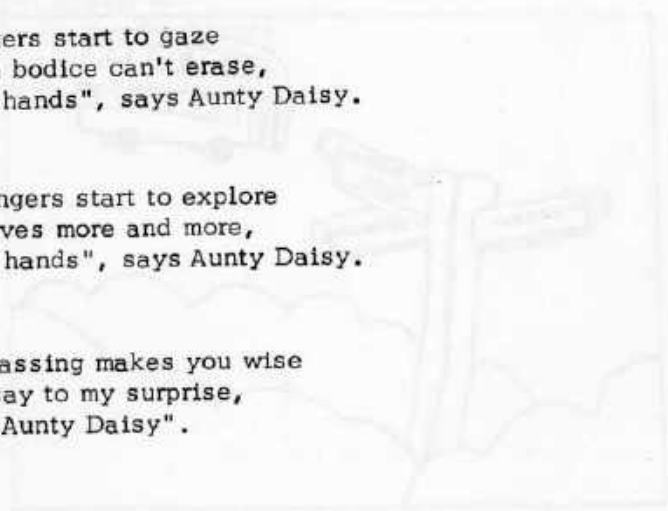
When monthly blues make you moan  
And the greatest need is to be alone,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

When little brother starts to bleat  
About strange stains on the sheet,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

When strangers start to gaze  
On shapes a bodice can't erase,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

When the fingers start to explore  
The new curves more and more,  
"Wash your hands", says Aunty Daisy.

Only time passing makes you wise  
Now I can say to my surprise,  
"Stuff you, Aunty Daisy".



# Dear Doctor

Why can't I be normal like you?  
It seems I do not  
Do  
I have to be done to:

Fumigated and decontaminated  
Deloused and douchéd  
Injected and disinfected  
Immunized and sterilised  
Abluted and aborted  
Castrated and mutilated  
Tranquillized and electrolised  
Anaesthetized and lobotomised  
Rejected and dissected.

And I'm only twenty-three  
Won't you just let me  
Be  
Why can't I be normal like you?

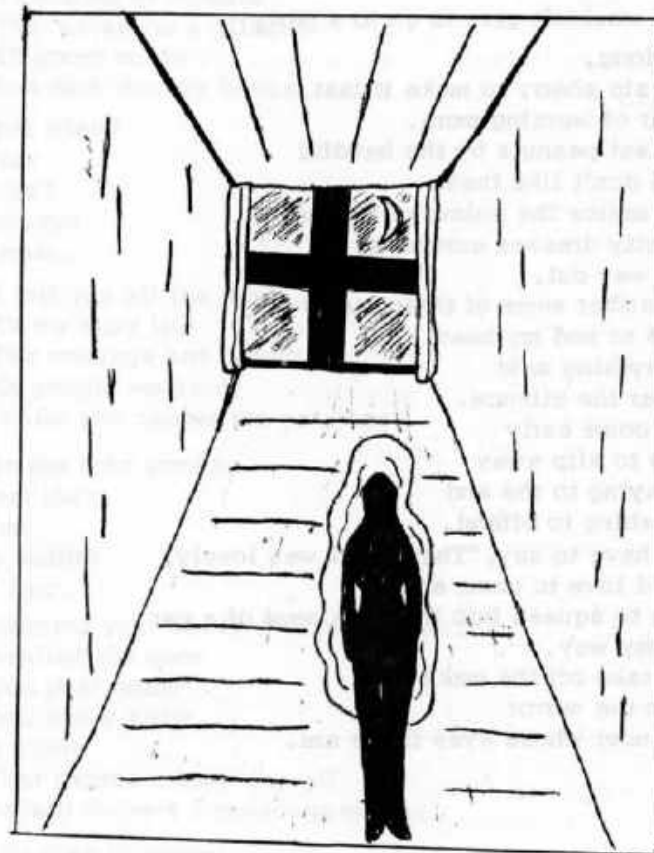
# Anima V Animus

She has an Action Man  
A fighter who will do  
Anything for her  
Her helpmate, her pal  
Who is nobler than she  
In his sunblue shirt  
He comes when the night sleeps  
His bayonet is always keen  
But in supplication  
To the enemy  
He will always bend at the knee

He keeps a Little Lady  
Small as an elf  
Just a hand size  
Taken out from the drawer  
Her flaxen hair  
Strokes through his fingers  
And the silver-slivered moon is  
Illumination to his darkness  
She becomes a secret unfolded  
In her nakedness  
And her openness

Will Action Man  
Marry Little Lady?  
After all we are all four quarters  
But in the bedroom  
Where the curtains  
Are hung and drawn  
They each to each surrender  
And no knot is tied  
In her hair  
And no battle ring  
On his finger

# After The Party





# Mushy Peas

It was Friday

We met as usual in the Fish and Chip shop.  
He was sitting at our table, his back to me.  
We said 'Hi', and I sat down.  
We ordered fish, chips and mushy peas.  
He had something to tell me  
Which couldn't wait.  
He had some exciting news.  
His promotion had come up  
And he was off to London  
On Monday to start his training.  
I said I was pleased to hear.  
A girl came and took away my half-eaten food  
Wiping at a gravy stain with a grimy rag  
And leaving a streak there  
Like a barrier between us.  
He did not ask for a second cup of tea.  
He was going out celebrating with the lads  
So he had to get home  
As his mum had put on the immersion  
For his bath,  
He got up and walked out with me following.  
He was smiling a lot  
As we stood at the windy corner  
Showing his teeth.  
He said he would be back home at Christmas  
To see his Mum and Dad  
And hoped I'd be around.  
I noticed his shoes  
Plastic leather-look and brown.  
They weren't new but I had never seen them before.  
I watched them move.  
Or maybe it was my eyes blinking in the wind.  
There was something I wanted to say.  
Something I'd wanted to say all my life.

But my throat was burning like I'd been sick  
And my tongue had swollen  
And pushed against the roof of my mouth.  
I heard the voice, quiet, above me  
He went to shake my hand or rather my elbow.  
As my hands had curled up into fists and  
Pushed at the lining of my mac.  
Refusing to come out.  
I had just thought  
Of what I had meant to say,  
When the shoes turned sideways  
And walked away.

# I Thought

I thought I'd never grow  
Too high for this world  
Nor ever stop expanding -

But I was wrong

You put me in a wooden box  
Hammered in the nails  
And even if I escape  
All I'll meet is the cold, damp soil  
That once I used to play upon.



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# Phil Boyd

I started writing poems about 10 years ago while I was still at school. After that I wrote short stories and a couple of plays at the mind boggling rate of one or two a year. Having been subjected to - others would say priveleged to receive - a traditional education in English Literature, my problem has often been to get into perspective the way I see and experience the world, and what I have learnt about the 'right' way to write. Partly through working at the problem myself and partly through the impetus that Commonword has given my writing, I feel that I am beginning to move in the right direction. The poems in this book were all written over a space of about six months since I first came to the workshop. Many were easy to write. I think that where they may fall down is in not dealing with the real complexities of experience. I think that in the future I will probably find writing harder and less spectacular.

## A Thought

Strike a match.  
Observe the soft tongue of its flame  
with its velvet, phosphor-blue underlip  
as it seeps from the warping charcoal,  
and not the hint of sulphur  
in its slight, acrid scent.

But don't worry.  
It's not important.  
Who was Jan Palac anyway?

# Revolutionaries

Sitting here  
in a hunch  
with my feet toasting  
against the grate  
of a dying fire

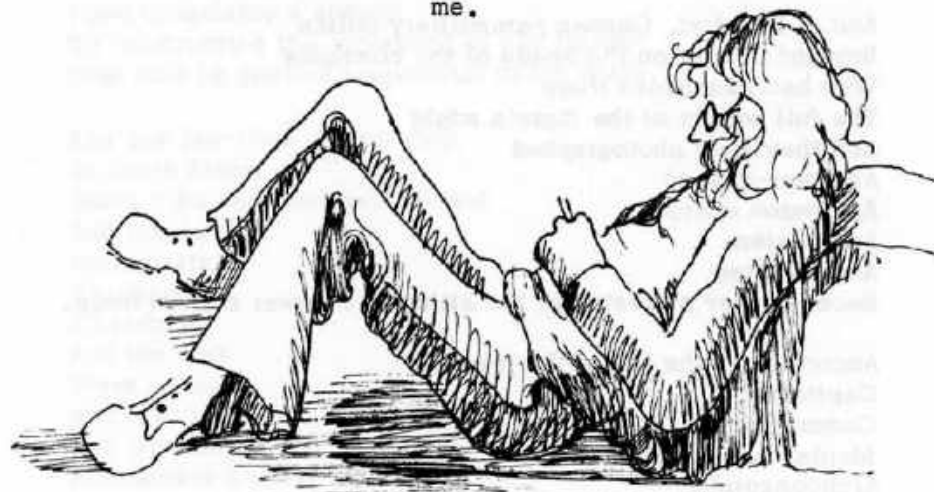
Watching you  
throwing cobbles at riot police

Feeling the Itch  
of my wooly dressing gown

Wincing at the baton  
that crashes down on your head

Thinking  
dialectically  
of a fresh pot of tea

Some  
revolutionary  
me.



# The Day Andreas Baader Died

The day Ulrike Meinhoff died  
French Gendarmes rifled shanti town dwellings  
Hauled off their inhabitants  
Who were Greek  
And Portuguese  
And Italian  
And Spanish  
And Moroccan  
Workers  
Attending on the needs of the French economy  
Until one day it was discovered  
That they were no longer required.

And the leaders of the shanti town dwellers of South Africa  
In the fortified prison on Robben Island  
Mandela  
And Sisulu  
And Mbeki  
And Sobukwe  
And the rest  
Languished a day in an eternity of penal servitude  
And broke stone the purpose of which was to break minds.

And at Brokdorf, German paramilitary police  
Brought to bear on the heads of the comrades  
Who had assembled there  
The full weight of the State's might  
And they were photographed  
And tear-gassed  
And baton charged  
And beaten  
And arrested  
Because they protested at the siting of a power station there.

According to the Nazis the Jew was  
Capitalist  
Communist  
Mental subnormal  
Archconspirator

Exterminator of the Aryan Race  
And so was himself exterminated.

According to the Western Powers the terrorist is  
A small  
Isolated  
Palestinian  
Or South Moluccan  
Or Zimbabwean  
Or Latin American  
Or Basque  
Or some such  
Minority  
Who by means of crude force and intimidation  
Took Vietnam from the French and Americans  
Aden from the British  
Angola from the Portuguese  
And has resisted for more than fifty years in Ireland.

A blind, irrational madman  
A mastermind, the Jackel  
A cheap and common criminal  
A politically motivated fanatic  
And to Jimmy Kruger is a man or woman  
Committing 'any act' in word or deed  
From composing a speech  
To 'obstructing the movement of any traffic'  
That may be deemed prejudicial to the State.

The day Jan-Carl Raspe died  
In South Africa  
Stève Biko had been laid to rest  
And others  
Journalists  
Teachers  
Churchmen  
And the rest  
Were banned  
And restricted  
And imprisoned  
And denied a trial.

In France immigrant workers  
Were hounded  
And harrassed  
And intimidated  
And beaten  
And had visas stolen  
And revoked  
And were deported.

The day Gudrun Ensslin died  
Telegrams of congratulation were sent by  
The American  
And British  
And French  
And Dutch  
Governments to their associates in Bonne.

And telegrams of condolence were sent by  
The American  
And British  
And French  
And Dutch  
Governments to the widow of a former Nazi.

The day Andreas Baader died  
The German working class through  
Unions  
And Parties  
And opinion polls  
Applauded the resolve and determination  
Of Herr Schmidt and the Federal Government.

The day Andreas Baader died  
I recalled  
Mechanically  
Stubbornly  
Obtusely  
The words of Lenin:  
Terror is a means of struggle used by the petit bourgeois  
bound to put the masses to sleep by making them  
believe that the arm of a hero can bring liberation.

## A Sad Story

Ian Smith was sunning himself  
on the verandah of his ranch.  
He'd had a lousy day.

At 11 o'clock John Vorster was on the line  
to say the British had supplied him with 50 jeeps.  
Ian was green with envy.

At 12 it was the Army Chief of Staff  
to say the terrorists had blown up a railway line.  
Ian was red with fury.

At 1 it was the Foreign Minister  
to say Ian's wife had just fled the country.  
Ian was blue.

At 2 it was the Air Vice-Marshal  
to say they'd lost two fighter bombers over Mozambique.  
Ian was livid.

At 3 it was the Chief of Police  
to say he'd have to come and quell a riot.  
Ian was yellow.

At 4 he remembered he'd been 5 hours in the sun.  
Ian was crimson  
But at least he was white  
And he still hated coloureds.

## A Political Position

Who are these people?  
Sharp humourless mouths articulate passionless polemics  
whose sounds are like hard metals struck  
or flints snicking.  
Their laughter has heat  
but no warmth  
and its derision has never shaken their guts.  
They have given a new meaning to correctness  
but it is no less formal  
or straight-jacketed  
or icy  
than a Victorian gentleman's social manner.

(Silicosis eats its way like acid through soft metal  
into a miner's life.

An Asian grandmother is burnt sacrificially to death  
in an attack officially described as non-racial.  
The rest, at work or in the home, are appendages of a  
machine which admits exceptions at a rate no greater  
than that at which the Bank of England makes printing  
errors)

And so again:  
Who are these people  
the Left?

Cut consciously  
consciously  
with greater or less efficiency  
with greater or lesser agony  
from the womb of the culture that bore them  
they are right

are right

they are soulless.

Can the masses save a vanguard?

## A Definition



A Capitalist  
is like the weight  
on a pressure cooker.  
He lets out just enough steam  
to stop the whole mess exploding.  
Only what he's forgotten  
is it's his goose that's cooking.

## An Observation

"'ere, see that feller wi' a 'atpin through 'is cheek?"  
"No, where?"  
"There"  
"Where?"  
"There: the one wi' Marks an' Spencers bag"  
"Oh. Aye. What does he think he looks like?"



# Poem to a Poster of Karl Marx

Yeah, I read your book  
- y'know, the big one  
the one your mate completed  
after you'd passed on -  
and I was impressed.  
But then, how could I fail to be  
when you ran such rings  
round Smith and Bentham and the rest of them  
- who I've never read.

Tell me, how does it feel  
to write a best seller?  
- quite a feat when you write  
such lousy prose. -  
And now the bandwagon's rolling  
and all the zealots have climbed aboard  
was it worth it?

You know your trouble don't you?  
You look like a bloody saint  
or an Old Testament prophet  
with your white hair swept back  
and curling round your ears  
and your beard  
bushing out from your chin  
and your forehead so high and clear and creaseless  
- was writing it really so effortless? -  
and your eyes staring serenely through me  
into the future.

You're a ready made icon  
a natural superstar  
that's what you are.

Why the hell weren't you born a hunchback  
with a birthmark blotched across your face?  
- but you'd look like a martyr  
with your bloody stigmata  
and that'd be worse. -

You see you make it all to damn easy.  
Why was your logic so impeccable,  
the force of your analysis so unstoppable?  
- but then again  
if they weren't  
you'd be another Bentham  
or Smith  
and I wouldn't be hving this  
absurd conversation  
with your picture  
on the wall. -

You tried to unravel the strands  
that tied the workers  
to the bosses  
but you ended up writing a bible.

You're too fucking great  
that's your trouble.



Why don't you say something?  
Why won't you tell me where we went wrong?

But maybe it isn't your fault.  
You likely didn't want to be there  
on the wall.  
And maybe if I met you in the street  
and called you 'sir'  
you'd laugh  
and then I'd understand.

# Memories

In conversion  
his memories  
were lamps  
that lit the backstreets  
of a history  
we were never taught in school.

In 1907  
a small boy in clogs  
crouched at the foot of the stairs  
like a secret  
and from the parlour  
voices  
of a Russian emmigrée  
and a Rochdale cotton worker.

In the darkness of a labyrinth  
points of light  
whose refracted rays  
were fine strands  
to lead and link me  
to my pass  
to my past.

In 1932  
a barber's shop in Longsight  
five unshaven men  
with empty bellies  
snug and warm for once  
plotting revolution.

Half lit ginnels  
shadows of strangers  
suspected at twilight.

And with his death  
the night  
is black.

And now the day  
with its single  
brilliant  
orthodox light  
in which I squint  
and am unsure  
of ways once seen

and strive to recollect  
the bits and pieces  
of a dream.



# That Wednesday

I saw an old man  
gathering leaves into a rusty bucket  
in the autumn wind

and I saw a sheet of plastic  
shrouding a hedge of roses  
from the autumn rain

that wednesday  
my grandad died.



## Yesterdays News

They're just old newspapers  
you said

Only old papers  
I thought:  
the mechanical litter  
of a machine  
whose daily miracle  
is to transform  
the lives and deaths of strangers  
into profit.

It's Aberfan  
you said  
it seems like yesterday

Time flies  
I said  
and thought  
of the mud and filth  
rising like a slothful monster  
from its slumber  
and sliding unseen  
a ponderous pace  
to engulf the lives  
of.....  
how many children was it?

We don't want them any more  
you said  
they just make us feel old

Throw them out  
I said  
and gathered up an armful  
of children's bodies  
creased and tattered round the edges  
and parents' faces  
bleached and yellowing in the sunlight  
so much  
waste paper.

We should have done that years ago  
you said

You're right  
I said  
and thought  
of yesterday's news  
that somehow got lost  
in today's  
history.

## For Helen

Let us sleep now:  
my eyelids are weighty  
and dry  
and creased  
and my body feels both stiff and heavy at its joints.  
A yawn wells irresistibly beneath my tongue  
and my lungs strain gently for air.

Your eyes  
I see  
are immobile and lustreless  
and you screw down their lids unconsciously  
and frequently  
and your body too is awquardly relaxed  
and your shoulders slumped into a hunch.

Let us lie  
warmly and snugly  
into one and other  
and sleep  
safely now.

# Voices

Voices  
I begin to hear  
inside my head

I can name names

- And when Allende died  
You laughed, but I cried -  
the aggressive sneer  
of John's verse.  
Something strong and clear  
in Mike's voice.  
- Some people can't see  
Because their mouths get in the way -  
Celia said that.  
And from the line at Grunwicks  
and the wards of Withington  
voices.

(There are more I should name  
two women on a bus  
an old man in a pub.....)

voices  
speaking words  
I hear  
and use.  
The common word  
of the common wealth  
of the common people

These words are not new  
they've been spoken before  
These lines are not new  
they've been written elsewhere  
and that is the point  
that is the point  
that is the point.

# Steve Marland

I was born in Middleton where I learnt to read and write and until I was sixteen bored the teachers half to death. I was brought up at my parents' house until I was twelve when my mother and father were separated. The court decided - I don't agree with them - that my mother was unsuitable to look after myself and my younger brother. We were placed in Bankfield Children's Home up until I was sixteen when it was decided that I was man enough to look after myself. But it took me about three years to learn to look after myself, and it was to my amazement that I then became politically aware, and even greater amazement that I found that I could write and so could everyone else because I know that I have no better nor worse brain than anyone else.

## You are so

## How Many People

you are so.....  
just so.  
I could think of a million words  
but I'll wait to say them in your ear.

## 1,600,000 on the Dole

1,600,000 on the dole  
Blame the communists.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Blame the unions.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Blame the immigrants.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
They're just scroungers  
Living off our backs.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Blame the women.  
They should give  
To the younger ones.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Who is to blame?  
The communists,  
The unions,  
The immigrants,  
The women:  
Or are they all scroungers?  
No, I don't think so.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Don't blame the communists.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Don't blame the unions.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Don't blame the immigrants.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
They're not all scroungers.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Don't blame the women.  
1,600,000 on the dole  
Blame the bosses  
They're the ones  
Who put  
1,600,000 on the dole.

## Unemployed Layabout

Unemployed layabout,  
Got to shout out,  
Got to tell people  
There ain't no jobs about.  
They who ask:  
"Why don't you work,  
Why don't you look,  
There's plenty about!"  
Easy for them to shout,  
Ain't they working,  
Have they ever been out?  
They call me a parasite.  
I find it depressing.  
Ain't it them  
Who don't give a damn,  
Sack them  
They'll find out  
There ain't no work about.

## How Many People

How many people starve in this world?  
How many people grow fat?  
Don't tell me  
God planned that.

# Imperialism

This is Great Britain  
Made great by imperialism.

They took over Asia,  
Made slaves of the Asians.  
Then they excused this by saying:  
"We colonised,  
We civilised,  
We educated."  
But they never tell of the deaths.

They took over Africa,  
Killed and enslaved the African race,  
And excused this by saying:  
"We colonised,  
We civilised,  
We educated."  
But they never tell of the deaths.

They took over America,  
Tried to kill the Indian race.  
Placed them in plantations,  
Then put them in reservations.  
When they fought back,  
They gave their normal excuse:  
"We colonised,  
We civilised,  
We educated."  
But you never tell of the deaths.

Not so great  
Britain.

# Can you imagine

Can you imagine,  
death your only friend  
life must come to an end  
as birth comes again and again?  
A superior being  
a god of the starving?  
Sixty pence pay  
each and every day?

Can you imagine,  
children mutilated  
to receive arms from charities?  
Sleeping amidst dead bodies  
in the streets?

Can you imagine all of these?



# What's Happening?

BLOODY HELL!

What a scare

Now they're packing

Up the chairs.

What a sham

Don't give a damn.

I think I'm dead

I don't really care.

One for one

And one for all.

Let's take this literally.

They think I'm stupid.

I think they are.

They tell me I owe them for the war.

They tell me to get on my feet

Then try to put me down,

Keep me from fighting back,

Saying

"Stop that rat."

Get the people off my back.

I could do without that.

Oh, what a shame, another dead.

When I cry

They ask why.

I tell them

And they say I shouldn't care.

Am I alive,

And are they dead:

Or are they alive,

And am I dead.

# I Do

Fifteen stitches I had now

They say I'm mad

They say

They have the right

But that night

It was me who was wrong.

According to them

Who sit around

And say

"Don't give a damn.

You could die today.

You could go now.

I just don't care."

Marched to Blackpool

From Liverpool.

Again they say I'm mad.

They ask me what I've proved.

I tell them we got people involved.

Then they say

"Don't give a damn.

You could die today.

You could go now.

I just don't care."

Maybe you don't

But I do.

## Sorrow in those Eyes



Sorrow in those eyes  
Boredom pries  
Tears cry  
The coffin lies

All that sorrow  
Gone tomorrow

Ashes scattered  
Tears dried up  
I've got no time to cry  
Got to live  
And die.

## Blocked Off

The tennis balls  
Fly across the tables.  
People block the way,  
Yet I can see you,  
Your back against the wall,  
Your black hair stretching  
Half way down your back,  
Your legs bent as close to your chest  
As you can get them,  
Your brown eyes focused  
Focused on Fiona  
Asking her to go,  
But receiving the answer no.  
You sit back quietly  
Giving to Fiona's will.  
Sylvia's seat embracing smile  
Stretches across the room to me.  
Then she sits in the way,  
Her smile I return  
Distraught by the fact  
That I can't see you,  
Then Fiona decides it's time to leave.  
Only your back do I see  
As you walk to the door,  
You knowing no more,  
Me wishing to follow,  
But do not.

## Chess

Chess  
That old war game  
A man can be a Queen  
A King  
A Rook  
A Bishop  
A Knight  
And Peasants  
All at once  
A game where peasants  
Can replace the generals  
And try to destroy the other side  
Not as long as any war  
But better than any battle  
As noone bleeds,  
The game of tension  
More so than anyone thinks  
A move a minute  
Sometimes five  
God that board's alive  
The pieces move so slow  
Ideas and moves  
Take place in the minds  
Of both players.  
As time goes  
So the pieces go  
Then one word  
Checkmate  
And the battle's won.

## John Koziol

There are times when I'm ashamed of these poems. They are naive, unstructured, and most of them never came near to saying what they were supposed to. But I wrote them, and at the time I suppose I must have had some commitment to them. One or two, like 'Kids at the Conference Gates' almost came near to showing the anger sometimes present when I was writing them. But I wonder whether it is enough just to show anger. Shouldn't I be doing something else? Is writing an excuse for inaction? I wanted to try and speak for and to the class I belonged to, only to become aware that as I try to, I become alienated from that class. I tried to speak for other people. Now I think that's the biggest imposition I could make. Was I writing as a substitute for some more decisive action. All round the writer the revolution is happening. He tries to stay at home and write about it as an excuse for not taking part in or formulating a new, different course of action.

I have the feeling that just as what I have written has become irrelevant to myself, it will stay, rightly, irrelevant to the majority of people. What the hell! A lot of the time I wrote just for myself, sat on the bus with nothing else on my mind. There's nothing at all wrong with masturbation, just that I feel it shouldn't be exhibitionist. That's why I tried to argue that these poems shouldn't be published. They don't need it. They don't merit it. But my ego insidiously connived with those arguing with me. What the hell! Look at all the other wankers who get printed. Why don't you play the game with them. So that's what's happening here, another literary game. I hope it isn't played at the expense of the reader. Here are some writings from March of last year, when I started writing in response to being freed from the factory, to January of this year. Sometimes I think I've got very little to do with the person who wrote them: othertimes I'm aware that he's still there, still writing.



## One Morning

One morning, in the crowds  
a tramp like a fallen god walks.  
Broken backed shoes that could have trod Olympus,  
a ripped plastic bag.  
It's near Christmas, maybe his birthday.

## Lets Begin Where I Left Off

A year ago I left this boozer,  
said never again  
too much repetition hurts my brain.  
But here again after a year,  
same bloody counter, same bloody beer.  
They've changed the barmaid but they've not changed you,  
and you've not changed at all.  
You open your mouth and the same words fall.  
You're a fixture, fixed here with your fixed mind.  
Bet they ring your head to call time.  
You'll still be here in twenty years.  
I'll come in again, you'll discretely cough, and  
and the conversation'll begin where I left off.

## Clockcard

Clutching a clockcard  
stamped with my time.  
They paid me for that  
because it was once mine.

Clutching a clockcard  
marked with my name  
that was mine also  
so they pay me again.

Clutching a clockcard  
marked with my number.  
Begin the new week  
with redistributed plunder.

Clutching a clockcard  
marked with my blood.  
I'd clean it off  
but it would do no good.

Clutching a clockcard  
as white as my face,  
push it in the machine  
because I know my place.

Bang in that clockcard  
ring a little bell,  
wonder when I die  
will I clock into Hell?

## Rent Strike

Last ones to pay:  
the rent collector hasn't even the grace to snigger.

Now, thanks to a stand  
by struggle, struggle  
lies undone.  
Paying  
at the end  
was less of a sacrifice than not paying at the beginning.

Like someone fleeing a fire  
carrying away a prized possession  
you threw it away  
in order to help someone else.

Last ones to pay, that's not a mark  
or a blemish:  
it's a bloody banner.

## The Hockey

One day the hockey caught me  
playing in the raising ruins.  
I hadn't done nowt,  
but caught  
and six years old,  
he said he'd get the police.  
Crying, I hadn't realised his lies.  
Impotent old man: he seemed bloody big then.

We'd crawled all over the site,  
dug in sandy depths,  
jumped from three foot heights.  
We'd always played on bombies, in bricks and mud,  
but unlike our last slum,  
this one wasn't coming down:  
it was going up.

## Girl Smiling

Why  
are you wearing that thing?  
A smile is too much to take.  
If it were laughter  
I could believe it prompted by hate  
and simply respond  
by hating you,  
but a smile is too much to take.

Why  
that smile?  
When will it stop?  
You'll upset the whole bus.  
Don't you understand  
the demand it makes on my sullen attack?  
If you keep smiling  
I'll have to smile back.

## To A Friendly Fascist

I hate to tell you this  
but your views smell.  
They smell of poison gas,  
they smell of burning human flesh,  
of bodies on ropes drying in the sun,  
they smell of fear, reek of death.  
I have to tell you this  
your views stink.

# Out There

I was out there one day  
 and the sun caught me by the eyes  
 held my head over the water,  
 the wond made me cry.  
 'I'm through, done with running,'  
 I said to the air  
 then empty, no achievements  
 walked back to nowhere.

And you my father  
 and you my mother  
 mistook all my grievance  
 because I gave it no other.  
 The cup smashed on the floor  
 and I walked the streets  
 and the end of the world  
 lasted more than a week.

Now again I run  
 moving not further but faster  
 this everlasting journey  
 after the causes of laughter.  
 I seek life, hope and love,  
 concepts which delude me  
 because I always seek goals  
 set to elude me.

When I'm truly done running  
 and don't fear the pain  
 and the outside of the world  
 matches the inside of my brain,  
 out there one day  
 when the sun catches my eye  
 I will look into the water  
 and not want to die.

# Page Three Girl

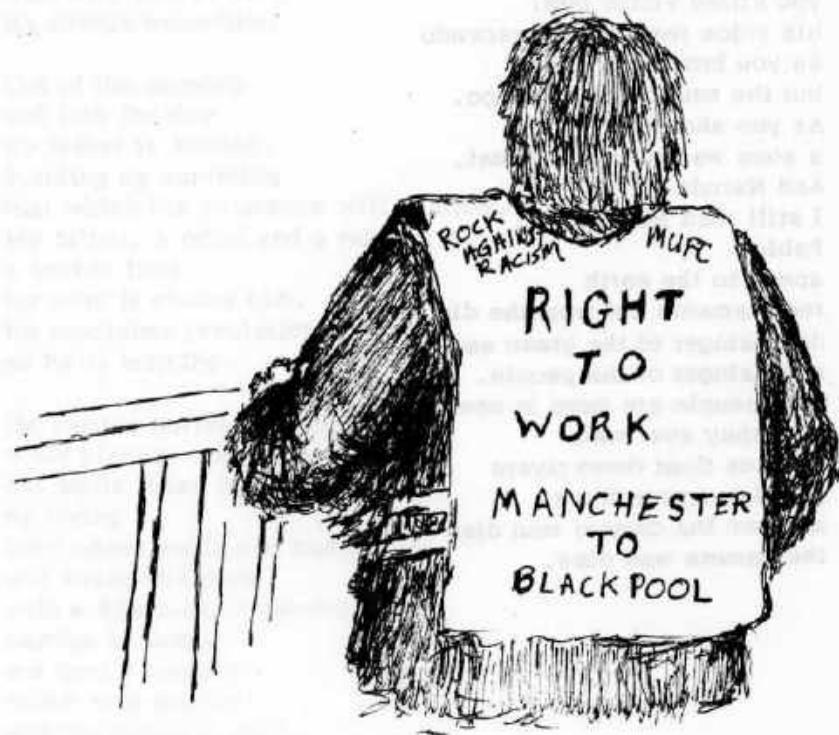


Stretch that smile with sacharine glee  
 You'll soon be spread all over page three.  
 Oggled and goggled at by every lazy sod  
 who reads the paper hiding in the bog.  
 Each one says "Cor, give that one."  
 Turn to the sports page and you're gone.  
 Two months later you're holding my chips  
 with a big pool of vinegar drowning your tits.  
 I consider as I crumple the paper in a ball,  
 Bloody Hell, in a way I screwed you after all.

## Kids at the Conference Gates

There were kids at the conference gates  
I saw the remains  
in scruffy comradehood  
five days on the road,  
they yell at the police.  
I know the feelings  
of sweat hard socks,  
and crawling clothes,  
no baths, the quick lathing in cold, greasy water,  
wincing at the feel  
of dirt reapplied.  
But I did not know in full  
what let them yell at police  
and stand there singing rude, crude slogans  
at their leaders, their blessed leaders,  
who curse their impudence  
disdain their presence.  
"When I was their age, I was fighting fascists."  
Yeah, but you stopped and the fascists march.  
"There's jobs down the mines."  
Funny, I thought only old Joe Stalin  
wanted those he disliked to be miners.  
Should I name you, you who winced,  
you who could not wince?  
No, I won't name you  
you who have names flaunted like a whore's overused tool,  
you belong in the media, you need to be owned,  
it's a crime letting you walk free.  
I'd rather name the kids  
but knew none of their names, few of their faces.  
I'll remember your fear, your hatred of kids  
whose main sin was to be kids and unemployed.  
Thugs you called them,  
thugs are better than traitors.  
Cannon fodder somebody else called them,

but I'd sooner see them march to their doom  
attacking,  
than wait for solutions  
which with leaders like you might just be final.  
Just think,  
when you were young you fought  
those in power, those in the wrong.  
Now these kids are fighting you  
and you started the fight  
by forgetting what you once fought for.  
Kids at the doors  
and grown men  
urbane, knowledgeable, powerful men  
grow chilled and afraid  
of kids.



## The Camera Man's Eyes

Through the camera man's eyes

I see

that you killed Allende,

I saw the people's friend:

he died

with all his hopes and a people's pride,

and while newspapers laughed

I cried,

I know

you killed Victor Jara:

his voice reached a crescendo

as you broke his fingers

but the music would not go.

As you shot him

a song waited in his throat.

And Neruda

I still read Neruda:

Pablo

speak to the earth

read laments out from the dirt

dead singer of the green earth

dead singer of the people.

Your people are more in need of songs

than they ever were

as nuns float down rivers

and the camera blurs

as even the camera man dies

the camera man dies.

## Poem to my father

Out of the night

and into the morning

my father is rising.

Not waking

because his night is over,

he is waking

because the day demands it.

No time to think

to think on a new morning.

Yesterday has not yet run its course,

time has trapped him,

its doings move him.

Out of the morning

and into the day

my father is moving.

Building by surviving

that which his existence will destroy.

My father, a rebel and a worker,

a worker first

for work it claims him.

He proclaims revolution

as he is working.

He carries horizons around him,

other places, other times,

but walls those horizons

by living

here where walls are many

and wrapped around

with a dire lack of dreaming;

carries horizons

out from a country

which was waking

and beginning to work.

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