

Where the Seaside Meets the City



# David Symonds

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Meets the City

Where the Seaside Meets the City: David Symonds

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**In Llandudno. in the summer of 1984.  
there was an exhibition of some of the work  
J.M.W. Turner had done in Wales.  
mostly as a young man.**

I. Llandudno - rain. steam and overcoats-  
just to see the Turners.  
Llandudno - bingo and forget-me-nots -  
just to burn some money ...  
to escape the city.  
You sit tight, but you don't sit pretty,  
on this smoke-stained, abused, deranged,  
tumble down train, from Rock Ferry.

2. Allow me to  
picture the scene :

a lace-curtain pier and a gallon of air,  
a motor-launch trip round the harbour;  
motor-bikes and bright-coloured lights,  
an aspidistra in the guest-house parlour.

Lads with bleached hair who boast of drunken affairs,  
girls in glaring, sloganeering t-shirts;  
old ladies in bloomers who revel in rumour:  
old men who pretend not to listen.

The oh-so blue of the paddling-pools,  
the mumblings of malignant mountains;  
hot-dog stalls and amusement halls -  
waterfalls and fountains.

3. A few streets away from the mirrored arcades  
the Museum hosts a trickle of admirers.  
In the succulent shade of this municipal glade  
the paintings are themselves reflections.

Topographical views in subdued hues -  
a torrent, a broken castle -  
Mister Turner, pinned to the spot,  
by a jagged streak of pure silver.

4. Soaked to the skin and singing,  
learning a trade in slate-grey Wales;  
where the leaden lachrymose heavens  
persistently prevail.

Where the weather is a drunken uncle,  
refined by the artists's gilt frame:  
pointed, arranged, subtly changed,  
given a meaning, a name.

Where a man is a match-stick pin-prick:  
where Mother Nature doesn't wear drawers:  
a muscular, wanton wanderer,  
strapped to a drawing-board.

Where all the colours are water;  
where sheep sheepishly graze;  
a barber's boy from Covent Garden  
hammered out his songs of praise.

A master craftsman who served his time,  
an inventor who embraced tradition;  
a working man who spoke with his hands -  
a miser, a drunk, a musician.

5. In Llandudno town, as the heat heats down,  
drown your sorrows in the depths of a ball-room;  
pack up your troubles in a cardboard case  
and dance away your wages.

In Llandudno town, as the heat beats down.  
you hear the echo of a distant thunder  
measuring time in ice-cream chimes,  
you make love to a perfect stranger -

see through the eyes of a master -  
year after year, at the end of the pier.  
you hear the breaking restless ocean.

## CITY DOGS

City dogs. a mean breed.  
strutting around, on the scene,  
kept by children

in need/

city dogs.

Serrated smiles, cut-throat teeth,  
they don't want loving.  
they just want meat

red-blooded/

city dogs.

The city dogs travel in packs  
like overgrown sewer-rats;  
tattered, battered -  
you don't talk back to a/

city dog.

The Sex Pistols, Bow Wow Wow,  
anything that makes a row,  
They want the world -  
they want it now/

city dogs.

Concrete sharpens up their claws,  
trotting round on all fours.  
They don't like Fellini,  
but they loved 'Jaws',



**Two sexually attracted bodies  
belonging to people who aren't sure  
if they like each other wake up  
in the same room.**

Our bodies speak to each other;  
not exactly shouting, but certainly  
talking fast. And they have a lot  
to say; one or two books worth -  
the odd colour illustration for good value.

Our spoken words have all the  
force of pastel tissues. Dazed, they  
float around the room. They  
wear a smile, bemused by  
their temporary weightlessness.

Our bodies vibrate signals. Our  
minds, not sure what policy to  
adopt, struggle against them,  
sending ticker-tape messages  
to the bodies' bits. The bodies'  
bits don't want to know. They're  
on 'automatic pilot'. They have  
fixed goals. Their patterns and  
programmes are strong, strong  
medicine. We tinker, like  
children, at the foreign language  
controls.

The minds wrestle with a  
thousand problems. Not least  
these bodies of hair and nail. These  
bodies of holes and protrusions :  
these some· bodies.

(And not least this conflict of  
convictions; this strange dereliction.  
this truth, more wild than  
fiction; these faces wearing  
frowns. Not least this abandoned  
garden; these frightened,  
tattered children; this falling  
into pieces: this collision  
with the ground.)

## TOO MUCH OF NO ONE.

Too much of no one can't be cured by a pill.  
Too much of no one makes you miserable and ill.  
Too much of no one leaves you shaken. then still  
a pop-song. a whole load of nothing.

Too much of no one and your eyes turn red.  
Too much of no one. messing up the bed.  
When everything is left unsaid  
how do you joke with a face in the mirror ?

A false lover's plea would be all right by me:  
I could enjoy being cheated.  
Some tortuous intrigue might be just what I need  
I want to be ... over-heated!

A duel at dawn. a rhinoceros horn.  
an African aphrodisiac:  
the girl of your dreams. covered in cream.  
love letters sweeter than peaches. but -

Too much of no one drives you round the twist.  
a one-sided partnership with your own wrist:  
it cuts down the pregnancy risk.  
but leads to guilt-ridden somnambulations.

Too much of no one gets on your nerves.  
Too much of no one is more than you deserve.  
Too much of no one really should be curbed  
it's a worse scourge than dog-dirt.

A place in the sun. plenty big fun.  
a darling of a dusky toreador.

I wanna get next to an air-hostess,  
not spend another summer in Toxteth !

A sultry sultana. a honeyed banana,  
a barrel of Barbary barbarians :  
but what is this? Fish and chips,  
in the land of the limpid librarian!

Too much of no one and you're running scared,  
you spend your life drowning in a bottle of beer;  
it's some sort of substitute for fresh-air,  
and the breweries tell you you're a genius.

Too much of no one is a pain in the neck -  
a ten-ton torpedo in your quarter-deck -  
you always get what you least expect :  
it has nothing to do with justice.

A regular job, a couple of bob,  
some sort of vision of the future.  
Meat and two veg., a garden with a hedge.  
a kitchen with a cupboard and a kettle.

A green grass lawn to roll children on,  
where the colours are vibrant and living.  
A water-proof bright-red roof  
some walls, a floor ... a ceiling!

Too much of no one with nothing much to do -  
there's bills and pills and fags and booze -  
in the derelict remains of a telephone booth  
somebody's mother mumbles and stutters.

Too much of no one and it's dark and it's dire,  
you sleep all day, but you still feel tired.

The North of England stands idle, for hire  
'a 'temporary aber-aberation'.

Too much out of touch -  
you should watch it - this space  
too much is enough of heartache.

Too much out of touch -  
the world won't wait -  
too much is enough  
of losing your face.

Too much is enough  
of spaces.

## **CHRISTMAS.**

I'm tired of being tired.  
I'm sick of feeling sad.  
I want to see my Mum.  
I want to see my Dad; and  
sit in front of the fire,  
in all that baking heat;  
with paper hats and jellies,  
and much too much to eat.

The train is always chokka  
everybody's late -  
Knocking back the rum and black  
like it's going out of date.  
You get buffeted in the Buffet,  
roasted in the Grill.

You could get washed aside on an alcoholic tide  
of seasonal goodwill.

There's always been a welcome,  
just inside the garden gate.  
You get your face laced with tea and cakes;  
you get your hand severely shaken.  
The kitchen may be painted,  
the furniture re-arranged,  
the curtains are slightly paler -  
nothing's really changed.

It's as pleasantly predictable as  
custard and Christmas pud;  
pantomime, or sweet white wine,  
Doctor Who or Robin Hood.  
Clark Gable makes an entrance,  
doing his usual stuff,  
being an unsung hero in a battered sombrero,  
and generally acting tough.

A juvenile Judy Garland  
flickers across the screen;  
fixed on a strip of celluloid,  
forever in her teens.  
'Somewhere Over The Rainbow'!  
America's virgin bride;  
broken into little pieces,  
shivering inside.

Chaplin's black and white drama  
becomes sharper, every year.  
A little man in a maze of machinery,  
hopelessly out of gear.

Our hearts go out to Charlie:  
we live in 'Modern Times'.  
Implicitly accessories  
in a cunning corporate crime.

Bronco bamboozles the baddies,  
a dagger between his teeth,  
then rides off into the sunset,  
just in time for the Queen's speech.  
There's 'Disney time' and 'Lassie',  
'Donald Duck' and Tweedle-Dee,  
Tony Hancock, Shirley Bassey;  
the News as light relief.

I've packed, up all my presents,  
written all my cards:  
going to home where I don't quite belong:  
back to home to my own back yard;  
where food appears on a trolley,  
to everyone's great delight.  
You're drinking beer, you're watching telly -  
you sleep strangely tight, as a

florid figure from folklore  
fills up your stockinged sleeves -  
'You'll believe a man can fly!' -  
Once a year, on Christmas Eve.  
Take the money! Open the sack!  
What a tangled web we weave;  
doing the Hokey Cokey Cokey,  
in East Anglia's snow-bound fields.

## MERSEYSIDE POETRY MINIBOOKS SERIES

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**DAVID (a.k.a. Charley) SYMONDS** comes from Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk.

He studied Fine Art at Leeds Polytechnic in the early '70's, and moved to Liverpool in 1976, where he has taught and endured intermittent bouts of unemployment.

He writes songs and has performed with the comedy band 'Les Poissons d'Avril'; the folky 'Hobo Insensibles' and is currently (almost) with the grossly amorphous 'Long John and the Combinations'.

In 1980 he had an exhibition at the Bluecoat gallery, Liverpool, who published a loose-leaf collection of his poems called 'The First Eleven'. This is his first book.

**WINDOWS**

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