



THIS .. IS PRESTOUNGRANGE

This is Prestoungrange
where people still believe
in the shining light!

I know that
love flowered all around this place
where the work was done
in the pits
or on the frothy Firth

Maybe I heard it on a warm
spring early morning
when sounds
in the High Street
hung in the air forever....

"Listen to us!" the auldmins said,
"We lived like marble angels
along these shores....
We grew from dust to rocks
and back from rock to dust!....
Whay Hey!

I can sometimes sense them all
in parallel lines,
the ancient loving folk,
the coals their struggle
and their hope.

Sweet, sweet to me
these swarthy worthy
men and wummen,
comrades of love
in a gigantic clanking
iron garden.

What were their loftiest dreams?
tell us now
how from across the world
the Brotherhood of Man
began again, here,
among these laddered roofs.

Oh Yes! The wraiths nod
from behind the grey windowpanes
of ownerless recollections :-
"For history hasn't quite
finished us off -
We only lie beneath a crust
of brittle memories!"

"Oh Yes!" They nod,
"We were the workers
in the half immortal coal seams....."

And the oldest wumman
who ever lived in Prestonpans,
amid a jumble of cats and flowers -
closer to God now -
can tell of Marxist prophets-
bold, spectral and Utopian
and the young louns
roaring at the street corner
and the swimmers
in Aitcheson's Haven
amid a tatter of boats.

Oh, she has the face of an elder
angel
who once rode on banners of soot
astream in the shore wind....
For sure she knows
a harsher time was here,
when a Calvary of debt
and impossible toil
led our astonished forefathers
to a bewitched and fathomless fate.

And now, South side of the Great Forth,
ghosts tell me of
the dust, the salt, the soap,
the alchemistic oyster meat,
the mighty warfleet
steaming past Inchkeith
and in microcosm

the little bottle of Fowler's
held by a nervous young miner
with a deck of cards for fingers....

And of the pretty young wumman
bent over a fence with T>B>
and the children with no shoes
and the squeeze-box in the Goth
playing onandon
with these damn spoons -
approximate percussion,
just where the trams rattled by
the jobless men.

"Oh, will ye come with us?"
Our Fathers ask,
where the waggons creaked
and the fiddlers etched their love
past dark and noisy caves
in Prestonpans
where maddened/gladdened angels
sometimes pressed their ears
for peace! while the Guid Shepherds
roused them,
"Baldy" the teacher and the disapprov-
ing meenister
and the missionary Priest
in a Blue-nose environ,
lectured at this sweet
uncompromising breed,
whose whetstone was the coal,
won from a grudging God
who seemed to frown as mortals stole
his rocks
with their hands!

Oh Lord, the honoured ghosts say:-
"Were we no seduced
by the perfect vision
o' Man's equality....
Oh, we were but simple folk, hired and
used as goods and chattels!"

Aaah, she remembers fine,
this auldest wumman,
the music in the temprance Goth
Was it a Tavern of Love, where the ram-
shackle
orchestra of hard-won life and joy
taunted the unpersuaded enemies of
her class?

And of course the funny words
we shared on that Spring morning:-

"COMRADE, THROW AWAY YOUR
PICK!

Take your girl for a tramride
to Portobello-
MEMENTO MORI -
for the salt of youth
is crumbled soon!"

And for auld times sake,
we watched a black/white cat
laid in ambush at the doocot
and she said:-
"Yes! this was a proper place
to rest tired bodies
at the sea's edge
at Prestoungrange

*John Lindsay, Poet Laureate
Twinning with Barga -
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