

A Red Blanket Addresses Christians

Where are your daughters? Cat got your tongue?

They roamed the countryside searching for marriage,
Shamelessly shackled up with live-in lovers,

Cut capers in Newclare till all hours of the night.

With rheumy eyes their mothers bewail

Their absent family, who left them standing,

Advising the air and pleading in vain

With sons and daughters who've all been to school.

Gaols crammed to capacity, courts jam-packed

With the learned products of school education;

The judges in charge just hoot in derision

At college certificates brandished by bums.

Our every crook can be found in the schools,

Our every thief can be found in the schools,

Our every rogue can be found in the schools:

I swear by Nontsizi, you should all be kicked out!

You still wear red blankets in God's very house,

You're Christians by day, hyenas by night;

The pastor's the shepherd of God's own flock,

Yet he scurries by without a nod.

The Zulu Girl

To F.C. Slater

When in the sun the hot red acres smoulder,
Down where the sweating gang its labour plies,
A girl flings down her hoe, and from her shoulder
Unslings her child tormented by the flies.

She takes him to a ring of shadow pooled
By thorn-trees: purpled with the blood of ticks,
While her sharp nails, in slow caresses ruled,
Prowl through his hair with sharp electric clicks,

His sleepy mouth, plugged by the heavy nipple,
Tugs like a puppy, grunting as he feeds:
Through his frail nerves her own deep languors ripple
Like a broad river sighing through its reeds.

Yet in that drowsy stream his flesh imbibes
An old unquenched unsmotherable heat —
The curbed ferocity of beaten tribes,
The sullen dignity of their defeat.

Her body looms above him like a hill
Within whose shade a village lies at rest,
Or the first cloud so terrible and still
That bears the coming harvest in its breast.