

word pictures

a collection of poems

by

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word pictures

Sometimes
When I see
Something
That strikes me

Hard

I take a picture

But sometimes
I don't have a camera
So I write something down
Instead

red poppies in Italy

Red poppies
From the train
In Italy
Look nice

In green fields
Speeding past
They look so
Red

But when you get out
And take a closer look
They're not so red
After all

More like
Squashed pink

grey

The colour is grey

Blue would be nicer
But grey it is

It doesn't change
It doesn't grow
It just is

I can not

Rub

Whenever I see
A group of people
Having a good time

I always stop for awhile
And watch

Hoping some of it
Will
Rub off

The Lido, Venice

Crushed empty soft drink cans
Cigarette packets
A wet bottle

The garbage man hasn't been yet

I wonder if Dirk Bogarde
Was jabbed by a discarded needle
As he lay down on the golden sand to die
In that funny white hat and cracked make up
Lit by the purple and orange setting sun

The Springboks

The Springboks
Won the World Cup

Nelson Mandela
Raised his arms
Shaking little fists
In triumph

I guess
He deserves to be happy
After all the time
He spent in jail

The worse service

The worse service
I ever had

Was in a Cafe
On the Bastille
Paris, France

The waiter
Was so rude
The woman next to me
Laughed

He shortchanged me
But I still left him a tip

Apologising
For the gaul
I had
To sit in his cafe

Up in the clouds

Up in the clouds
Jettisoned into
The deep soft blue
You feel free
At last

High above
The earth below
Away from the teeming millions

Everyday things
Burned away
By the sun

Like a bird
Wings outstretched
Soaring

But unlike the hawk and dove
Encased in steel
Strapped by nylon
Peering through portholes

Unable to feel cold wind on cheek
Sun on feathers
Ice on skin

And soon
Wanted or not
The inescapable return

Earth, tarmac, bitumen
Awaits

The momentary
Happy release
Gone now

Your touch of heaven
Suddenly at an end

VCD

(Video Clip Directors)

Are always
Constantly
Giving us
Lots of Colours

Black and white
Crimson and Gold
Cerise and Puse

Slammed together
In rapid succession

And images
Ever changing images

Picture upon picture
Flash upon flash
Never pausing

For an instant

Tricycles and the sea
Pineapples and gumboots
Breasts and barbeques

Juxtaposed
ad hoc

No theme
Or message
Here

It's as if
In all the
Confusion

They hope
We'll forget
We're only listening
to a pop song

video music clips

Video music clips
Are always full of rain.
Lightning
Thunder
Hail

A supine black goddess
Writhing in drizzle

Droplets easing down her
soft curves

Or Slurpy
Or was that Nerdy
Or Big Fluff -
Ee

Wet
All wet.

The directors must think
It's erotic,
Atmospheric, super charged
It just makes me think

I need a new raincoat

It's all in the way you look at it

What is life
but a series of chance encounters
signifying nothing
leading nowhere

Or is it something
Deeper stronger truer
More honest
More real

And are nights
of misplaced love
in smokey bars
with bad music
More than they
seem to be

And fraught casual liaisons
fretted out on starched sheets
and even more
casual betrayals
something more
than they appear

Or are things just
as they are

Confused
Confusing
Dysfunctional
Desperate

In the end
you decide
Light or shade
Hope or despair
Half empty
half full

It's all in the way
you look at it

Morning in Cape Town

Hard white faces
Behind driving wheels
BMW, Mercedes, VW

Blank black faces
At the mini cab stop

Expressions of well trained
Nothingness
Firmly in place

Cold wind blows
Table Mountain looks down
Voices break through the murmur

"The train is fifteen minutes late"

"A man was stabbed just up there, last night"

"Wynnnn - berg ! "

"Keiiiipp - tun!"

Just another cold morning

In South Africa

On Sundays

On Sundays
especially when it rains

I like to go and watch an American movie

Watching Bruce
or Arnie
killing people
With bombs and guns

The human annihilation
Makes me

feel better.

Greta Scacchi and Chess

Scacchi in Italian

Means chess

Does this explain

All the complex moves

Great Scacchi

Has made in her life ?

Holy Communion

When I was young
I remember going to church

And when time came
For Communion
I watch the little silver box
Holding the holy wafers
Appear from under the altar

And I remember looking
At all the people
And looking at the box
And thinking
I hope they'll be enough

In the final days

In the final days
the end is faintly glimpsed
like a boat
on a lake
emerging gently from fog

And these precious glimpses
of death's slow reveal
make it easier to comprehend
what is approaching
and what is coming to an end

Girls on the train

When I see
A beautiful girl
On the train
Especially in Italy

I always like to imagine
What she'd look like
In a gorilla suit

The Red Dust of Baxter**April 22, 2003**

I guess in the end what I'll remember
Is the dust

The red, gritty all over dust
That got into everything

Your pasta
Your water
The floor of your tent
Your undies
Your eyes
Your heart

The red dust is in my heart

It's the dust of Baxter
Mixed with salty tears
Crushed into powder by shiny police boots

We went to walk in their dust
We tried to put our feet in their shoes
We tried to reach out and touch
But they were held deep in a dungeon

Above the ground
A dungeon of polished metal, sharp wire and steel
But no glass
They could not look out and see our eyes
All they could see was dust

And we were fought back by rigid lines of
Dead troops
In blue, beige and shiny black

Faceless, mindless, following Ruddock's
Orders to kill the innocent
Imprison hope
Foster injustice
Maim inside and out

They didn't hold the line

They surged among us
Batons raced, helmets shut tight
Grabbing the guiltless
Sharing their misery
Inflicting their pain
And when they were done
They took off their uniforms and strolled round
Flashing inane grins
Jeering
Sidling up to us to be our pals
To eke out some precious information
To target the next paddy wagon bound

Then they brought machine guns into our camp
They brought their red dust into our camp
On their uniforms
On their boots
In the barrel of their guns
In their hearts
They burnt the red dust into our hearts

And then when it was all done
Travelling back on the bus home
Away from Baxter
Away from the desert
Away from the ones stuck fast
In the dust

As we sang and laughed
I smiled with red gritty teeth
And thought "It's okay
We're still us
We're alive
We can hope and smile
With red gritty teeth
We're not them
The cops are still cops
Faceless, mindless, inane, dim
Their heads squashed out of shape
Force-fed processed lies
Twenty five hours a day, sixty six weeks a year
We were still us and
They were still them"

But the innocent 299
Still laid, buried in the dust
Their tears, their cries, their unending agony
Still drowning in that dust

We came with anger, passion, hope
We tried to carry our hopes to them
But they got washed away in the dust

The red dust of Baxter is still there
And now the dust is in my heart
My tears
My hands
My feet
Stained into my skin
Rub and rub as hard as I
Can but I'll never rub it off

The red dust of Baxter is all over my country now
It's piled two inches thick
Our poor country is choking on
Baxter's red dust

So blow
Big breath
Blow again
Keep on blowing
One day
We can blow the red dust of Baxter away

I use to go to a psychiatrist

I use to go to a psychiatrist

We sat in big leather chairs
In a nice yellow room

Fireplace
Heater
Exposed wooden floors

She was quite a pretty lady
And had a daughter
Who lived up stairs
But I never saw her

I just paid the receptionist
After each visit

She was a very good psychiatrist
I know
Because she was very expensive

I used to go twice a week
It cost me \$150 for an hour
But I got some back on medicare

Sometimes I cried
Sometimes I didn't

I don't remember laughing
Much

She gave me some pills
To cheer me up

My uncle said "they'd made a change"
A friend said "They hadn't"

I'm not sure
If it did any good
But some days
I enjoyed our chat

desolate nation

desolate nation
heart less land
desert in its core
desert in my heart

this is not my land
gouged
and bleeding

this is not where I belong
no home
here

desert nation
desolate heart
you give nothing

Dust

Life is not what happens
It's what we're left with afterwards
What remains
Lying in the dust

And what I'll remember is the faces
of all different ages
Trudging back exhausted after another long march

The feel of my hands
Parched dry from wind and sun
And the dust

And later at home
As I unpacked my bag
Put everything away
I looked at my boots all covered in dust
And turned off the light

the other day

The other day
 On a semi-busy city street
 Bordering Chinatown
 Walking, paper in hand

I passed someone I knew

But I couldn't remember where I knew her from
 And I couldn't remember her name
 Was it Mary ?
 And I didn't want to re-meet her
 For reasons I couldn't remember why
 Just a vague uneasiness.

So I walked quickly past
 Had I slept with her one drunken night ?
 Almost slept with her one drunken night ?
 Pissed in her bed ?
 On her head ?
 Vomited on her dress ?

I couldn't remember
 Thankfully

So I walked quickly past
 Her and her spiky grey haired
 hand held companion slash partner

I crossed the road and made safe
 My escape
 I thought

And then I heard a voice from behind me
 Calling my name
 I turned

Grey spiky haired hand held
 Companion slash partner
 Was calling out my name with
 An embarrassed grin on his face

“How did he know my name ?
 Had she told him ?
 How did she remember
 My name ?”

And there she was was
 The woman I couldn't
 Didn't want to
 Remember
 Holding up pieces of paper
 My paper
 Beside the grey spiky haired hand held
 Companion slash partner
 Calling my name

So back across the road towards the
 Woman I didn't want to remember
 (Was it Margaret ? Michelle ?)
 Didn't want to talk to
 Didn't want to face
 (What had I done to her ?)

Now here we were on a semi-busy city street
 Bordering china town
 Standing together face to face
 (Mary. I'm pretty sure it was Mary.)
 Holding up pieces of paper
 Next to her grey spiky haired hand held
 Companion slash partner

“You might need these” she says
 What do I say in reply ?
 “Didn't I sleep with/almost sleep with/spew/piss/vomit on you ?”

What do I say ?

She held up some ad supplement
 Advertising cars/washing machines/land
 I didn't even want it
 Was this what this was all about ?

Why did she give birth to this awkward collision of half remembered facts ?
 The past and the present meeting

So clumsily
On a semi-busy city street
Bordering Chinatown
And all for an ad supplement ?

What do I say ?
“How are you ? Who are you ? What did I do ...
to you ?”

So instead I just take the
Unwanted ad supplement
Greedily from her hands
Weekly smile
And say “Thanks”

Make my second awkward escape
Away from the semi-busy city street
Bordering Chinatown
And the grey spiky haired hand held
Companion slash partner

And the woman who remained
Deep in my subconscious
Lost
Thankfully

South Africa

South Africa

is the saddest

country

in the

world

if they dropped a bomb on Johannesburg

If they dropped a nuclear bomb on Johannesburg
would anybody care ?

in South African restaurants

In South African restaurants

The waiter is always

Coming up to you

Asking you

If everything's alright

"Are you okay ?"

It's as if they know

They're giving bad service

And they're apologising

In advance

on Italian trains

On Italian trains

The conductor
Is always trying
To rip you off

i went down to the deep blue sea

I went down to
The deep blue sea sea sea
To see what I could see see see
And all that I could see see see
Was

Seventeen garbage cans

