

**A Question.**

My African name is Essalu  
which means nothing to you  
I live near Freetown place,  
war has been my whole life  
I don't know what peace is,  
one day the rebels came here  
and took us to their camp  
they made me kneel down and  
put my arms on the ground,  
they cut my hands clean off  
with the blade of an old axe,  
I was in so much blind terror  
I didn't really feel the pain  
but afterwards the agonies  
caused me to faint away,  
a friend got me to hospital  
when the fighting died down,  
the hungry dogs ate my hands,  
afterwards the stumps healed  
and they gave me a little strap  
so that now I can feed myself,  
ghost-hand pain is still with me,  
I can never ever understand  
why people are so cruel.

**Mother And Child.**

It was a front page article  
in a community newspaper  
not big time as papers go  
but the photo was so arresting  
a mother and her daughter,  
the daughter was paralysed  
an unfortunate birth had left her  
needing a totality of close care  
in every single facet of living,  
forty years of a total caring  
has absorbed the mother's life  
an old lady now at seventy eight  
and her greatest concern was  
who will care when I have gone!  
the thought pressed night and day  
it agonised her every moment,  
sure they will put her somewhere  
but she has known a mother's love  
a totality of endless close caring,  
nothing can replace that love  
a night and day life of total giving,  
the mother knowing she has failed  
the few years given yet to live  
will haunt her with this failing,  
she has lived a long life of agony  
and is facing a death of shame.

### **Thoughts For The Morrow.**

When we lay aside our life and die  
will our passing be just the ending  
of all that we know and stand for  
as an apology for our having been  
or else a handing-on of all that was  
cleansed and refined into a rebirth?  
desiring the latter we cannot dream  
the dimmed dreams of past grandeurs  
achieving nothing in the future fight,  
get down to the bedrock message  
defeating the scourge of inequality  
shouting the message of liberation  
revealed in a defiant Jesus-death  
no compromise in sleight of hand  
revised devotions out of past ages  
rather, small groups to read and live  
his message still there in Testament  
where evil is confronted by a love  
the down-trodden lifted by that news  
work is there in this so little time  
then die fighting always for the cause  
strengthening a future for Jesus's name.

### **Searching.**

The Divine is not ever constrained  
within the solemnity of churches  
nor within the rarity of pure ether  
rather it is captured within the human  
no matter the banality of interactions,  
the loveliness of humans one to the other  
divine unity of people in pure protesting  
or divinity of a person lifting another  
out of the poverty of long lost hope  
children play in a happiness of beyond  
for nothing in the adult is comparable  
the adult knowledge is beyond fantasy,  
Divinity is born out of a total trusting  
of a child ignorant of all knowing.

**Pain And Sleep Story.**

I have had an extremely hectic day  
I left home at seven o'clock this morning  
getting back at six p.m. this evening  
sitting down at my home-friendly desk  
and sleeping soundly for a whole two hours,  
Big deal! I hear you exclaim in ridicule  
but just let me hasten to add to this  
that it was my best uncontrolled sleep  
for three persistent months of solid pain,  
a persistency of mad devil-prodding pain.  
I'm not quite as young as I used to be  
and have had this constant run of pain,  
Ah pain, wherein is your smug victory!  
what a wild persistent bed-fellow you are  
not an agonizing screaming pressure pain  
but just an ongoing prodding task-master  
that scoffs at increased doses of pain-killer  
as so many grains of sand on life's shore  
just pitch-forking me into the macabre play  
of life endured under the power of a demon  
who follows one around in leering pay-back  
until yesterday when the miracle occurred  
and you slithered away you mad wild beast  
leaving me here in this incredible confusion  
in a rare world of trusting soft painlessness  
and so after this more than hectic day  
I awake, gathering my wits to the present now  
of a rare thanksgiving and new playfulness.

### **Silence.**

Blessed be the God of silence  
quietness of the quiet time,  
it is not to be thus avoided  
but there is that tendency  
to run to the market place  
to seek the solace of noise  
we fear to be close to silence  
or to be too much alone  
for there we are close to self  
too close into the deep self  
where it is easier not to go  
for fear of reaching into  
that which is not understood,  
so we hang in with the tumult  
we try to escape from self  
of the silence pressing ever in  
fearing intimacy of knowing  
the key to fear is not- knowing  
we fear because we sinned  
not knowing the liberation  
of the quiet God of love,  
time comes when we will reach  
for the true silence naturally.

### **Clowns**

A group of top international clowns  
visited a childrens hospital in Kosova  
and in those old dark fetid buildings  
children were seen to smile and laugh  
for the first time in many slow months  
many of them have respiratory problems  
and other war induced serious illnesses  
many of them will die from a simple lack  
of basic medications and equipment  
and so clowns entered this clownish hell  
where sick children lie victims of war,  
maybe a team of nurses was more urgent  
clowns came as a zany contradiction  
attempting to break through the inertia  
that pervades this war-torn country  
full of sick children who cannot laugh.

**Floods.**

**(Good Friday 2002.)**

Good Friday again  
and the wide world  
is as ever awash  
in a sea of blood,  
a shortage of water  
is a world problem  
but the flow of blood  
an unending flood  
as cheap as the dirt  
yet dirt is moistened  
in unending floods  
men , women angered  
over the totalities  
of endless inequalities  
that flood the earth  
so let us now offer  
on this sad quiet day  
our blood and water  
our tears and agonies  
in this place of blood  
at the foot of a cross.  
bleeding for all of us.

**Current Affairs.**

Sharon is all trapped within  
the tough skin of an old soldier  
and Arafat is likewise trapped  
trapped in the skin of a terrorist  
because that is just what they are  
or they have so fated to become  
and also Israel and Palestine  
are likewise trapped deep within  
agonies of their own constructions  
so that they can only be helped  
by people in this world outside  
we need to be bombarding them  
with prayers , letters and support  
in the form of food and medication  
to help them to learn and know  
that they are of this whole world  
and not creatures of another planet,  
possibilities for peace are so real  
but only if they can let old hatreds die,  
their tiny strip of earth must become  
sufficient for those twin odd entities  
and only we on the outside world  
can help the young in both camps  
to see the futility of all the killings  
knowing the future to be different.

**Indofood.**

I bought a packet of  
rich cream biscuits  
at the Supa-Valu store  
in East Victoria Park,  
the same cream biscuits  
as manufactured by  
Arnotts conglomerate  
or any other big firm  
the only difference being  
the cost was sixty seven cents  
how could such a product  
be made, packaged and sold  
at this ridiculous price?  
then out of curiosity  
I read the packeted print  
made in Purwakarta Indonesia.  
with the import agents name  
printed on a separate sticker  
like some badge of pride,  
then I had visions of  
a factory surrounded by  
squalid rotting slums  
where families are compelled  
to work for slave wages  
and to enslave their children  
under such shocking conditions  
to place on our shops' shelves  
biscuits at sixty seven cents,  
and I said "what can I do?"  
and I knew all I could do  
was to write these few sad lines:



**Reflection While Writing Poem 1100**

Is it time to stop and rest  
to take stock of things  
to review the whole situation?  
I can't answer that one  
for it is not given to me  
to decide when or how,  
I am just a pen-piece  
through which words flow  
a simple vibrating machine  
that spews out simple words  
in patterns and lack of patterns  
words sprawled across a page  
words written into infinity  
compulsions of writings  
totally beyond the writer's control,