

## SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSBOY

The veld grit thrusts  
 Spiked shrubs to sun;  
 Aloes brandish  
 Blood-soaked spears;  
 The puffy, stiff  
 Corpse-flesh of cactus  
 Jets a spray of needles;  
 Like a giant latrine-brush  
 The bare-trunked, tufted tree  
 Scours the sky.

You shudder at the hot prick and glitter of thorns,  
 Aware, everywhere, of the parched vegetable lust.

Cheap at threepence—a paper and a smile;  
 He'll sell you either: neither are his to give.  
 You have not studied the economics of smiling?  
 It may be safely included under Supply and Demand.

In this town you would not believe  
 How many churches. Dutch Reformed,  
 JESUS SAVES, in neon lighting,  
 Anglican, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist:  
 Mass at eight; Knee-drill at ten;  
 See the last page, right-hand column.

Round his legs he wears,  
 Like bright red bangles,  
 Sores.

A non-drinking Calvinist (shares  
 Mainly in pineapples) warns:  
 Papists as Dangerous as Reds.  
 (Page three, the Catholics have just  
 Consecrated a Zulu bishop.)

Not that the little black newsboy knows,  
For he is one of the free,  
Who are not compelled to be literate.

Aloes brandish  
Blood-soaked spears.

DENNIS DAVISON

