

TUNELESS NOTES

by Vortex

Corpus Christi

Held in the aisle by a press of black people
(dressed in the Sunday best of my white skin),
as we all walked together towards communion,
I suddenly felt a deep desire
to hide among them, to disguise myself forever,
so that I might avoid the wrath of God
and stand at last at peace
a simple son of Africa,
waiting for the shower of tender grace
and the spray of police bullets.

News Item

Old Voster went to Vienna,
He was a great success:
They said he was mad, they said he was bad,
He loved it nonetheless.
"You'll have to change or you've had it, man,"
They said, but he replied:
"I can't, because I know I'm right,
I know God's on my side."
They pitied his thoughts and his ponderous style,
But he flew back home with a great wide smile.

Dreadful Andy

This poor sad U.S. diplomat –
Foolish, blundering, uncouth.
How could he so lack insight?
His name is Young: perhaps it's youth?
But sure, he's shocked white patriots
By saying a dreadful thing: the truth.

Pietermaritzburg

has become, at last, quite metropolitan.
The effect is produced, I think,
by the new town squares –
the large one, named after Winston Churchill,
flanked by impressive buildings
(though it's mainly still a carpark),
but the small one too, named from Ndhlovu
that little space for walking to and fro
between the Library – white and rectangular –
and the red wedding-cake of a City Hall.
It's in Ndhlovu Square that there are the fountains,
and these, especially, give a sense of city,
a sense of a place where people have progressed.
The fountains sculpt delicate circular patterns:
the water jets and turns quite sensitively.
But there's something dark beneath the circles,
and a strange smell sometimes turns one pale:
there in the water lies the man
who last month died in the Maritzburg jail.

We Surfers

Our bodies tensed, our heads high in the air,
We ride the crest of the wave of despair.