

Poems by Tony Voss

LUXURY ONE-LINERS

1. Total Strategy
a con-
stipation of states
2. Separate but Equal
you in your small corner
and me down the mine
3. Urban Foundation
city
brick!
4. Western Civilization
draw!
a blank—
robber bank
5. Romantic Capitalism
the lute
continues

NOW

Someone is dying now,
Somewhere; or being born:
Now as I take the air
Somebody mows a lawn.
Now they are digging fields
Out of the land.
We take the money now—
Or take a hand.
Now she turns back to him
Or leads a band:
Now as we sing a hymn,
Someone is banned.
The poor are not with us—
Now is not always here:
Songs do not grow like wheat
Out of one ear.

SONNET

Some of the townships had run short of rations,
Rumours of typhoid ran through the locations;
Despite official warnings to the nations,
There seemed no reason to control the passions:
Occasionally trains arrived at stations,
Some frequencies broadcast the latest fashions:
Others demanded generous donations,
Offering relief to new and strange compassions.
Deep in the suburbs there was talk of fire:
Housewives and widows chattered in the town.
One danger passed; the bare electric wire
No longer menaced. Slowly the dark came down.
It became necessary to face survival
Before we started thinking of revival.

PIETERMARITZBURG INTERSECTIONS

As I walked out one evening
All in my weekday vest,
I saw the black whores waiting
At Burger Street and West.
They waved as I crossed the Dusi,
Murmuring in the dark,
And turned to where the pictures
Proclaim our part in the Ark.
Then up to where Colenso
Spelled the prophets and the loss
Of Eden in the Colonies,
To the fire of the cross.
I saw the children gather
By the fountain and the pond;
I saw the policeman waving
His baton like a wand.
Between terror and pity
The ghosts of history lurch;
At the heart-beat of the city
Commercial crosses Church.