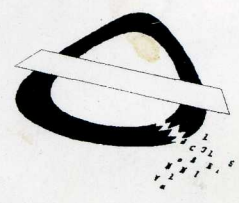


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Jody Hyde-Thomson



London, my London: Issue No. 12





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 de touer peiq den 2 leopolaten den 2 June 1688. liberté de conscience et d'après le 2 du même mois. A. Schoneveld

LONDON

London in May; the flowers, the cherry blossom,
 And grasses stretching to the green horizon,
 Gigantic trees, that celebrating, burst
 Up from the roots, the glory of their bloom.

All the trees of the earth are here,
 Like emerald fortresses adorned with flowers
 Peeping from crenellated battlements.
 Each tulip on the fresh crisp perfumed grass
 Shines like a flaming torch, and every rose
 Stars in a firmament of rainbow hues.
 The gardens are spread out upon the earth
 Like the loveliest patterned carpet of Iran,
 Heroic land of suffering and struggle
 Where my heart nests...

London; a city of flowers and grass and rain
 With the exhilarating song of birds
 Scattered beneath a parti-coloured sky
 Of blue and silver, and a softly shining sun,
 With turbid waters, with verdant parklands full
 Of flowers where loves are openly engaged,
 With quiet rows of multicoloured houses,
 With grandeur marbled into palaces,
 With gracious pleasure gardens, haunts of lords,

With colonaded halls of guarded culture,
With churches soaring to an English heaven
And with its people, so polite and cold.

For centuries, gold and remnants of old kingdoms,
The loads of diamonds, argosies of trophies
Appeared here from the corners of the world -
The golden Buddah, and the Koh-i-nor
Diamonds found their way into this city.
Here the toil of nations crowds upon the eye
And you will see, if once you care to look,
The imperishable heritage of genius
And living trace of art. Here you will see
Proud palaces neighboured by beggary
And homeless bodies pausing on marble stairs.

Bustle at night, the pulsing glare of neon,
Hurry by day, feet jostling to work,
And to no work;
Each evening London wakes, then a thousand lights
And adverts wink at you from walls and doors
Till dawn in this city of banks, exchanges, trade.

Deep in the night, the mugger and the thief
Creep silently away from the robbed corpse;
Such freedom for corruption and for vice
And for the orderly, polite police.

All through the night, shameless casino doors
Beckon shame-eyed to aimless pleasure seekers
Who pass theatres where the words of Shaw
And Shakespeare offer beauty to the gods
From a goddess voicing art into a miracle.

Surge after surge of people floods the streets,
A swollen river of nations, creeds and races,
Faces with dreamy narrow eyes, impassive
Olive tanned faces, parasols of black
Frizzed dread-locks shading healthy thin dark faces,
And others where dawn snow has crystallised
The skin to leave transparent pools of eyes
Grey green or brilliant blue, and those whose eyes
Are dark and fiery as the night, like waves
Breathing out of the storm, glaring from a skin
The colour of fine wheat: along the street
They move, pulsating.

I always harbour in my heart this hope -
That they may ever join their hands in greeting,

Their faces smiling, eyes sparkling with joy,
Their hearts in unison, distinct their colours,
And there will come a day when through the earth
All men unite into one heart and mind.

London cannot forget
Her history, her burning, when the wood
Of ten thousand houses crackled into flame
Melting her body and soul. She disappeared
But she was built anew.

In London, bulwark of the rule of law,
Babel of power, and tower of tradition,
The capital of speeches, strikes and cash,
Peace and a pistol stare each other out
Then lock in bitter combat. Freedom fighters
Keep here appointments with their promises
And faiths.

I live in you, London the marvellous,
But day and night my heart is where the sands
Of Khuzestan lie drenched in blood, or where
Lebanon's embers crumble into dust.

London, within your parks I am a guest
In these distracted times; I love to talk
With you about yourself. But now, no more;
My heart's distraught.

London, how quickly pass
The showers; you have read history, and I
Have read it too.

Zhaleh (translated from the Persian)

