

LOUIS MACNEICE

THE SATIRIST

Who is that man with the handshake? Don't you know;
He is the pinprick master, he can dissect
All your moods and manners, he can discover
A selfish motive for anything—and collect
His royalties as recording angel. No
Reverence here for hero, saint or lover.

Who is that man so deftly filling his pipe
As if creating something? That's the reason:
He is not creative at all, his mind is dry
And bears no blossoms even in the season;
He is an onlooker, a heartless type,
Whose hobby is giving everyone else the lie.

Who is that man with eyes like a lonely dog?
Lonely is right. He knows that he has missed
What others miss unconsciously. Assigned
To a condemned ship he still must keep the log
And so fulfil the premises of his mind
Where large ideals have bred a satirist.

THE MIXER

With a pert moustache and a ready candid smile
He has played his way through twenty years of pubs,
Deckchairs, lounges, touchlines, junctions, homes,
And still as ever popular, he roams
Far and narrow, mimicking the style
Of other people's leisure, scattering stubs.

Colourless, when alone, and self-accused,
He is only happy in reflected light
And only real in the range of laughter;
Behind his eyes are shadows of a night
In Flanders but his mind long since refused
To let that time intrude on what came after.

So in this second war which is fearful too,
He cannot away with silence but has grown
Almost a cypher, like a Latin word
That many languages have made their own
Till it is worn and blunt and easy to construe
And often spoken but no longer heard.

STEPHEN SPENDER

MAN AND WOMAN

Through man's love and woman's love,
Moons and tides move
Which fuse those islands lying face to face.
Mixing in naked passion,
They who naked new life fashion,
Are themselves reborn in naked grace.

THE CHILD

'You dream,' he said, 'because of the child
Asleep in the nest of your entrails, whose dreams
Flutter through your blood in streams.'
'Baby', her lips dreamt, and he smiled.
He laid his head, weighed with a thought
On the sleep of her lips. Thus locked
Within the lens of their embrace
They watched the life their lives had wrought,
The folded future active street
With walls of flesh and crowing face,
Within her flesh complete,
Between their clinging bodies rocked.