

Poetry

Caught, transformed broadcast again
 In a Sunday peal of eye and hair
 Agamemnon's warning flame
 Hand-in-hand with the sea-blown air
 Swept over all the promontories
 Alerted all Hellenic signatories
 With the news that Troy was taken.

Passing thus from height to height
 Steeple, tower, hilltop took that light
 And sent it on its way,
 Until at last this great expansion
 Became coterminous with creation
 And one ecstatic vast compression
 Made past and future all one day.

That day was ours, uniquely and alone
 Standing together, our love had grown
 In silence sterner than the sea.
 Subsumed beneath eternity
 It became itself eternal, reborn
 From some vague insubstantial form
 Into a thing of great glory.

So once in Mykonos at dusk
 I thought May Morning came
 And once upon a Persian Mosque
 I felt I knew some name
 Of God, when in the tiles of Holy Writ
 It circled one whole minaret
 And streamed to heaven again.

*Rod Stuart***Baz has got Sixpence**

BAZI I AM SAD FOR YOU.

Stoning yourself on sixpences

Pouring them into the belly of the bandits

Beating your brains out with the evil arm of the fruit machines.

Oranges and lemons rang the bells of St. Clements.

Two cherries. Five silver pills are spewed up.

Your face wears the maniac smile of the tanner addict

As you feed them back into the unsated fledgling mouth.

When will you pay me screamed the bells of Old Bailey.

You'll have bought one before you win a jackpot.

Why don't you marry it? Carry it off to your bed?

Come home Baz.

I don't want to be martyred on an altar of sixpenny swallows.

When I grow rich whispered the bells of Shoreditch.

I'M TIRED BAZ!

Questions

Who sewed insanity into the lining of my skull?
 Who planted the seed of worldsorrow in my heart?
 Who knocked the ash from an atomic cigarette into the turn-ups of me?
 Who warmed me in the thighs of Africa?
 And fed me at the breasts of the world?
 Who made me see the beautiful shapes of words,
 Taught me to hear the song of colour?
 Who poured the rum of love through me,
 Filled me with its alcoholic remorse?
 Showed me its beautiful petals
 Bursting from the bud of its pity?
 Who stood me in the manure of war
 So that I grew six feet small?
 Who walked with me into madhouses
 And straightened the snake of sickness in my mind?
 Who stripped the sheet of madness from the face of my battle-torn corpse?
 Lifted me gently on angel dove wings?
 WHO?

Knowing

I saw seaweed growing from the sidewalk
 saw the sun dying in the road
 saw a frog leap into the moon
 saw a corpse carrying its coffin
 saw a cockerel lay an egg
 saw a head with a man under its arm
 and I wondered.

Saw the sea turn from the shore in scorn
 saw my mind walking in front of me
 saw a sparrow with a wooden leg
 saw a scarecrow kiss his foe
 saw a tree turn into a skyscraper
 saw a city sprouting leaves
 and I pondered.

Saw a paint-brush pointing hands
 saw a footprint on the sky
 saw a railway roll itself up
 saw a baby pushing its mother in a pram
 saw a blind man at a movie
 saw a cripple climb a hill
 saw a clock murdering time
 and I knew.

NOTES & TOPICS

A Social Commitment

A FEW MONTHS ago an engraved card dropped through the letter-box, inviting my wife and myself to attend, at seven-thirty for eight p.m. on a certain June evening, the Midsummer Banquet at the Mansion House, where our host and hostess would be the Lord and Lady Mayoress. I did not then know what the Midsummer Banquet was, but I swiftly found out that it was inaugurated last year, in honour of the Arts, Science, and Learning; I also gathered that it had replaced on the mayoral calendar a fairly dispiriting feast in honour of the Fruiterers or some similar faction of middlemen. "Evening Dress," said the card, and also: "Decorations." Apart from a bronze medal awarded to me at school for throwing a cricket ball, I am totally undecorated, so that presented no problems. I have evening dress—featuring a sky-blue dinner-jacket of Italian silk which gives me the appearance of a Swedish band-leader—but I got my secretary to call the Mansion House to make sure that this would be acceptable. A rotund major-domestic voice answered the phone. My secretary identified herself and asked: "Does evening dress mean black tie?" "No, madam," said the voice reproachfully, "it means evening dress." Which meant trouble, since I have neither white tie nor tails. Eager, however, to shovel it in with my idols (would Stephen Spender be there, I wondered? As it happened, I wondered right), I decided to accept the invitation, apprehensively aware that this would entail an experience to which I had never before been exposed—a visit to the Brothers Moss, makers and hirers of ceremonial garb.

Moss Bros. is a big establishment near Covent Garden which performs an indispensable function in an age of collapsing class barriers and increasing class-consciousness: for a deposit and a small fee, it enables its clients to leap for a few treasured hours into the upper class. Outwardly, it is a tailor's shop, but I have never knowingly met anyone who owned a Moss Bros. suit. The soul of the organisation is its hiring department, where you can fit yourself for any social occasion that still partakes of the nature of ritual. I arrived on a Monday morning, hoping that trade would be slow, and was ushered into a spacious and sleekly furnished waiting-room already full of two dozen other

frauds. Perhaps I slander some of them by saying this; one or two of them may have torn, stained or otherwise damaged their formal wear so recently and irreparably that they were forced to seek replacements; but most of us, I could tell from our studiously preoccupied air and our careful reluctance to look each other in the face, were frauds in the simplest sense of the word. Either we were pretending to own a garment we could not afford, or we were aspiring to membership of a class to which we did not belong; or both. I went to the reception desk, whispered my needs and was given a numbered card. I then waited for my number to be called over the public-address system: it was like sitting in a cross between a dentist's anteroom and London Airport.

BROCHURES, STREWN ACROSS shiny coffee-tables, beguiled the next twenty minutes. Was I planning to get married? If so, Moss Bros. would clothe my bride and myself, my parents and hers, the best man, the bridesmaids, the ushers and even the pages: what, asked the catalogue, could be more fetching than a page in a kilt and sporran? The question puzzled me a little: since when had a miniature Scot been a status symbol? Possibly, I supposed, since Prince Charles enrolled at Gordonstoun. In a crisis, having equipped the wedding party with everything from high heels to toppers, Moss Bros. would no doubt be able to provide a hired bride to avoid disappointing the guests. I was pondering this theme when an amplified female voice said: "Seventy-two for fitting." I was seventy-two, and a sombrely clad, quietly spoken fitter escorted me into the inner sanctum, or tribal robing-place. He behaved with the grave discretion of an undertaker addressing someone lately bereaved, a manner perfectly appropriate to those clients (and they cannot be few) who resort to Moss Bros. because the movement of history has bereft them of their class status. They are genuinely in mourning, and must be handled with tact. My case was different: having no class status (I was born in a Birmingham suburb), I had nothing to lose.

Except my trousers, that is; and herein lay my embarrassment. I had just come back from a holiday with a trunk full of dirty linen that had gone straight to the laundry. I was left with no underwear; beneath my trousers I was naked. The undertaker led me into a cubicle—the final confessional, in which one is stripped of every vestige of socio-sartorial pretence—and sized me up. It seemed I was too tall to be easily suited. An escape-hatch occurred to me. "Just give me the tails," I said. "I can wear the trousers I usually wear with my dinner-jacket." The man quickly disabused me: in order to avoid show-