

LONGING by Jenny Deane

Sometimes I long for Denmark. I long for the flat, open roads of Bornholm carving gently through fields of ripening corn, the roadsides blue with wild chicory the colour of the sky. I long for the thick, dark pinewoods with their backs to the sea, their twisted roots pushing through the white sands of Dueodde and I dream of the long, warm dunes at sunset, the cold Baltic sea between my toes; the small wooden summerhouses with their lace curtains and geraniums at the windows. I dream of red and yellow houses, side by side along narrow cobbled streets, bicycles propped carelessly against their old walls.

And I long always for the green copper spires of Copenhagen; the small squares and fountains; the peaceful churchyard where my Grandmother sleeps. I dream of flaxen-haired girls in Summer dresses strolling hand in hand along Store Kongensgade, honey-skinned and laughing. I dream of herrings and a tall, cloudy glass of ice-cold aquavit in Nyhavn, old haunt of sailors and drunks and now full of smart restaurants and sandwiches piled high with salad and prawns. I long for Tivoli, not at night as many do, but in the morning when old ladies drink coffee and smoke cigars and the magic is in the fountains and the lakes and the flowers and the daytime music. I dream of the long beautiful drive up the east coast of Sjaelland; of small sailing ships upon the sparkling waters of the Sound; of shooting stars at midnight when the sky is still light.

This was the Denmark my Father knew and loved, the Denmark of my youth and the Denmark which still makes my heart ache with a longing I can't explain.

No Music by Helen Whitten

There was no music at her funeral
but we could sense her there
as we had last seen her,
an 105 year-old figure,
stooped over her piano,
skinny neck sunk into her chest,
crooked fingers gnarled over the keys.

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There was no music at her funeral
but for us she'd played Haydn,
her hands dancing in perfect form
"the songs of my childhood" she'd said,
then sang calypsos from Trinidad
lullabies she'd hummed to the Kinder children
she'd transported from Germany.

There was no music at her funeral,
just awkward quiet in the Quaker hall,
a shuffling of shoes on bare boards,
the odd cough, a fidget,
eyes that glanced up for a moment
then back to the floor.
And silence.

There was no music at her funeral.
An omission of sound.
Her life had been teaching young hands to play.
A choir should have sung,
an orchestra performed,
a fanfare heralded a farewell.
There was no music at her funeral.

Kind of Blue by Michael Lowe

Blue

One colour or many?

Many moods, many shades.

Chelsea play in blue, Oxford in a darker hue,

Cambridge row in a lighter shade.

The EU & UN flags share blue,

they say for harmony.

Joe Biden salutes a blue wave,

welcoming change in DC.

Blue reflects confidence and calm,

imagination, also sadness.

Blue is masculine, unlike yellow;

It implies distance even infinity.

Slides from indigo to teal,

prussian, marine, or cerulean.

Marks out art:

dive into Hockney's swimming pool,

listen to Miles play Kind of Blue.

Two poems about 'colour' by Susan Murray

Celebration

PING!

FIZZ!

a pale yellow flush
swirls in my glass
bubbles and pops
golden liquid explodes
in my mouth

Pigeage

Ankle-deep in the wooden vat
stomping on indigo orbs.

Green-yellow flesh, purple skins
squelching under foot
squirting between toes
a rouge ripe liquid
sweet-sour scents
warm autumn sun

Love is a Many Splendored Thing - Hong Kong early 40s

By Phillipa Deane

My mother had an interesting back story with a cast of her parents, three brothers and herself. First, they lived in England and then, Grandpa Joe, an ambitious architect, decided to chance his luck and seek work in Shanghai. This was in the 30s and Shanghai was described as the Paris of the East. Grandpa enjoyed life in Shanghai and became a regular at the Club.

Women were not welcome in the expat club in Shanghai and my grandparents hardly spent time together. My grandmother was lonely in her huge house and would lie on her low sofa under the wooden fan which clunked irritatingly round and round until the noise got too much and she went to bed.

Joe Maughan was besotted with his only daughter - my mother - and got more attention from her than from his wife.

My father was a child of parents living and working in Southern India. When he grew up he worked in a bank in Hong Kong and played a lot of rugby. Sometimes rest and recuperation was necessary and that was where my parents met in 1940, on a beach retreat in China. He proposed on the night he met my mother, but she was not rushing into anything so ridiculous. She replied, "Say that when you're sober, Barry". Things went quickly from there and they married in Hong Kong in July 1940. There was no question that my mother would return to England now and she stayed on in Hong Kong. They could not believe the rumours that the Japanese would capture the island and much more.

There were a few fairly peaceful months before the threat became serious and on 25th December, Christmas Day 1941, there was surrender to the Japanese. Men were separated from their families to be used for slave labour on shipyards in Japan, which meant my parents were apart for nearly 4 years, before they were able to enjoy life and taste freedom again.

Compare the crisis of 2020. We have been blessed with (mainly) staying in our own homes, with people we know, every amusement device, comfort of own rooms, familiar voices and faces. My mother's room in an internment camp in Hong Kong was a tiny space for two, populated by seven people, even a married couple. There was no privacy and a bowl of rice twice a day. Showers were rare, and heavy humidity did not help.

The boredom was killing and not knowing if you would live or die was a hideous reminder of this unbelievable situation.

My father was working in Japan carrying steel girders on his back and I was not even a twinkle.

GAIA - A Modern-Day Eco Warrior by Susie Heavens

Gaianism - honours and cares for our planet respecting life and reducing the negative impact on Earth

She was born out of chaos

The mother of life

Uranus her husband and she his wife

She lay with Heaven revealing her worth

To bare many children

Though some were a curse

From a shapeless form

She created features and life

Earth that we know, but not without strife

A symbol of fruit and grain of the earth

And to Pagans who worship

A deity of great worth

The Colour Yellow by Jacquie Squire

Yellow is a colour with many meanings
Stirring up one's most inner feelings
Yellow card in a football game
Gets the fans shouting "the refs to blame"
Yellow fever makes one feel ill
Yellow-bellied folk run for the hills.

Yellow can be full of joy and fun
Yellow butter melting into buns
Yellow bananas topped with custard
Yellow saffron and hot English mustard
Yellow chicks on Easter bonnets
Yellow lemon in vodka and tonic

Daffodils stand on stalks so green
Beatles once sung about a submarine
Yellow, sweet honey made by bees
Welcome-home ribbons tied to trees
Yellow sun is cheerful and bright
Greeting the days after long dark nights.

Poisoned Challis by Jenai Cotterill

Through the stained glass window
the sun's rays dance in kaleidoscopic glory,
reflecting vibrant reds and golds onto the alter.

The gleaming silver challis takes centre stage,
filled with deep ruby sacramental wine,
symbolising a belief in the blood of Christ.

Father Lynch prostrates himself before the altar.
Arms outstretched, body wracked with remorse,
the image of Christ too painful to behold.

Straying into lust, greed, the forbidden,
his sins are deeper than his faith.
He pleads for compassion, forgiveness.

On unsteady feet he blesses the white powder,
allows it to cascade into the hallowed wine,
watches as the lethal grains swirl and disappear.

With trembling hands he lifts the challis.
Shamed, he slowly, tentatively drinks.
He prays there will be a place in His Kingdom.

Coffee Venues by Harriet Grace

Returned from local coffee dive
where planned to spend an hour or two
'We're booked,' they said. 'You can't come in!'
I turned away and thought, oh boo,

you're meant to be that place I need
to sit and read and write and drink
flat whites, where strangers talk and sing,
where thoughts leak out and make a link.

They'd hide if I was still at home.
Too shy within familiar walls
thoughts need to find wild other shores
and lurk in fragrant coffee halls.

Oh coffee venues far and wide,
we bring ourselves and thoughts along
to sit and muse and wonder on,
is it the coffee that makes us strong?