

United Reformed

(The founding of the United Reformed Church: 1972)

Although the wood of the pews is dark and sombre,
varnished through years of comfort,
penitence and care
its grain is still visible:
thin lines of the life that was -
in some Welsh copse
or African hardwood forest;
the whorls and knots depicting
the face of the coppicer
or the soles of the feet
of a native boy
running through his dappled,
fabulous country.

On the green hill
above the grey squat lump of chapel
rooks and magpies shuffle and scuff the old knotted branches
of beech and elder and ash, their leaves
dappling a view of the Sunday-still city.
The sun is somewhere out in the channel –
on Flat Holm or Steep Holm –
until the channel opens to the sea
that brings the ships with fabulous names:
Douala; Ashanti; Limpopo...