

SUMMER ROAD AND FAR AWAY

It was here that his sensational life began
 as the sun laid a crust of heat
 on slate, brick, concrete, tarmac
 and lettuces panicked and bolted for the sky
 in all their small gardens....
 his sensational life began behind a curtain
 drawn but too old and thin to keep
 howling daylight
 out of the room.

And the children
 who couldn't have cared less
 went about their summer day business
 as usual, crashing tricycles and carts
 on kerbstone and wall and listening
 to the STOP ME AND BUY ONE man
 in his musical fridge
 seven streets away but coming closer
 all the time.

And the older women of the street
 bad-mouthed, tough as hell
 but gone tender, acting wise
 as women saying 'We are the ones
 who know exactly what's going on
 at number 33...

fishing boats could be seen
 on the sea which gleamed to the east of the town
 All the shop doors were open
 and there were places where music spilled into the street.
 An old man in too many clothes sat muttering
 on the steps of the Church of Our Lady
 Star of the Sea. Suddenly
 almost everyone had bare arms
 and even the traffic warden rolled up his sleeves
 because it was very hot, the sort of heat
 that stuns and stills the English...
 so no one was doing very much
 around 3.30 in the afternoon
 when his sensational life began.

Andrew Bell

