

FRANK KELLAWAY

DUDLEY FLATS

Stung by the Christian God behind wet ears,
my brother Will and I felt guilt and shame
seeing the derros camped on Dudley Flats
in huts of galvo iron and hessian bags\$Fl on a waste of
sea-marsh, salt-bush, marram grass.

We'd pass them coming home on holidays
wrapped up to the snout in a safe limousine
while they stood staring, a tattered thought away.
So we decided some time late in May
we'd give our Christmas gifts to *them* this year.

We begged and scraped and saved our sixpences,
feeling ourselves both rare and Christian too.
We even worked for the odd bob or two!

We boasted to our elders and bit them
here for two bob and there for half a quid.
Dying of cancer, Willie's God-mother
gave us a fiver and some words of praise.

Stoked by our virtue, on a spending spree
we bought up cake, dried/candied fruit and nuts . . .
three sugar-bags full if I have it right.

What I remember as most singular,
it stirs my love and admiration now,
our mother drove us within half a mile
but waited for us, staying out of sight
while we two trudged like midget Santa Claus,
humping our blueys of expensive trash
to men and women dying for a drink,

to whom a bottle of port or even beer
would have been truly Christian Christmas cheer.

Yet they received us gravely, courteously,
without surprise or none that we perceived,
thanked us with gentle sadness, took our food
and sent us back to mother feeling good.

Within a month the haloes that we'd worn
were badly tarnished by forgetfulness.
We'd paid our debt to conscience and were free
from guilt's insufferable debility.

BRIAN WALKER

APRIL FOOL

I believed it
when my fruit trees burst with blooms,
sunlight lifted winter-wan hands
to rake and hoe and pruning shears;
I went out to forget my name
and find a new one in the birdsongs—
or scratched by wind on puddles in the park.
But in the night a burglar came
who knew my address and with hoary hand
returned me to my numbered place.