

MADE IN LIVERPOOL

by Jim Bennett



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This collection of poems has been condensed from the collection,
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made in Liverpool

like The Beatles
and Meccano
I was made in Liverpool

for me it was the city
not a path less traveled
that made all the difference

it was the dockland
a port and a place
to call home

inventory 1953

the inventory came with the baby

1 three piece outdoor set

4 Turkish Napkins

2 pair of socks

2 nightdresses

2 pair of shoes

2 vests

2 liberty bodices

2 pair knickers

1 cardigan

2 Jersey suits

1 pair rubber pants

1 pair mitts

it filled up the space

below the statement

which read

I will receive James into my home

feed, clothe and look after him

and bring him up

as carefully

and kindly

as I would a child of my own

below this and below the

inventory

was the familiar scratched

signature of my mother

who kept her word

the sign at the end of the road

there was a sign at the end of the road
it said "adopted"
I always thought
that was how
people knew

but no one had told me
I found out at 12
about the same time the Beatles
officially became
a phenomenon

in a shop
I heard a lady I did not know
speaking
to someone else
this is the one
Mary adopted
she said
as she smiled at me

and it was

I never told Mum or dad
kept it secret
like they had
but searched for
proof
eventually found it
in an envelope
pushed
under clothes at the back
of a bedroom drawer

why I hate Bernardo's

when my mother died
I went in search of myself
I knew most of the story
abandoned at Christmas
taken to a children's home
later taken to hospital
near death for months
but then I found
I had avoided deportation
because Bernardo's
only wanted strong children
they took them
lied to them
sent them to new lives
out in the Commonwealth
for many Australia
was the place that hid
the shame of their birth

I am always grateful I was left
with asthma
coughing through
the British winter
too sick to be sent away
glad my new parents
found me then
glad I had the chance to have
the life I have
but even so
I will always hate Bernardo's
always

Litherland Town Hall

this is where it was
the guide said
pointing at a squat
brick block building
where once the Mayor
and Aldermen processed
now patents walk in
to be treated
but in December 1960
this is were *they* came

the five lads back
from Germany
with a new name
still with Stu and Pete
stood here and played
and played in a new way
forged through the late
red light nights
where they had to keep going
singing till their voices gave out
playing till their fingers bled
to their drunken
out-for-a-laugh audience
giving as good as they got

this is where they came
the guide said
just after Christmas
at the start of the new decade
the screams first heard here
slowly built
until they could be heard
around the world

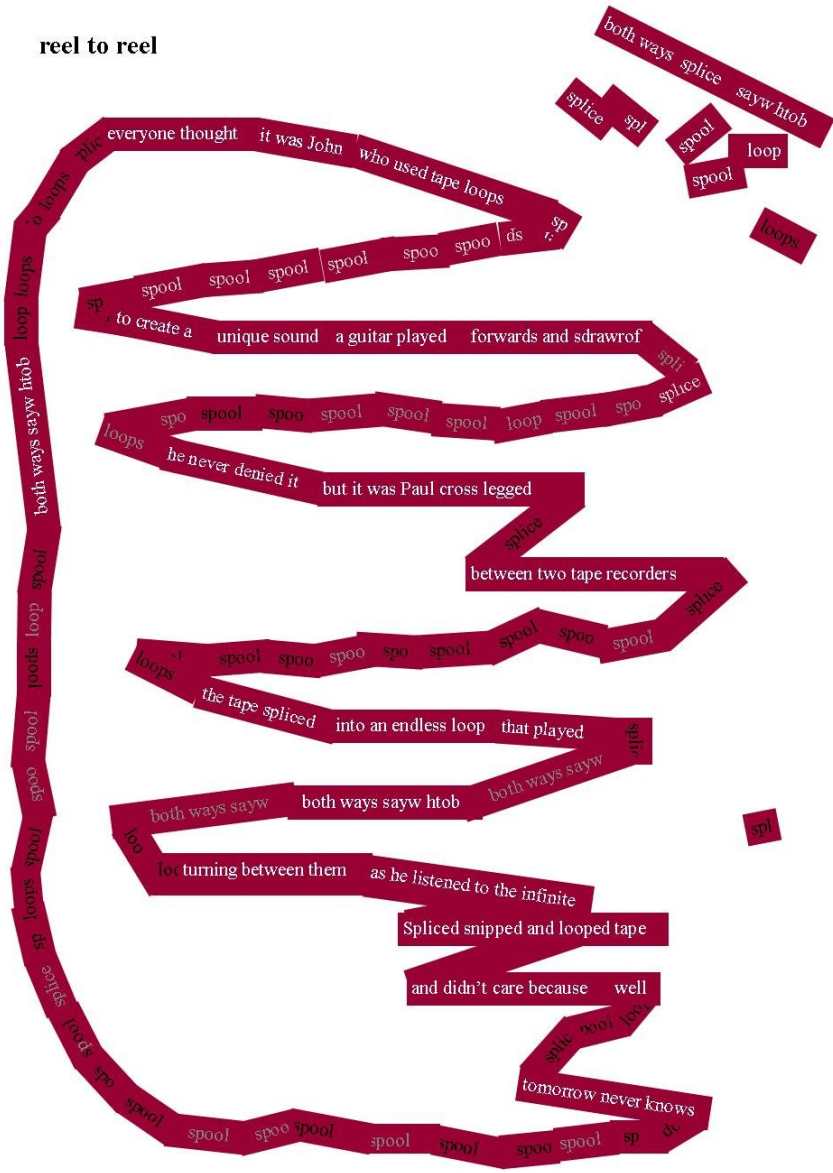
it started with love songs

something was happening
we didn't know what
something about the
the Cavern
the dripping wet walls
the claustrophobic heat
something about the music
that glued itself to
every brick
something about the new drummer
the new manager
the new beat
the new sound
the other groups
felt it to
the songs changed
used real language
started to be about our lives
not just recycled Americans
this started to sound like us
and it meant something
something as important
as a generation
finding its voice
and it started with love songs

reel to reel

everyone thought it was John
who used tape loops
loops loops loops loops loops
to create a unique sound
a guitar played
forwards and sdrawrof
he never denied it
but it was Paul cross legged
between two tape recorders
the tape spliced
into an endless loop
loop loop loop loop loop
that played
both ways sayw htob
turning between them
as he listened to the infinite
and didn't care because
well
tomorrow never knows

reel to reel



death of a pop star

I was driving up to Hyton
when I heard that John was dead
the news was not broken in any
thoughtful way
a newsreader came on the radio
just after *Hey Jude* was played
and said that he was dead

I didn't know John
never saw him except at a distance
but at that moment I felt
a close member of my family
had been taken away
someone I had grown up with
someone I had loved
I wondered if anyone understood
why I was crying over the death
of a pop star

I need not have worried
Liverpool was subdued that day
the city grieved

in another week
I stood with thousands
at St Georges Hall
singing songs
from his Beatle years
and his solo work
and remembered

at the end of the night
we sang *Imagine*
for what must have been
the tenth time

and we all did

the day I lost faith in flying

Dunblane didn't do it
New York did
shook my faith in flight
once I stopped believing
it was like Tinkerbelle
falling from the sky
in every dream
I ever had

then the flight path moved
over my house
and every day I watch
waiting for the one
that will come in too low
skim the roof
sweep TV aerials, masts
chimney pots
into the street
rip tiles into a tornado
spiralling in the sky
to tear down clouds
and fog the day

years ago
melvina and her friend
wanted to hurt me
but never got the chance
I'd skip school to see the planes
to avoid the bullies

then there was the shop that was closed
most of the time
only open one day each week
magazines and newspapers piled
on the floor on Saturdays
no counter
just pictures of planes
torn from old issues
sellotaped on every wall
next door the sweet shop
and the man who later died
watching the planes
in those days
when I still believed
that they could fly

I watched Speke Airport transform
and be renamed
listened to Ringo
tell the story
of being on the phone to Paul
“Do you know where I am Paul?
I’m at John Lennon Airport”
Ringo and Paul laughing
fit to bust
as planes take off

seeing John Lennon Airport
from the track at the back of
Speke Hall
the empty acres of vacant
concrete
the river just beyond
wondering why
the land was so empty

then there was the day
we went to see the Lifeboats
in New Brighton
but they were out on the Mersey
across the river at Speke
a plane had missed the runway
landed in the river
see I said
I knew they couldn’t fly
anymore
and really for the first time
I understood the grief and
the sense, of loss
when something magic
is taken from the world

looking for The Beatles in Liverpool

when he came
looking for The Beatles in Liverpool
Tom visited the roads named after them
there he found some houses
which had nothing to do with
The Beatles
they never lived there
no one in the street had seen or met them
Tom made sure
knocked on every door
and although people were friendly
they told him to try elsewhere

eventually someone gave him a map
and he went to Strawberry Fields
because he had heard about it on a record
stood and took his own picture
standing by a gatepost
then walked round the corner
to John's Aunties house
in Menlove Ave
it was closed
so went to Penny Lane
the place on the flipside
wanted to get his hair cut
make a deposit
but it was too late in the day
people said they would be happy
to talk about The Beatles
but didn't have the time to stop
as they rushed home from work
some people even said
they had Beatle records
played then once a while ago
others didn't know
but said they thought it had something to do
with Mathew Street

a taxi driver was going to take him there
but conversed in lies about
the time he went to school with Paul
Tom said he knew the Taxi driver was a liar
got the school name wrong
the taxi driver threw him out
and he walked the rest of the way into town

in Mathew Street
there is a door marked
entrance to the Cavern
and a sign to tell you that it isn't
the real one was buried under tarmac
on the opposite side of the road
but this one was good enough
for a photograph

every bit of it was like that
a bit disappointing
imitations and false memories
but then Tom said
he hadn't been on the bus trip yet
or seen The Beatles Story
at the Albert Dock
so he was hopeful
that somewhere he would find
the Beatles in Liverpool

and there are the sounds
you can hear them everywhere
it's even in the voices of the people
like an echo from a long time ago
everywhere you go if you listen hard
you can hear the it
and in the end I suppose
that is all that matters

Trout fishing on the Mersey

it is hard to explain how people get connected to Liverpool
hard to understand
but it is a character I came to know
someone I grew up with
played with
photographed
drew
it's mum and dad
it speaks funny
but its like when you hear it
everyone else in the world speaks
in the strange accents
and this is the right one
it walked out of Africa with Lucy
set itself up on the banks of the Mersey
where everyone came to find inspiration
said it was a great place
they told everyone else and they came
and some time in the past the world
moved here for a while
trout fishing on the Mersey

it inspired everyone
people everywhere could name streets and people
who lived on the shores
that would be about the time
The Pope came and we went trout fishing
listening to Klezmer music
and Dylan and the Beatles
on our portable tape machine
happy days
trout fishing in the Mersey
listening to Liverpool
breathing long and deep
snoring as it dreamt its future
its spires touching heaven

it is hard to explain how people get connected to Liverpool
but they do

Mathew Street

I often walk down Mathew Street
looking for writing on the walls
it's supposed to say "Billy Blake is fab"
but I could never find it
except in a poem

it's missing
should be there
to show the affection
Adrian Henri had
for William Blake
but it's more than that

when Ginsberg came to Liverpool
Ade took him to see
the cast-iron Church in Everton

as they came out
into the Liverpool sunlight
the street sign on the road
read "Albion Street"

they talked about Blake
spirituality and poetry
they knew it was an omen

Adrian Henri wrote a poem
"Mrs. Albion You've Got a Lovely Daughter"
dedicated it to Allen Ginsberg
and he became famous

Allen Ginsberg went off
found himself being spiritual in India
then carried on being famous

and today a shed load of people
walk down Mathew Street
which is incredibly famous
at least one of them still looking for
"Billy Blake is fab."
written on the wall
by someone other than himself
and I'm still not able to find it

made in Liverpool (2)

like The Beatles
and Meccano
I was made in Liverpool

a foundling in the city
it gave me a home
and an identity

I grew with its poetry
its music
and I cherish it still

like The Beatles
and Meccano
I was made in Liverpool

retronym

as time moves on
sometimes it is necessary
to rename things
the Great War became
World War I when they decided to
have a rematch
the original series of Star Trek
only became “the original series”
after more series were added
a reel to reel tape recorder
was originally just a tape recorder
then cassettes came along

so things change
and you need to find a retronym
but then some things don't
some things are so unique that
you just know there will never be
a retronym for The Beatles
no rebranding
to The Original Beatles for them
their name will never change
but take a baby's name
Anthony MacDonnell for example
just think what you can do with that

the best day we ever spent

2nd July 2006

it is always difficult to write about evening
the way it arrives in the late afternoon
the air cools the sunlight gentler
before you know it it's evening
the hum of conversation no longer
boisterous, now somehow softer
the distant TV football watching crowds silent
the barbeque dying off, the burnt wood
smell retreating into the damp leaves
grass and insects return to the world
from a perch on a TV aerial a blackbird
joins the bird song
with a magpie on the fence top
and another in the tree
later as the sun sets, the guitar
and the Beatle songs
Let it Be and *Yesterday*
then Brel and all the words we could
remember from *Amsterdam*
and *Jackie*
wishing Attila could have been here
to sing *ces gens-la* because we loved it
when he sang it on the CD
instead it was *les bourgeois*
and *if you go away*
then *Hey Jude*
with a chorus that
went on and on
someone remembered then
it was a year since the London Bombs
we read some poems cried a little
and finished as we always do
thinking it was the best day we ever spent
and it probably was

kind words

kind words
usually appreciated
pass between us
in a virtual world
“I am having a Beatles marathon today”
she said
“how come they are so cheerful?”
“They are from Liverpool.”
I said
“It must be nice there”
she said
“It is.” I said

“I am up to Revolver”
she said
then added
“got to get you into my life”

a proposition?
a statement?
a recollection of a track?
“si si si” she laughed

later I stood
the river Mersey
like rough ploughed land
reflecting the
last of the red sun light
I watch until like
a long and winding road
it met the sky
and poured itself into
the future

made in Liverpool

like The Beatles
and Meccano
I was made in Liverpool