

# **Travellers**

**New poems by Michelene Wandor**

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## San Miniato

a sudden buzz

a divebomb at night

my right arm

something made out of nothing

A Tuscan hillside. A monastery. I sit alone at a round table in Miravalle, the local restaurant. Andrea, the drama teacher, arrives. He bows a punctilious hello, flicks back a thick, caressing wave of black hair over his temple, and sits at another round table. He is an artista.

*I am the poet I sit alone*

overnight, my inner right arm is

angrier than a mosquito

Andrea runs the summer course. He flirts with the young women, slippy straps on shoulder-bare camisole tops. He wears a black leather jacket, carries a black leather bag. He checks his hairline carefully each morning for signs of flecked grey.

*I am the poet I sit alone*

the pharmacist tells me

I have very sweet blood

oil of lavender

sharp on the skin

Andrea opens doors for me, a code rusted  
from centuries of chivalric use. He calls  
it courtesy. I say they are not the same  
thing.

that night

I talk to the mosquito bite

upper inner arm red field spreads

the mosquito cannot buzz in English

The acting exercises are like leather.  
Smooth. Soft. Malleable. The cool  
monastery room smells of rosemary,  
anchovies spring to mind. I watch.

*I am the poet I applaud*

bread olive oil and salt are cake

bright yellow duck egg dense omelette

hot yellow

ham and formaggio are cake

I am born into taste at my round table

white bread in olive oil

salt hits my palate

sweet and sharp

outside it rains

jasmine and eucalyptus and oleander

in the cool air my arm cools

The leather factories are in Ponte a Egola.  
Bus, train, TV aerials. The scent of  
tanning fills the air. Soft leather curls  
round the nape of my neck, a soft black  
leather jacket, loose and cooling. It fits as  
if made for me,. I buy it and it is made for  
me. My leather lover.

*I am an artista*

mozzarella buffalo and basilica

red white and green

The end of the week Andrea joins me at  
my round table. The slippy-strap students  
wave to us. Blasts of cool air from barred  
windows. Outside a leaf floats, a bell, a  
bird in a mirror in yellow, red and black.

you have sweet blood

whine mosquitoes in the night

I wear my new black leather jacket, my  
dark hair streaked with grey. Drama and  
poetry. There is a buzz in the monastery  
room. Listeners look out across a green  
valley streaked with houses.

the mosquitoes buzz

*we are artisti*

we make something out of nothing

## the colour of botany

1.

magic in a tiny purple flower

prizing stigma, three red threads

rising from a single stem

crocus

saffron

female, though rising

male, with soft colour

a plant is gender

saffron pollen

remove stigma carefully, leaving three threads attached,

three red threads

magic in a tiny flower

purple red hot yellow

Homer tells us that Jupiter and Juno's bed  
was covered with crocus flowers

dew on purple leaves

hide three red threads

yellow taste

after botany

saffron

2.

a botany lesson

Homer plants, leaves for a winter

bulbs hide ten centimetres under

ground, take out in July, divide, replant in

August, between four and ten flowers in

October

pick early in the purple morning

blooms still nearly closed

only the caps

leave the stems

female or male

there is no stigma in gender

Homer picks saffron threads

100,000-200,000 needed for today's kilo

shake in a tambourine

toast quickly over fire to

preserve taste and colour

bottle in glass vials, store away from light

wild boar and fungus

Homer's hands stain red gold from picking  
rare love for Juno and Jupiter's bed

3.

saffron travels

risotto eaten by Romans

wearing saffron robes

saffron nestles in the Sistine roof, in

risotto alla Milanese

Perugino, little Pietro from Perugia

eats soft sheep cheeses

Perugino, master of Raphael

uses saffron to mix paints

takes ultramarine

brightens water to sharp pointed blue

for the virgin's robe

from Rome to Florence to Perugia

Homer counts 150 flowers for one gram  
of saffron threads

Juno and Jupiter eat soft sheep cheeses

Homer covers their bed with crocus  
flowers

no-one cares that saffron is the symbol  
of unhappy love

Jupiter and Juno eat soft sheep cheeses

saffron colours risotto

tastes yellow love

after botany

## brushstrokes

bees and brushstrokes

chasten the hillside      jasmine

and rosemary fly higher

in search of acacia

Toulouse-Lautrec sees vultures in the distance

dark butterflies, whirring, blurring

skirting cloud shapes

dancers' skirts are white jasmine wings

backstage they can

can do

Henri Matisse sees eagles circle

keeping the cloud's heat      circling

hot dancers hands painted round

fire in the dark blue night

hot wood carbonises coal, chars

the blue sea's edge, dancers' feet brushstroke

the dunes, ridging like woodgrain

woven by scuttling crabs

Laura Knight sees a yellow canary

once caged to warn of danger  
now flying wild, coloured jasmine  
she brushes backstage ballet sylphs,  
strokes canaries in free flight

the forest twines jasmine vines  
silver willows sweep eyelashes

each pronouncing a different shape

birches stroke and brush the forest's face

black vultures hiss when they feed

eagles whistle , pipe

male canaries sing

dancers' feet rest

Laura holds a yellow feather

## **beached**

flat, matt and packed      the sand

cracks with sea traces, lines

from the last tide's foam

feet feel cowries, fine ridged, oval

shapes too small to hear      sea's sound

feet sink, making tiny sand spires, like

cathedrals too small to sound prayer

out to sea, a solo surfer bobs

feet hide behind waves, a

spiderman shape

way back on land, a respectful distance

grass and low walls drizzle damp

stone upon crossed stone, carves

a headless bishop's breast

prone, feet chipped,

locked stones, beached

far from sand

beyond, the surfer's head bobs  
to the sand, haloed spiderman red  
by the sinking sun  
behind him, the horizon exudes a false solitude

further back, the towering cathedral  
boasts rock-year centuries,  
the bishop's cowrie-fingered hands  
like a lingering fossil, lined  
with wind-blown sand

feet on stone  
the crow-black verger holds cross-keys  
sweeps sand from the nave  
welcomes visitors to prayer  
surfs at weekends

from the beach, he sees  
matchbox cars at a distance

postcard days for some

## the Clock of Heaven: a fugue

*(Latitude and longitude were once  
calculated by gauging the height of the  
sun or a given star above the horizon.)*

### 1.

Marc Chagall's grandfather clock was  
too tall for the shelf, so it stood  
on the earth

*does the earth go round the sun  
does the sun go round the earth  
turn and turn about*

**Friday, we break ground  
out of Plymouth Sound**

*somewhere the sun is always shining*

**Monday, thick clouds  
winds whistle and sing  
a hideous storm**

*gold and silver  
pearls, diamonds  
calico and ebony*

**swells and roars**

*somewhere the sun always shines*

**beats light from heaven**

*turn and turn about*

**dark hell is black upon us**

*pepper, cloves*

**sails lie without use, sea swells**

*cinnamon, nutmeg*

**sea swells above the clouds**

**battles the heavens**

**water floods the air**

*somewhere the sun shines*

**waves are mountains**

*turn and turn about*

**fingers touch the moon**

*it takes the earth twenty-four hours to spin round the sun*

**the earth opens, we fall to hell**

*elsewhere the sun shines*

**no night star, no day sunbeam**

*emeralds.*

**the sea fills our ship**

*cinnamon*

**hatches to deck**

*cloves.*

## **rocks and more rocks**

*(Latitude and longitude were once  
calculated by gauging the height of the  
sun or a given star above the horizon.)*

**2.**

John Harrison learns woodwork from his grandfather

rings church bells

plays sweet music on the viola da gamba.

**he builds a mighty clock**

*tropical hardwood with its own grease.*

*wooden teeth never snap off*

**a clock telling accurate time**

**no matter where it is**

**a face with four dials**

**surrounded by eight carved cherubs in**

**a tangle of vines**

*brass, steel*

**one dial marks the seconds**

*rods and balances at odd angles*

**one dial marks the minutes**

*a clock, a cross between*

*a galley and a galleon*

**one dial the days of the month.**

*a mythical sea vessel*

**one dial marks the hours**

*somewhere the sun*

**a time machine**

*shines*

**we need a girdle about the earth**

**to know where we are**

*the sun is a ball of fire*

*slides down the ropes, a fiery globe*

**the earth is a cog in the clockwork universe**

*somewhere always cinnamon cloves gold silver pearls diamonds calico*

*ebony emeralds cloves diamonds gold calico silver cinnamon the sun shines*

**the clock of heaven paints numbers**

**on the stars**

**turn and turn about**

Chagall's grandfather clock reaches up to the sun

*(Latitude and longitude were once  
calculated by gauging the height of the  
sun or a given star above the horizon.)*

***the sun is always shining somewhere***

## **GBS (Great British Stripling)**

George Bernard Shaw plays piano

for the heavenly choir

reviews the music of the spheres

Corno di Bassetto

bassoons grunt and buzz

violoncello hums

flutes whistle

horns are hoarse

trumpets bark

oboes squeal

**on earth as it is in heaven**

**Marsyas and Apollo square up**

on earth, a stripling, fresh

from provincial Dublin

whistles *The Barber of Seville*

**Marsyas and Apollo square up**

a critic's hand should be against every man

and every man's hand against him

**a contest**

the problem with the pianoforte

is that you can hear it next door

**judged by the Muses**

English ladies and gentlemen can sing

reasonably

out of tune without perceptible effort

they avoid the correct pitch by instinct

**Marsyas plays the double reed**

**aulos, pipes, bagpipes.**

**Apollo plays the lyre, harp, viol**

revive the old music

the beautiful pure choral counterpoint

of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, lutes, harpsichords

**Marsyas plays, people dance wildly**

**Apollo plays, people have tears in their eyes**

Shakespeare reads sonnets to his dark lady

her fingers walk with gentle gait

over the blessed wood of the virginals

saucy jacks leaping to kiss the tender inward of her hand

**the judges go with Apollo**

when people do less than their best

and that less badly, they inspire hate

and loathing

**Marsyas is to be flayed alive**

Bach is for the future

**luckily Marsyas wears a sheepskin**

the Viennese Ladies' Orchestra are a bouquet

crimson silk military tunics

white shirts and skirts

**Marsyas believes in free speech**

**is against slavery**

the conductor's sleeves are short and wide

freeing a plump wrist and arm

**Marsyas is for the common people**

fine artists inspire the warmest personal regard

Bach belongs to the future

**hell rises, heaven descends**

**dances on earth**

**rhythm and harmony are given**

**given to the common people**

the late Golden Age of early music is foretold

GBS reviews the music of the spheres

plays piano for the heavenly choir

Bach is for the future

**Apollo says he is sorry**



Rodrigo signs the contract with his blood

written on the air

we're all in hell until the world ends, says the devil

if this world is hell, then I am willingly damned, says Rodrigo

eating biscuits tasting of almonds

the devil is an honourable man

**3,**

Isabella is in Mantua            her husband, Francesco Gonzaga

hides behind his desires

if you had to give birth, says Isabella

you would be more chaste

if men gave birth, they could not go to war, to keep you secure

says Francesco

touché, thinks Isabella

our marriage was arranged when we were babies

love has never come into it

France and Spain fought over Naples, says Francesco

Lorenzo de Medici kept the peace

Now Lorenzo is dead, there will be war

Plato put women in charge of a city, thinks Isabella

**4.**

a nun prophesies

the sword will come

the enemy will ride their horses beneath your castle walls

in sowing the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind

there will be mud and rain

a foreign king will ride into Rome

Isabella wants to live in peace

give birth to a son for her husband      it is her duty

**5.**

bricks fall from the windows      smoke rises above the clouds.

Pontificam Habemus

a fountain in the shape of the Borgia bull spouts water

from mouth, nose and ears

Pope Alexander the Sixth

what did I tell you, says the devil

**6.**

Lucrezia is thirteen



Isabella prays to the Virgin Mary

Cesare Borgia commands the Pope's army

a ruthless soldier rides like the devil

the French army gathers outside Rome

the Pope welcomes the French with

peaches and almond cake.

to save Rome from being burned to ashes, with

jewels, gems and sweet smelling musk.

the French take Naples

bread cheese honey almond cake

**8.**

the French hold on Naples strengthens

Lucrezia must have a new husband

a Neapolitan, to help seize back Naples from the French

the pope annuls Lucrezia's first marriage

Cesare swears he did not threaten the Milanese husband

with poison

**9.**

he is seventeen, the same as Lucrezia

a handsome Neapolitan

neither wants this marriage

she smells of cloves and honey      her hair is smooth as silk.

neither is a virgin      they laugh

if they pretend they are virgins

it will be fun

he studies the black thread on her dress

he undresses her

she takes off her fine ruby necklace

she lets down her golden hair she is light as a feather

they see, they love each other

at the wedding

Cesare dances with Lucrezia

says he hopes she will dream of unicorns

a symbol of chastity

my dreams are the one thing which no-one can control

says Lucrezia

**10.**

Cesare has the French disease

too many nights in the arms of French Venuses

or the mal de Naples

depending on whether you are Italian or French

onions and honey will cure it

### 11.

Cesare whispers        the Spanish want to take Naples from the French

Lucrezia's husband is a Neapolitan

he is spying for the Spanish

says Cesare

Lucrezia laughs        he loves me        I am a Borgia

he loves Rome        he would never betray us

### 12.

Alfonso has been stabbed        no-one knows who

Lucrezia weeps

### 13.

the doctors immerse the Pope in a great jar

of iced water

the skin peels from his body with the shock

if you laugh on earth

you will weep in hell, says the devil

cardinals ransack the Pope's rooms

silver rubies gold

a group of beggars carry him to the church of St Peter.

you will weep in hell

if you laugh on earth, says the devil

**14,**

a private villa

an orchard, hedges for privacy.

jasmine, between rosemary borders

lilies, carnations, a fishpond      fragrant herbs

in warm water

drawn from the earth beneath the city

I did not choose my husband, says Isabella

I did not choose my husbands, says Lucrezia

Isabella admires Lucrezia's embroidered satin

dress, the hem a flame of pure gold

Lucrezia offers Isabella a Spanish dress

with flowing sleeves

**15.**

Isabella runs Mantua whenever

Francesco goes to battle

no-one tells her what to do

Lucrezia smiles

women can be close to children and government

Isabella smiles

men never miss what they have never wanted

Lucrezia would rather have been a man      not

to be pregnant all the time                      not

to be ill every time she is pregnant

Isabella smiles                                      carnality without risk

husbands take their pleasures where they will

we put up with it                                  it is our duty

it suits our husbands to think we are rivals, says Lucrezia

then it is our duty to continue to please them, says Isabella

**16.**

on Mount Parnassus nine Muses dance

Venus is warm, soft, beautiful

next to her stands Mars, the God of war

two women laugh

two women

**gates**

music is

for four seasons in the lagoon city

*la musica e' divina*

*on earth as it is in heaven*

on stage a zither hides in a kettle

a violin in a cobbler's boot

a flute in a chimney sweep's broomstick

when books are burned, the ash travels straight

to heaven                      the ash

climbs ladders between

pages

each ghetto page in the lagoon city in 1516

each page is                      words

each page is                      music

censored books hide

behind Venetian              gates              in 1516

(the Venetian Duke eats kosher biscuits when he visits

the ghetto synagogue during carnival

then he leaves, by the ghetto gates)

later, in 1628

*collegium musicum*, the *Accademia degli impediti*

invites the Jews to admit impediments

for a temporary belonging

on stage *con la musica*

*con le parole*

(except when the plague rides into

town and blame rides again)

centuries seek keys to the gates

behind horses balanced on a frame flat

painted on a wall

behind tigers galloping with centaurs

watch men wrestle with serpents

see salamanders lick a dish clean

precious as ginger, sweet as syrup made with violets

centuries find the right key

wrapped in black and purple velvet

Napoleon unlocks the ghetto gates

Napoleon brings the Republic of Venice to an end

(1797 is a long way from 1516)

Napoleon burns the ghetto gates

Jews have the same freedoms

as all other citizens

...

zither, violin and flute come

out of hiding

books unfurl their pages

(it is not known whether Napoleon ate kosher biscuits)

**travellers**

desert        dust turned golden, fires

glow ash grey

no more wind, the dust still

stings

the sun has pushed the night out

*he wears a long robe, a keffiyeh round his face*

*she wears a long coat over a divided skirt*

*a keffiyeh round her face*

*only their eyes show*

walking here, pitting strength,

loose and easy

*he has been sent to bring her to Cairo*

*she has brought Shakespeare, maps ,*

leaning forward against the hot desert wind, the *hamsin*

*crystal, rugs, quinine, camphor, bandages, soap, flea  
powder, a lavatory seat*

hands dangling, loose, easy

*he wears a grey flannel blazer with pink piping, white  
flannel shorts, a bright red tasselled belt round his  
waist, to show he is a bachelor*

the fire shimmers the waterhole rusty

*her favourite moment is sugar in the first cup of coffee  
in the chill of dawn*

**The British are making schemes.**

**to remove the Turks.**

maps, held firm

*she says the best way to catch fish is to put a basin,  
weighted with stones in the stream. Bread in the basin.  
Cover the basin with a cloth, with holes. The fish swim  
in, get the bread and can't get out again.*

**The British are planning to enter**

**Jerusalem, to end the Crusades finally.**

*he likes a breakfast of milk, eggs, bread and honey.  
(he was deemed unfit for military service)*

pointed fingers moving fast

*he becomes Lawrence of Arabia*

*she is the uncrowned queen of Iraq*

once camels would have circled

**The British government needs**

**Palestine, in order to guard the Suez  
Canal.**

you shall sleep in their houses and eat at their tables

**Palestine will be divided between the  
British and the French. The British  
must protect the oil.**

the plain is covered with places wherein they have rested

**The British have promised the Arabs  
independence.**

an Arab tent, black goat's hair

**Britain and France will share in the  
exploitation of oil.**

*she wears her hat to dinner*

a fire of desert scrub burns in a shallow hole in the ground

**The word 'guest' is sacred from Jordan to  
the Euphrates.**

the desert is thick with associations

*lamb and rice      bread    olives*

*ices of milk and lemonade*

*she has never been so sunburnt in her life*

the Iraqis call her Khatun

Lady of the Court

*a rich red brown*

*not at all becoming to a lady*

bright, crackling fires

*he has lived among the Arabs*

*he has quitted his English self*

*in England she is just a woman, an empty jar*

*here she is in linen and khaki*

tamarisk

*sometimes she wears blue-green velvet in her hair*

the night is moonless

stars above the fog

*the tribesmen understand him because he wears  
Meccan clothes: embroidered silk and gold*

the voice of the wind will be heard

*she knows all the sheikhs*

*the Mesopotamian tribes*

*Arab clans                  campsites*

*wells                  railways lines*

the touch of rain and frost are sharper than praise or blame

**He is to help organise a rebellion against the  
Ottoman Empire.**

murder will be like the drinking of milk.

**He wants to draw on her reports for his campaign.**

murder will be like the spilling of water

**In Cairo, she will have a post on the Military  
Intelligence Team.**

the mountain wears a skullcap of snow

**She will be the eyes and ears of the British and  
convince the Arab tribes to co-operate.**

a wet evening mist rises from the ground

**The British have occupied Baghdad.**

**She wants to make Baghdad a great centre of Arab civilisation and prosperity. To move the Arabs towards independence.**

the trees must be washed

they are very dusty

**The British will not give up Iraq. She must come to Cairo to put the Mesopotamian case. The Arabs can gain independence afterwards. It is distasteful, but it must be done.**

the voice of the wind will be heard

*She is Sheherezade in the Arabian Nights.*

*He says, come to Cairo, Miss Bell.*

*She says, I will come to Cairo, Mr Lawrence.*

one day they take the tent down and depart

and the place is left desolate

*his woollen cloak is covered with silver beads*

*when the wind shifts, the women set the tent up to face  
in another direction*

the touch of the rain will be gentler than praise or blame

*they are in a country like a garden of flowers.*

murder is like the drinking of milk

**They will lunch at the Savoy in Cairo.  
Turkish coffee. Cigarettes.**

pale blue hyacinths

**She will wear a soft black satin gown,  
the skirt down to the ground.**

irises and red anemones

purple hellebore dot the grass

**The British will break their promises.**

the mists lift their heads from the hollows

**They have sold the same camel twice.**

wisdom hath builded a house

she has hewn out her seven pillars

**Does she think she is a spy?**

**I am a traveller, she says.**

**So am I, he says.**

in the eastern sky

the strong yellow rays of the rising sun

a pine cone from a cedar in Lebanon

**two men**

*they are in a country like a garden of flowers.*

**Khalil, Palestinian, Christian, poet  
in Jerusalem**

**Alter, American, Jewish, poet  
in Jerusalem**

America has entered the war

the Turks say anyone hiding an American is a spy

*the word 'guest' is sacred from Jordan to Euphrates*

**in the desert, says Khalil, I would roast a sheep**

**your sheep is not kosher, says Alter**

**bread and olives      tea with lemon**

two men

arrested on the last day of Ottoman rule

**December 1917**

**The British have entered Jerusalem.**

two men

sit back to back      their

hands tied together behind their backs

*the plain is covered with places wherein they rested*

walking      chained      socks in rags.

four days to Jericho.

chained socks in rags. walking

how many days to Damascus

*they shall sleep in their houses*

**I could teach you Arabic, says Khalil**

**I could teach you Hebrew, says Alter**

two men

in one cell

*they shall eat at their tables*

**Now the British have entered Jerusalem**

**Palestine belongs to the Palestinians.**

**Now the British have entered Jerusalem**

**there is a Jewish state. It is promised.**

**A promised land.**

*the nightingale nourishes the red rose with his heart*

**There is a Balfour letter of declaration**

**says Alter**

**It is not an internationally approved document. It is not  
even a formal promise by the British government**

**says Khalil**

*the strip of herbage divides the desert from the sown*

**The British are fooling the Arabs, says Alter.**

**The British are fooling the Jews, says Khalil.**

*a wind catches at the boughs in envious mood –*

when we are free

**My study in Jerusalem will have green walls and black  
furniture. I shall have a telephone                      says  
Alter**

when we are free

**My house in Jerusalem will have an orchard and a tennis  
court. I shall have a telephone                      says  
Khalil**

*wisdom hath builded a house*

they are released on bail

**You can buy a new pair of socks, Mr Sakakini,  
says Alter**

*they will sit on cushions and drink coffee*

**We shall form a group of Jews and Arabs, Mr Levine,  
says Khalil**

*a jug of wine              a loaf of bread*

**Hebrew for the Arabs**

**Arabic for the Jews**

*some olives              tea with lemon*

one day they take down the tent and depart

two men

## forest fire in Provence

haze has

fired underground dry resin, unprompted clouds rise  
pining red through the wind. changing yesterday's green

the fire speaks sparks, cannot control its speech, a

person with too much to say and no order

in which to say it

the damage measured in area and value by men who

received postcards from relatives last summer

their elbows are comfortable, though

some will have no tables this winter

## American Brando

Harley-Davison roars splat, splattering

fumes, toxic, noxious, an

American dream, dreaming

face, lips tongued, arrogance twanged

through narrow lanes, across

flat fields, nose to gate, a gale gently starting

an East Anglian farmer bends, shielding his eyes from

the wind's tears, no time to bid the day across

rows of white crosses growing from the ground sweep

by the bike's side

legs streak splashed mud from careless wheels

leather back streaks away

crosses are alone

nothing crosses their minds, not even a dream

## **Sheba and Solomon**

**1.**

Sheba comes to Solomon, and after  
the exchange of gifts, they share a red and purple  
velvet cushion

sewn in stars and moons, no  
graven image

red and yellow and pink and on  
the hot pink Sheba rests her hand and drinks  
with Solomon and they  
listen to the women singing

(they do not know that after the  
Second Temple women's voices and  
instruments will be banned )

and Solomon lifts Sheba's hand and guesses her fingers  
must be heavy after the business of the day  
and Sheba smiles  
and the women sing

**2.**

with the wine so warm and Solomon's beard  
like velvet it is easy to cushion in  
the dark tent

next day Sheba blinks in the cold morning sun  
moves away from Solomon, and the velvet cools

**3.**

Sheba remounts her camel  
moves in a cocoon of mist    her women beside her  
the dry desert promises lushness  
ahead                            every breath is damp  
the horizon shimmers silver mercury  
their skins glisten, their feet glide

Sheba dreams of her Biblical sisters  
running round the rims  
of earthenware, as real to her as  
her own body

graven images, forbidden women arousing something deep  
imagining muscles moving, tendons flexing, bronze roundness  
glowing a ruby danger, far away from Solomon's red and purple passion

Sheba pulls her robe close around her

**5.**

the Bible does not relate details, but nine  
months later, Sheba is delivered of a son  
she is a rich woman in her own right

for this is the land of Ophir, which some say is in  
the heart of Africa, where King Solomon's mines are

this son, called Menelik, grows towards  
Ethiopia where he becomes the first king of the Jews

**6.**

the Bible rides through the centuries  
and it comes to pass  
that the Ethiopian Jews, the Falasha, are outlawed,  
their lands seized and a rabbi brings his family to St John's  
Wood, to give a talk about their plight

(not knowing that now women's voices and  
instruments are no longer banned )

**7.**

I come upon them in Regent's Park  
marvelling at the giraffes, something kindred in the way their  
necks crane





