

BAREFOOT ON THE CARDO MAXIMUS

Under a stone sun in Delos,
I contemplated gods who don't exist;
I sailed on to Rhodes,
But met no scholars.
I landed at the Port of Brindisi;
Danced on the red-tile roofs of Florence.
The first time I ate shark-fin soup
I slithered in Liverpool near the docks.
North African Muslims fed me curry
In a steamy hole in Manchester, England.
In East Berlin I gaped through the eyes of *Krystalnacht*
Into the fragmented yard of a synagogue.
I rode a train out of Germany forever
Praying the prayer for the dead. Amen.

Doesn't the Cardo Maximus lead the ragged doubters
To slouch single-file to Spinoza's house?
My travels are but a barefoot pauper's
Traverse on flesh and paper.

In Zion, dusk hunches over bronze domes,
sand-casting shadows in amber, cranberry, and gold.
Down alleyways darkened like alexandrite stone,
I've meandered, squinting and waiting for a prophet
whose eyes glint fire, whose hair blazes bolts.
My books sent surface mail were lost at sea,
hopelessly spinning in Charybdis the whirlpool.
"Go home and read the Psalms,"
consoled the Orthodox Jew from Morocco.
"Messiah will come before your mail."

I scoffed and free-thought like a Greek
but debauched like a Roman,
Dipping my life into wormwood sop.
I played dice with knucklebones,
and paid *baksheesh* to the devil,
until facing the One whom I had pierced,
just by being me,
just by being me.



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