

LOVE SONG TO MY RUNNING SHOES

Let us run then, you and I,
Bruges' canals spread out against the sky,
Fog rising up like in a medieval fable;

Kruispoort

Let us run, through dark deserted streets,
Beneath that tourist treaded mill,
Crossing others, testing their own legs and will;

Streets and city gates follow anti-clockwise - I insist
Oh do not ask, 'Why is it ?'
Let us run, and make our evening visit;

Dampoort

Youths smoke, lying on a bank,
They don't seem to like me, to be frank,
A dealer's pitbull stands on guard,
Sweet smells tear their young lives apart.

There is no time, I do not dare,
No time to turn back, confront their stare,
And why would I disturb their universe,
For decisions and revisions, they will not reverse ?

Ezelpoort

Neither there, no police to be seen,
So even if the traffic lights are not on green,
I run: in a minute I should be half time,
Steps and heartbeat in a steady rhyme,

Stil Ende

Birds (formost swans, so fair), and fountains everywhere,
But benches turned towards the traffic there.

Warning: "*Don't feed the animals*",
Here, where mad cows were cannibals.

People come and go,
Talking about chickens and their 'Club' hero.

And I have known their eyes already, known them all,
The eyes that fix you in a passing glance,
Thinking that at my age, they still went out to dance.

Smedenpoort

I have known that road, down to my dead fathers' town,

I have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out that life with Sunday coffee spoons.

Tall trees reaching over me,
Their naked fingers crossed,
A chapel's ceiling, at Nature's summer cost.
Dog owners without paper bags,
so 'Bobby' stops to press a hit,
'Heavenly Father, forgive our daily shit'

Minnewater

I have known it, but do not know it all,
Even perfume from a tourist dress,
Won't make me to digress.

Nuns come and go,
Praying for a Lord or so.

Black Beguins in this Flemish, christian town,
Strange problem for a 'Blok' so brown...

Katelijnebrug

Question marks in black and red,
Painted on the wall:
*"If I leave you,
Will you wait for me ?
If I come back,
Will you still be there ?"*
Dark questions,
Many parents met,
And didn't answer, not at all.

Fast cars come and go,
Racing to places like Bocacchio.

Gentpoort

The last climb before that gate,
Higher than the ships, trailing their late white wake,
But no mermaids singing, each to each,
The sea's today too far to reach.

Visitors come and go,
Talking of cathedrals and Michelangelo.

Coupure

A harbour without waves,
Got to get home, my body craves,
A quay of old, uneven stones,

I feel them through my tired bones.

But I will be back in time,
There will be time, there will be time,
Time for you and time for me,
Time for a kiss - my flower -
Before the evening shower.

Molenbrug

Towers, churches, countless to my left,
The 'Green' canal quiet, I cross it deft.
Terrace tables empty,
No icecream to be sold,
But in 'Uilenspieghel',
Bruges' beer flows cold.

Verversdijk

And will it have been worth it, after all,
After the sweat, the lack of breath, the pain,
Doctors never talk so plain,
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: *'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you, I shall tell you all:
I was not running to outrun you all'*.

No, I was not an athlete, nor was meant to be,
A jogger, one that will do,
To swell his own progress, thanks to a Nike Air Max shoe.
At times ridiculous,
A fool's program, so meticulous.

I grow old... I grow old....
I shiver, sweating in the evening cold.

I have lingered in the chambers of my run,
A doorbell rings where I have begun.
My chrono stops the dream,
'I'm still alive !', I scream.

To T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 1917

J. Falnon, April 2, 2000