

THE TRAVELLERS (JOHANNESBURG)

Trevor Whittock

Sitting together on a bench
In Joubert Park,
Grasping hands only,
They heard in the city dusk
A locomotive whistle.
Merging memories and desires
Woke to sensation
With that distant wailing:
Of strangers undressing
In the yellow light of a compartment,
Darkness of Karoo spaces outside,
Blurred rock rising to the window,
Falling back into darkness;
A wait at some dorps station
With a faint steam hiss
And Afrikaans half-heard
On the borders of sleep,
Till a whistle wails its reassurance,
And they cling together,
In the rhythmic heart
Of a voyaging train.