

Sydney Carter - reflections

Brief intro ... man who defined his life and faith as a *dance*... and whose most famous piece of work was about the dance of another...

3 *My Believing Bones*

Swung by the rhythm of
a yes and no
between the living and
the dead I go.
The dance is in my bones
and though I see
that every dancing bone
will cease to be
I will believe my bones
and learn to trust
my living and my dying,
for I must.

Coming and going by
the dance, I see
that what I am not is
a part of me.
Dancing is all that I
can ever trust,
the dance is all I am,
the rest is dust.
I will believe my bones
and live by what
will go on dancing when
my bones are not

4 *Lord Of The Dance*

Biography - Nicholas Williams 2006

In contrast to many other creative figures, Sydney Carter, who was born in Camden Town on 6 May 1915, enjoyed his formative early years, whether studying at Islington's Montem Street London County Council school or as a bluecoat boy at Christ's Hospital. Not for him the memory of schooldays spent brooding on the dark shape of things to come! Instead, he enjoyed hymn-singing in the school chapel (daily and twice on Sunday), visits with his father to the Finsbury Park Empire, and old English songs and community singing, to which were added in due course other diversions such as visits to concerts of classical music and enjoying Spanish dances played on a wind-up gramophone. While reading History at Balliol College, Oxford, he also wrote poetry and dreamed of being a painter or film producer.

Instead, he went on to become a teacher, but his own education as a songwriter continued through folk music. He imbibed it wherever he went until, during the Second World War, while serving in the Mediterranean with the Friends' Ambulance Unit, he discovered Greek folk music. From this defining experience flowed the possibility of all his subsequent achievement: not only the legacy of songs that are known and loved worldwide, but also his work in satire and in humanitarian politics, his questioning, probing verse, and his leading role in the folk revival of the 1960s and 70s.

Though Sydney lived to see his words and music appreciated internationally, he remained a Londoner to the end of his life. At home in Herne Hill he enjoyed the company of family and friends, welcomed visitors from many parts of the globe, and kept a lively and youthful interest in current affairs until, in his last years, the ravages of Alzheimer's Disease took him to a place where, to quote another English poet, the past became 'a strange land'.

Sydney Carter died on 13 March 2004. But although he is no longer with us, in his words and music that continue to inspire so many people, his spirit is still 'travelling on'.

What is Carter's spirit ... his 'theology'....??

Nicholas Williams again (Obituary, Independent , 17 March 2004)

That two of his most popular lyrics, "One More Step" and "Travel On", should invoke the concept of journey was indeed no coincidence. In this voyaging faith of interrogatives, the creed lay in the question mark, often of a Zen-like paradox. In 1974, he wrote:

Faith is more basic than language or theology. Faith is the response to something which is calling us from the timeless part of our reality. Faith may be encouraged by what has happened in the past, or what is thought to have happened in the past, but the only proof of it is in the future. Scriptures and creeds may come to seem incredible, but faith will still go dancing on. Even though (because it rejects a doctrine) it is now described as "doubt". This, I believe, is the kind of faith that Christ commended.

Such an approach, quite without post-modern irony, and uttered with the Blakeian candour of a man asking questions of himself, has brought comfort and inspiration to many similarly beset by uncertainty over the years. Moreover, the seismic upheaval in religious attitudes both here and abroad since the 1960s has brought Carter's approach in from the cold, his open-ended faith now in tune with the multifarious nature of contemporary Christianity, and pertinent to contexts of public worship such as school assemblies.

A poem called *Interview* beautifully expresses Carter's ideas on the faith journey....

5 *Interview*

Where have you been all day?

Fishing with question marks.
The fish I caught
are piled up in the basket.
What I seek
is deeper than the water.

Where have you been all night?

Travelling past the flesh,
beyond the bone,
until I came to nothing.
Back again
I travel in the morning.

So what do you believe in?

Nothing fixed or final
all the while I
travel a miracle. I doubt,
and yet
I walk upon the water.

That is impossible

I know it is.
Improbability
is all you can expect. The
natural
is supernatural.

Where are you going next?

Like you, I ask that question.
I can only travel with the music.
I am full
of curiosity.

Carter wrote that he believed in

*Nothing fixed or final
all the while I
travel a miracle. I doubt,
and yet
I walk upon the water.*

I shall use these categories to help guide us through a selection of his music and poetical work, in the hope that we gain a good experience of travelling along with him...

Nothing fixed or final

- which infers that Carter is not so much looking for God in any fixed text, but in experience and interaction with others:

6 *Present Tense*

Your holy hearsay is not evidence
Give me the good news in the present tense
What happened nineteen hundred years ago
May not have happened
How am I to know?

The living truth is what I long to see
I cannot lean upon what used to be
So shut the bible up and show me how
The Christ you talk about
Is living now

If you believe that there is nothing fixed or final then you'll probably be inclined to sometimes look sideways at life to find - and provoke - new insights. Or perhaps look backwards, as in the following poem (*Carter reading*):

7 *Run the film backwards*

When I was eighty-seven they took me from my coffin
They found a flannel nightshirt for me to travel off in
All innocent and toothless, I used to lie in bed
Still trailing clouds of glory from the time when I was dead

The cruel age of sixty-five put paid to my enjoyment
I had to wear a bowler hat and go to my employment
But at the age of sixty I found I had a wife
And that explains the children - I had wondered all my life

I kept on growing younger, and randier and stronger
Till at the age of twenty-one I had a wife no longer
With mini-skirted milkmaids I frolicked in the clover
A cuckoo kept on calling me until my teens were over

Then algebra and cricket and sausages a-cooking
And puffing at a cigarette when teacher wasn't looking
The trees are getting taller, the streets are getting wider
My mother is the world to me, and soon I'll be inside her

And now it is so early, there's nothing can I see
Before the world, or after - wherever can I be?

Carter's tricksterism inspired by *Jesus* who seems to deal with life this way. In his notes to *Lord of the Dance* Carter wrote,

'I see Christ as the incarnation of that piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality...
'Whether Jesus ever leaped in Galilee to the rhythm of a pipe or drum I do not know. We are told that David danced (and as an act of worship too), so it is not impossible. The fact that many Christians have regarded dancing as a bit ungodly (in church, at any rate) does not mean that Jesus did'

The next song - which Carter calls a carol (he calls most of his songs, carols) - had never been sung in any church, as far as he knew, when he wrote about it in 1974. It's a carol of the mistletoe variety, he says. And he goes on to describe it as 'slapstick'... the slapstick being 'the wand or bat of Harlequin'.

8 *Come, Holy Harlequin*

Come holy harlequin!
Shake the world and shock the hypocrite
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.
Let the feast of love begin,
Let the hungry all come in,
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.

Come holy harlequin!
Show the world your slapstick liberty
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.
Show the crooked how to live,
Be forgiven and forgive,
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.

Come holy harlequin!
Shake your rags and shine like a diamond.
Rock, roll, carry it away, turn it upside down.
Caper with your Columbine,
Turn the water into wine,
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.

Teach the crippled how to leap,
Throw their crutches on a heap,
Rock, love, carry it away, turn it upside down.

Rock, love, carry it away,
Lift the world up by your levity,
Rock, love, carry it away,
turn it upside down.

All the while I travel a miracle

'Lift the world up by your levity': this image seems to be a little at odds with the idea which so many have carried for so long, of God as immovably above us all, and perfect. But Carter sees things differently.

What then, of the perfection and omnipotence of God? His perfection and omnipotence must include what seems to us the very opposite: His incompleteness, His vulnerability. In which case, Jesus is the very image of divinity in a way that we could hardly dare to think. ...

We may want (eternal rest) (apparently) but God does not. God needs trouble. All we can hope for is to see it as God sees it: to travel with the Creator in whose image we are so uncomfortably made. [Rock of Doubt, 6]

Which may be why Carter chose to describe his faith as 'travelling a miracle', a very complex journey which he describes beautifully in *Creator of the Living*:

9 *Creator of the Living*

Creator of the living,
Creator of the light,
Keep shining to your children
That travel through the night.
In loneliness and terror,
In madness and despair,
If Love is what you really are,
Oh, show them you are there.

Creator of the living,
We have no life but you.
Upon the tree of torture
You hang and suffer too.
Your life is in your daughter,
Your life is in your son,
Created and Creator still
On every cross are one.

If Love is what your name is,
Your angry children cry,
Is this the love you show us?
We suffer and we die.
Through bitterness and blindness
Keep shining in us too,
That we may keep and cradle still
The gentleness of you.

Keep shining, Love, and travel

Keep shining in us still!
Like Mary we can mother,
Like Herod we can kill
The miracle we carry
That is our maker too.
Keep shining, Love, that we may show
The radiance of you.

The miracle that we travel is *journeying with the creator*: a rocky journey but one of light, gentleness.... and Love.

Carter's output includes many songs about fellow-travellers on the journey. Some from scripture, some from the folk and faith - and political - traditions.

His song *Friday Morning* was about two fellow-travellers in scripture - the thief and the carpenter on neighbouring crosses. It proved to be immensely controversial because of the line 'It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me'. Enoch Powell and the Daily Express called for *Friday Morning* to be banned because of these lines, and the American Armed Forces announced that they were having it removed from their hymnal, which reportedly surprised Carter who 'didn't even know it was there'. As Paul Oestreicher wrote in his 2004 Guardian obituary of Carter,

Classic theology says that it was God [they crucified], but Sydney lets the irony stand. In this, as in the following stanzas, he piles on the guilt, piles it on to God. It leads to the deepest of all questions: is God in Auschwitz or the Twin Towers, the killer or the victim? If there is a God?

Friday Morning was a song for Good Friday, Carter said, or the Feast of the Innocents - a song 'about the crucifixion of the innocent and of the guilty too', which 'contemplates, celebrates ... the Atonement.'

When we're journeying together we do have our arguments. But God has his very special way of resolving them. As this song also shows:

10 *Judas and Mary*

Said Judas to Mary, 'Now what will you do
With your ointment so rich and so rare?'
'I'll pour it all over the feet of the Lord
And I'll wipe it away with my hair,' she said,
'Wipe it away with my hair.'

'Oh Mary, oh Mary, oh think of the poor
This ointment, it could have been sold,
And think of the blankets and think of the bread
You could buy with the silver and gold.' he said,
'Buy with the silver and gold.'

'Tomorrow, tomorrow I'll think of the poor
Tomorrow,' she said, 'not today;

For dearer than all of the poor in the world
Is my love who is going away,' she said,
My love who is going away.'

Said Jesus to Mary, 'Your love is so deep
Today you may do as you will.
Tomorrow you say I am going away,
But my body I leave with you still,' he said,
'My body I leave with you still.'
'The poor of the world are my body,' he said,
'To the end of the world they shall be.
The bread and the blankets you give to the poor
You'll know you have given to me,' he said,
'Know you have given to me.'

'My body will hang on the cross of the world
'Tomorrow,' he said, 'and today,
And Martha and Mary will find me again
And wash all the sorrow away,' he said,
'Wash all the sorrow away.'

In his notes to this song Carter acknowledges that he has 'attributed to Jesus words which are not found in the New Testament. I have had to guess at what he would have said. The surprising twist in the tale - where the body of Jesus becomes the poor of the world - perhaps owes something to the gospel of the poor which Jesus teaches in the beatitudes and in Matthew 25, which Carter interpreted so memorably in *When I Needed a Neighbour*. There are strong echoes of that in this lesser-known song, which suggests to us where we may find other fellow-travellers in our world today...

11 *I come like a beggar (Carter singing)*

I come like a beggar
With a gift in my hand.
I come like a beggar
With a gift in my hand.
*By the hungry I will feed you,
By the poor I make you rich,
By the broken I will mend you,
Tell me, which one is which?*

I come like a prisoner
To bring you a key.
I come like a prisoner
To bring you a key.
By the hungry I will feed you...

The need of another
Is the gift that I bring,
The need of another

Is the gift that I bring
By the hungry I will feed you...

Take the wine that I bring you
and the bread that I break,
Take the wine that I bring you
and the bread that I break.
By the hungry I will feed you...

Carter was above all a folk singer. His 1966 album *Lord of the Dance*, recorded with Martin Carthy, was his biggest commercial success and he collaborated with many respected folk artists over the years. Though his religious songs became immensely popular he was arguably still regarded as something of an outsider in church circles. Unsurprisingly then he found fellow-travellers in the folk-faith tradition, inspirational characters who were themselves perhaps peripheral in their time.

12 *Julian of Norwich*

Loud are the bells of Norwich
And the people come and go.
Here by the tower of Julian
I tell them what I know.

*Ring out, bells of Norwich
And let the winter come and go,
All shall be well again I know*

Love like a yellow daffodil
Is coming through the snow
Love like a yellow daffodil
Is Lord of all I know

Ring for the yellow daffodil
The flower in the snow,
Ring for the yellow daffodil
And tell them what I know.

Ring out, bells of Norwich
And let the winter come and go,
All shall be well again I know....

Carter seems to be writing through the persona of Julian here, *empathising* with her deeply, and in this and other songs he shows a deep, mystical sense of his communion with the saints...

13 *Like the Snow*

Tell me, where did Helen go?
Here is where she had her dwelling.

She has vanished like the snow -
Where, there is no way of telling;
Here is where she had her dwelling.
All the while they come and they go -
Where, there is no way of telling;
She has vanished like the snow.

What became of Heloise?
Abelard - he was her lover -
Notre Dame or Saint Denys;
Where he went I can't discover.
Abelard, he was her lover.
All the while they come and they go -
Where they went I can't discover;
She has vanished like the snow.

Joan came riding from Lorraine -
Everybody knows the story.
England burnt her in Rouen;
Theirs the shame and ours the glory.
Everybody knows the story -
All the while they come and they go -
England's shame and France's glory,
She has vanished like the snow.

Where the time and where the place is -
That is what I'd like to know,
Where their glory and their grace is
When they vanish like the snow.

Helen - of Troy - (mythical) whose abduction started the Trojan War and whose 'face launched a thousand ships'

Heloise and Abelard - 11th century illicit lovers; early romantic love letters; The *Problemata Heloissae* (Heloise's Problems) is a collection of 42 theological questions directed from Heloise to Abelard at the time when she was abbess at the Paraclete, and his answers to them.

Joan of Arc, 15th century virgin saint and national heroine of France. She led the French army to several important victories.

- unusual collection of 'saints' to capture the heart and mind of a folk singer from Herne Hill... but the way he tells their story: in questions, in embracing their mystery, in trying to stand where they themselves stood, in refusing to give up on the search for them even though their truth seems to have melted away... says a great deal about Carter as a writer with great empathy and compassion for others, a deep sense of mystery and a search for companionship on life's challenging journey.

[B R E A K H E R E]

I doubt

To recap:

So what do you believe in?

Nothing fixed or final
all the while I
travel a miracle. I doubt,
and yet
I walk upon the water.

- we have spent some time gaining some idea of what Carter meant by believing in nothing fixed or final, and in travelling a miracle. And we have found a religious songwriter with a profound sense of doubt about many of the certainties usually sung about so triumphantly in church, yet at the same time a man of great trust in the journey he is making with God ... and with many fellow-travellers, past and present, who inform and enliven his journey, often forgotten or marginalised people.

Clearly Sydney Carter's faith has a strong political consciousness to it, and it's no surprise - especially given his involvement in the radical folk movement of the 1960s - that he was a keen supporter of CND and wrote them a marching song titled *I Want a Little Bomb Like You*; his involvement in Quakerism and humanitarian politics defined him as much as his leading role in the folk revival.

Perhaps his best-known protest song is *Crow on the Cradle*, which proved controversial because of its subtlety. Rather than employing slogans Carter defines the problem of militarism in a far more profound and thus far more disturbing way, in deeply human terms, in terms of the threatened child. Crows are known for killing weak lambs and for feeding on freshly dead corpses; they are also known to feed their old and weakened parents, which is often cited as a fine example of filial piety...

14 *Crow on the Cradle*

The sheep's in the meadow, the cows in the corn
Now is the time for a child to be born
He'll cry for the moon and he'll laugh at the sun
And it it's a boy he can carry a gun:
Sang the crow on the cradle.

If it should be that our baby's a girl
Never you mind if her hair doesn't curl
With rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes
And a bomber above her wherever she goes:
Sang the crow on the cradle.

Rock-a-bye baby the light and the dark
Somebody's baby is born for a fight
And rock-a-bye baby the white and the black
Somebody's baby is not coming back:

Sang the crow on the cradle.

Your mummy and your daddy, they'll scrape and they'll save
They'll build you a coffin and they'll dig you a grave
But hushaby little one, why do you weep
We've got a toy that will put you to sleep:
Sang the crow on the cradle.

Give me a gun and I'll shoot that bird dead
That's what your mummy and daddy once said
Oh, crow on the cradle what shall I do?
That is the thing that I leave up to you:
Sang the crow on the cradle.

Many have criticised this for portraying a bleak picture of humanity. Is it a hopeless song? The last couplet suggests not: but that it is within our reach to challenge and transcend militarism; we have the choice. *That is the thing that I leave up to you / Sang the crow on the cradle.*

Carter also got into trouble for starting a song with the line, *The Devil wore a Crucifix*, but as with the previous protest song it might be argued that he's pretty close to the gospel tradition of Jesus denouncing the brood of vipers, with this one:

15 *The Devil*

The Devil wore a Crucifix
"The Christians they are right"
The Devil said "so let us burn
A heretic tonight,
A heretic tonight".

The stars and stripes or swastika
The crescent or a star
The Devil he will wear them all
No matter what they are,
No matter what they are,

In red or blue or khaki
In green or black and tan
The Devil is a patriot
A proper party man,
A proper party man.

Whenever there's a lynching
The Devil will be there
A witch or an apostle,
The Devil doesn't care,
The Devil doesn't care.

He'll beat a drum in China

He'll beat it in the west
He'll beat a drum for anyone
"And a Holy war is best,
A Holy war is best".

The Devil isn't down in hell
Or riding in the sky
The Devil's dead (I've heard it said)
They're telling you a lie,
They're telling you a lie!

In *Green Print for Song*, Carter wrote:

Do I believe in the Devil? Yes and no. 'Devil', like 'God', is a man-made label to denote (however crudely) an experience that man has had. Abolish 'Devil' if you like; formulate the experience another way. Buddhists do without a 'God' and 'Devil' in the Christian sense. They may talk of 'gods' and 'devils', but the reality of these is thought of as being only relative. How relative? Well, I remember a book by an Italian traveller in which he reported a conversation with a lama. They were sitting in a room with grisly paintings round the wall depicting devils torturing the damned in hell. "Do you think that these things really happen?" asked the traveller. "Oh, no," replied the holy man, "they are all illusory. They are no more real than the chair that you are sitting on."

Is the Devil (or Evil, if you like) as real as the chair that I am sitting on? Can Evil be said to have a personality? Can it become incarnate in a man, a woman, or a mob? Look at the television, read the papers, listen to the news on the radio. Evil is not solid like a table or a chair, but there are times when it seems no less real. It may not have a face, but it can wear a mask.

It can wear a righteous or a patriotic mask. It can wear the CND badge or the Cross. When the Crusaders took Jerusalem, they burned Jews alive in a synagogue. It can wear a smiling face. "A man may smile and smile and be a villain" said Hamlet, and he found it hard to credit.

Do not put on horns and a tail to sing this song. Do not wear a placard saying 'I am bad'. Sing it cheerfully, nobly, patriotically. Give it glee and dedication. That is the way to be truly diabolical.

Clearly Sydney Carter is coming from a long line of fellow-travellers in a tradition where political radicalism and religious sensibility combine. In this song he sings about one who he admires, John Ball, who was a Lollard priest thrown out of the church for suggesting that all men were equal in God's sight. The suggestion may sound tame to us today - until we begin to engage with its implications.

16 *John Ball*

Who'll be the lady, who will be the lord,
When we are ruled by the love of another?
Tell me, who'll be the lady, who will be the lord,
In the light that is coming in the morning.

*Sing, John Ball and tell it to them all -
Long live the day that is dawning!
And I'll crow like a cock, I'll carol like a lark,
For the light that is coming in the morning.*

Eve is the lady, Adam is the lord,
When we are ruled by the love of another.
Eve is the lady, Adam is the lord,
In the light that is coming in the morning.

Labour and spin for fellowship you're in,
Labour and spin for the love of one another.
Labour and spin for fellowship you're in,
And the light that is coming in the morning.

All shall be met in the fellowship I say,
All shall be met in the love of one another,
All shall be met in the fellowship I say,
In the light that is coming in the morning.

As the musician Chris Wood writes in his sleeve notes to this song,

The night Wat Tyler and the lads were camped out on Blackheath before their 'meeting' with the King, John Ball gave a sermon which began, "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"

After the rebels were put down John Ball was singled out, hung, drawn and quartered before a 14 year old King Richard at St Albans. Sydney Carter... is the quietest of English heroes, I have not heard a song of his which is anything other than top-draw (sic).

And yet I walk upon the water

Carter feels the darkness in the world, sees the crows on the cradle and hears the John Balls crying in the darkness. 'And yet,' he writes, 'I walk upon the water'.

Empathising again with a scriptural character Sydney Carter casts himself as a Peter, one who has stepped out faith in the direction of the one whose words he believes and trusts, one who in doing so has put himself in step with the rest of creation, the winds and the waves who obey Christ too. This is close to being Franciscan... as Carter expresses so well in his *Carol of the Creatures*....

17 *Carol of the Creatures*

Creator high and holy,
To you all praise

and power belong.
Let all men listen
to the carol
of your creatures.
You are the end
and the beginning
of their song. Oh,

*Leap and carol to the Lord, I say,
show what He has done,
Oh, leap and carol to the Lord, I say,
show Him like the sun.*

And first I call my brother Sun,
for by that light I see,
The leaping of the Holy One
that calls the light to me. Oh,

I call upon my Sister Moon,
I love that gentle light,
And all the stars so sharp and clear
that shiver in the night. Oh,

I call on you my Brother Wind,
be weather foul or fair,
You show the likeness of the Lord
I breathe him like the air. Oh,

I call on you my Sister Water,
come down from the sky,
And show the likeness of the Lord,
I drink him or I die. Oh,

I call on you my Brother Fire,
in yellow light and red,
You leap and carol to the Lord
with sparks around your head. Oh,

My Sister Death, you call me.
To leap and carol I cannot say no.
I am a dancer to the end and the beginning,
Of all the leaping and the carolling I go. Oh,

Come all you men and women, too,
show pity and forgive,
For by your love you show the Lord,
and with Him you shall live. Oh,

We are nearly back to where we began with Sydney Carter earlier today. Leaping and carolling to the Lord, energised by the Lord of the Dance. In this vision of

Christ and the way he should be worshipped Carter was very influenced by the Shakers. In his introduction to *The Lord of the Dance* Carter wrote,

The Shakers didn't [regard dancing as a bit ungodly]. This sect flourished in the United States in the nineteenth century, but the first Shakers came from Manchester in England, where they were sometimes called the Shaking Quakers. They hived off to America in 1774, under the leadership of Mother Anne. They established celibate communities - men at one end, women at the other; though they met for work and worship. Dancing, for them, was a spiritual activity. They also made furniture of a functional, lyrical Simplicity. Even the cloaks and bonnets that the women wore were distinctly stylish in a sober and forbidding way. Their hymns were odd, but sometimes of great beauty: from one of these ('Simple Gifts') I adapted this melody. I could have written another for the words of 'Lord of the Dance' (some people have), but this was so appropriate that it seemed a waste of time to do so. Also, I wanted to salute the Shakers.

When the Shakers shook and shivered in their worship dances, Carter wanted to know, were they shaking and shivering with terror or delight?

With delight: I think of the quivering of leaves, of light on water, or the shiver of small bells on the wrist or ankle of a dancer. But perhaps there is a touch of terror too. Sudden beauty, sudden truth, can make you shiver. You are not prepared; it is aa shock. "My heart stood still".

The wonderful thing about Sydney Carter is that in his work he fearlessly embraced both terror and delight, rather like a mother does in giving birth or a traveller does in negotiating a difficult terrain. He did this because he had the instinct that this would draw him closer both to the source of creation - God - and to himself, the created one.

I close these reflections with two pieces, a poem called *The New Song* which is Carter's rich description of the art of creation in which he says, among other things, that 'making is / a way of being made / and giving birth / a way of being born', followed by the very lively *Shake and Shiver*, which is in every way Carter's celebration of the Shakers and their tradition he so enthusiastically followed.

18 *The New Song*

Be faithful to the new song
thrusting through your
earth like a daffodil.
Be flexible
and travel with the rhythm.

Let your mind
be bent by what is coming:
making is
a way of being made
and giving birth

a way of being born.
You are the child
and father of a carol,
you are not
the only maker present.

How you make
is how you will be made.
Be gentle to
the otherness you carry,
broken by

the truth you cannot tell yet.
Mother and be
mothered by your burden.
Trust, and learn
to travel with the music.

19 *Shake and shiver*

Shake and shiver in the light, my love,
Share that light with me.
Shake and shiver in the light, my love,
Like a leaf upon the tree.

Oh, shake and shiver in the light, my love,
Share that light and
Shake it and shiver it!
Share that light with me.

Shake and shiver in the dance, my love,
Share that dance with me.
Shake and shiver in the dance, my love,
Like a wave upon the sea.

Oh, shake and shiver in the dance my love,
Share that dance and
Shake it and shiver it!
Share that dance with me.

Shake and shiver with the song, my love,
Share that song with me.
Shake and shiver with the song, my love,
And show your liberty.

Oh, shake and shiver with the song, my love,
Share that song and
Shake it and shiver it!
Share that song with me.

Shake and shiver with the life, my love,
Share that life with me.
Shake and shiver with the life, my love,
That lives in you and me.

Oh, shake and shiver with the life, my love,
Share that life and
Shake it and shiver it!
Share that life with me.

Songs and Poems

All words: Sydney Carter

© Stainer and Bell (various dates)

Music CD Sources

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