

Home

These days when I'm away too long,
anything I happen to clap eyes on,
that red phone box, somehow makes me
miss here like nothing I can name.

My heart performs its jazz drum solo
when the bared crow's feet on the 747
scrape down at Heathrow. H. M. Customs . . .
I'm resigned to the usual inquisition,

telling me with Surrey loam caked
on the tongue, home is always elsewhere.
I take it like an English middleweight
with a questionable chin, knowing

my passport photo's too open-faced,
haircut wrong (an afro) for the decade;
the stamp, British Citizen not bold enough
for my liking and too much for theirs.

The cockney cab driver begins chirpily
but can't or won't steer clear of race,
so rounds on Asians. I lock eyes with him
in the rearview when I say I'm one.

He settles to his task, grudgingly,
in a huffed silence. Cha! Drive man!
I have legal tender burning in my pocket
to move on, like a cross in Transylvania.

At my front door, why doesn't the lock
recognize me and budge? As I fight it,
I think intruder then see with the clarity
of a torture victim the exact detail:

in my case that extra twist necessary,
falling forward over the threshold
then mail or junk felicitations,
into a cool reception in the hall.

Grey light and close skies I love you.
Choky streets, roundabouts and streetlamps
with tires round them, I love you.
Police Officer, your boots need re-heeling.

Robin Redbreast; special request: burst
with calypso, bring the Michelin-rung worm
winding, carnival-style to the surface.
We must all sing for our suppers or else.

FRED D'AGUIAR