

MARTIN WILMOT BENNETT

From "Outside-in: Or Footnotes from a
Squint-eyed Guest-worker"

1

"The goodly watermelon seller"—
His wares stacked like ordnance from Eden
Pale green mantles deepest red ringed again

And again with jet-black seeds
As, now smacking it like drum,
He heaves down a melon from the top, then

In one muscled slice of knife
Surrenders it, slightly dripping,
For our inspection.

2

With there and here a skip or somersault,
Uniformly purple bracts of bougainvillea
Scurry along the floodlit tarmac

And all in the same direction; catch breath—
In ones or dozens accelerate once more
Towards only the breeze knows where:

The gates of some festive factory, perhaps;
A stadium at which victory starts backwards;
Destination whose allure's in not being reached

3

Stop Press: Jelly-babies outlawed
Along with other sweets
"in the form of worms, bones, teeth:

Merchants introducing such products in Kingdom
are warned they must suffer the consequence
in strict accordance with the regulations.”

Quote-Unquote. Censor turned Surrealist?
Zionists' joke to bring their foes into disrepute?
No; cf. *The Dhira Gazette*, 1st Safar 1420,

Here's proof fiction's less weird than truth:
Stretch virtue to insanity,
And even candy can be certed X ...

4
Brown and leathery as a four-foot winklepicker,
The giant lizard at the garage door—
Our neighbour insisting we give it water:

A guard drives up in his Air Force jeep,
Grabs the tail, drives off
With the prize ingredient for this evening's pot

5
After such expanses of sand and basalt
this glut of neon winking “Dunkin' Donuts,”
“Kentucky Fried Chicken,” “McDonald's,”
“Burger King” in local then Yankee script
beneath which Chevrolets and pick-ups
flash by on the planet's cheapest gas:
So much for “A Thousand and One Nights”!
Here Aladdin and his lamp is eclipsed,
the exotic made corporate. Its glitz
censored of cabaret and slot-machine,
picture, instead, some puritan Las Vegas—
men, men, then more men sipping fruit juice,
looking bored; and not a woman to be seen;
what pleasures exist, strictly for minors ...