

Bystanders, All

Sonia Weitz (1998)

O, the baggage we must carry
When this century is done
'Cause the one to come, will ferry
All the deeds undone, forgotten
From benign neglect and fear
To complicity begotten (and denied)

Somalia and Bosnia ...Rwanda ...the Kurds...
Words that bespeak the unspeakable
Ethnic cleansing? Genocide?
Widely spread? We must be mad!
Unthinkable? Impossible?
Ah, but Auschwitz made it thinkable!
Evil festered – you stood by!
You wouldn't believe... you couldn't believe...
You screamed in vain – you watched our pain...
Bystanders all!!!

You built a wall around your soul
You wrapped a soundproof shawl
Around your heart, to stand apart
With blinders 'round your eyes
Your ears accepted only lies
Until your active mind (and you)
Were safely left behind!!!
But now you know. Oh, yes you know.
Because last night you really saw
The horrors on the tube...

How will you keep the truth at bay?
How can you face another day
Of standing by in mute neglect?
And what effect your silence bears
Upon all future devastation
Another group? Another nation?
Another unborn generation...
Yes, now you know... Don't look away;
The past is now and here to stay!

The more you know – the more you flee;
The fig-tree doesn't hide you well
'Cause you created your own hell
To haunt us all –
Unless we dare
To care
About each other.