Derek at Dungeness

The filmmaker wrests life and beauty from a wasteland.

February 1, 1996

When he bought the little fisherman's cottage in Dungeness, Kent, filmmaker Derek Jarman had no hope of starting a garden on that desolate patch of shingle caught between the sea and a nuclear plant. But by making circles of flints he found on the beach, arranging the local brush and introducing a hardy array of new shrubs and flowers-often staked by sculptures made from old tools and driftwood-a garden is whatJarman soon began in earnest and worked on until his death f om AJDS in 1994. Excerpted here, Derek Jarman's Garden (Overlook Press/Woodstock) is Jarman's own record of his labors and thoughts at Prospect Cottage accompanied by photographs of the garden's brave beauty taken by Jarman's friend Howard Sooley.

"I had noticed the little fisherman's cottage, with its black varnish and yellow windows, before, when I was in Dungeness making two images in The Last of England. I had been struck by the area's otherwordly atmosphere—unlike any other place I had ever been—and the extraordinary light."

I walk in this garden holding the hands of dead

friends.
Old age came quickly for my
frosted generation,
cold, cold, cold, they died so
silently.
Did the forgotten generations
scream
or go full of resignation,

quietly protesting innocence?
I have no words,
my shaking hand cannot express

my fury.

Cold, cold, cold, they died so

silently.

Linked hands at 4 a.m.,

deep under the city you slept
on,
never heard the sweet flesh
song.
Cold, cold, cold, they died so

silently.

Matthew fucked Mark fucked
Luke fucked John
who lay on the bed that I lie on,

touch fingers again as you sing
this song.
Cold, cold, cold, we die so

silently.

My gilly flowers, roses, violets
blue,
sweet garden of vanished
pleasures,
Please come back next year.
Cold, cold, cold, I die so _silently.
Goodnight boys, goodnight
Johnny,
Goodnight, goodnight.

The lizards dance
in the santolina,
head over heels
in the Crambe maritima.

Fluffer is out on a prowl.

Like Thomas the cat

he stops and stares,
the lizards laugh as

they dance and play

loop the loop
under the sky
on this fine
sunny day.

Hinney Beast,

Hinney Beast,

Go away.

But Hinney Beast hovers

like the kestrel above,

Lizzy the lezzy lizard of love

—for lizards are curved,

not straight at all—
green and yellow they

scuttle away,
playing with Hinney Beast

all day long.

This is the lizards’

Dungeness song:

Swing me high and sing me
low,
bless us sun as we
bask in your glow,
give us a larder of flies for
Lea
and plenty of beatles
for lunch and as we
let the sun shine on
in the infinite blue
and Hinney Beast’s

shadow—we can see you.

Hinney Beast
has
lost his shadow.

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