

Poems by Jo Salmon

MAZE MARKET

The hypnagogic vivid colours swirl
I am descending, drifting, deeper, deeper.
The wild-haired woman ferries me across the astral sea

Where,
On Yonder Shore the town with the Maze market stands
The labyrinth; where wares are traded.
Where hippy dresses and Hare Krishna jostle
For subterranean space,
With the incense and oils
That make scents.

The Happy Hag shows me things that don't fit
My shapeless form.
She navigates my soul upon fluids curves
And I am.
In concord with the crafts,
The creations of my alternative state,
My other home.

The Wise Witch ferries me,
Takes me to my maze market,
In the town that stands on Yonder Shore,
Across the astral sea.

THE INSTITUTION

It was a man called Ben that showed me round
The room with the windows too high up to see out of.

He told me that he would be the key-worker
Facilitating
The implementation
Of my client-centred-care-plan.

The other staff were in
A staff meeting
Behind a door
That said 'Staff Only'.
'They should have been finished by now', said Ben
And showed me the fire exits.

'We have an art group every Wednesday',
Said Ben proudly, and pointed to a corner
Where colouring books and crayons stood
Waiting.
Just in case
A therapeutic need should arise.

The other clients sat around Ikea tables
Comparing medications
Or they stared into weak Nescafe
That has been purchased
From the Work Experience Group
At 50 pence a mug.

Adverts for the Allotment Task Force
And the Samaritans
Were blue tacked (not pinned, I noted)
To a noticeboard that was hung
On one white-washed wall.

At the end of the tour,
Mr Bleaney,
Sorry,
Ben,
Asked me if I had any questions.
There was only one that sprang to mind;
“Has it really come to this?”