

# Thomas Merton's Cambridge - 1933

by

David Scott

71, Bridge Street  
is now opposite a bookshop,  
over a camera shop,  
and beside a bookbinders which  
was there when he was.  
You can't really get a good look at it  
except by stepping back  
on the opposite side of the road  
against a record shop window.  
Looking up to the first floor  
there is a 'To Let' sign.  
You could rent it and have  
a bit of the history,  
but the empty room with its pile of rubbish  
swept into the corner  
reminds you of how much he hated the place.  
It was 1933.  
King Kong was on at The Central  
and The Tempest at the Tivoli.

The jazz, cartoons, the room above  
Athletic Stores and Hairdressers,  
the bets and dares,  
the bull-nosed journeys up to London,  
all as empty as the room is now.  
The river was seeing double  
in the dark months of the year.  
Yet,  
it was the culture God grew warm in.  
It took a while for the jazz  
to whine its way back, and the cartoons  
to strike a chord with Chuang T 'zu.  
The hermitage was a world transfigured.  
Here is the camera shop, the bookshop,  
the binders that had been there  
all the time. To see it  
I have to step back against  
the window of a record shop  
to vibrate with the busy traffic of your soul:  
but now the room has icons and slow noise,  
a fire gently crackling,  
some internal jazz.