

NO ONE TO WAVE AT

*No one
To wave at
From the
Rail of
The liner
Leaving Southampton
For New York
Along the
Pierside
Waving people
Peered
Upwards towards
The deck rails
And waved
Vicariously
At husbands
Lovers
Wives
Cousins
Brothers-in-law
Aunts
Nephews
Nieces
Blood relations
Are never bloody
With one another
At partings
Especially
On ships
And planes
I suppose
It's the sense
(Or absence)
Of mutual
Abandonment
Having*

No one
To wave at
Made me
Feel
A sort of
Heel
A stowaway
In other persons'
Affections
So
I waved
Back
As the liner
Moved
Out to sea
Where soon
Only sea spray
Lunging waves
The ship's wash
Astern
And the
Static
Invincible
Horizon
Would be left
To wave at
I waved at
Tug-boats
Freighters
Dredgers
Wharfside cranes
I waved at
A plane's
Red-winking
Wing-tip lights
I waved at

*The smoke from
The ship's funnel
Trailing upwards
At an angle
Of forty degrees
Exactly
To stern
One hundred and forty
Exactly
To prow
Precision
At time of
Departure
Keeps the flag
Flying
The turbines
Throbbing
The heart
Ticking
The pulse
Beating
The flagging spirit
From flagging
I waved at
All those
Anonymous wavers
Waving from
The wharf
Across the
Widening waves
As the
Ship's band
(Nil desperandum)
Played
Jazzed-up
Musical hits*

*From South Pacific
For Christ's sake
It's the Atlantic
We're headed for
Columbus
Remember Columbus?
He crossed it
For Christ's sake
That's why they
Called him
Christopher
(Bearer of Christ)
But let it pass
It was before
Our time
Anyway
And anyway
The name Christopher
Has been
Struck off by Rome
From the list of
Officially approved
Canonised saints
Of the Church
My own son
Christopher
(Aged four)
Is mongoloid
He'll never
Make great
Discoveries
Geographical
Navigational
Theological
Eschatological
Or otherwise*

*He walks
Feeds himself
Clutches
My hands
Laughs
Doesn't talk
But waves
Frantically
At nothing
Or everything
In particular
Anyway
I waved
From
The deck rail
At everything
And nothing
In particular
And felt better
For it
Till
It occurred
To me
That possibly
All those others
Besides me at the rail
Were waving
For the
Same reason
At no one
Or nothing
In particular
That was
At six p.m.
At six-thirty
Precisely*

*Six warning blasts
From the ship's siren
Convened us
For mock
Emergency-drill
At our respective
Assembly points
All those
Comfy-looking
Bloated-looking
Orange coloured
Life-jackets
Gave us
Collective comfort
We tied
The strings
Tightly round
Our middles
And strutted
Cock-of-the walk
Mock-of-the walk
Self savers
Wavers
At life
And disaster
And death
I'll never
Scoff again
At that word
Togetherness
Never
Words
Like people
Warts and all
Grow on us
Like warts*

*People and all
Nothing
Is dispensable
Nothing
Viva togetherness
Viva all wavers
With no one
To wave at
Waving
At nothing
And everything
In particular
Viva Christopher
Viva la vie
Viva viva
Viva
Viva.*