

St. Pancras Station

I love the names of London's railway-
stations: Paddington, St. Pancras, Euston
King's Cross, Charing Cross, Victoria,
Liverpool Street and London Bridge;
Marylebone, Moorgate, Blackfriars,
Cannon Street and Kensington Olympia;
Broad Street, Fenchurch Street and Faringdon;
Holborn Viaduct, Vauxhall and Waterloo:
an almost interminable index of termini.

I love their noisiness: announcements, whistles;
trains arriving, trains departing;
the cheerful chatter of children, joy
of lovers meeting - the long silence
of lovers' separation; slammed doors, coffee-
machines, half-caught conversations;
the flap and flutter of frightened pigeons -
and anxious parents - i-players, ringtones:
a constant, comforting cacophony.

St. Pancras is a poet's station,
saved by a poet who opposed its demolition
in days when Victorian buildings were not valued as now:
John Betjeman, whose bronze statue
seems astonished by the single-span roof.
This railway cathedral offers routes to the Midlands;
Gatwick and Brighton, Bedford and Luton;
Brussels and Paris - and places beyond:
the magic of Eurostar, the romance of the railway.