

A time in the life of a teenage apprentice

There was a time when my life was set
around a factory job, fixed and long.

To get there took effort on a bike,
the riding home exhausted me.

Still, evening pleasures called to me,
I'd go out, wander with the lads.

We'd stroll, try to chat up girls, too shy
to reach for touch, did nothing else,
too broke to drink or smoke,
hung out on corners until a neighbour
moved us on. We'd stay out late
then slowly head for bed unsatisfied.

Morning drudge came on quite fast,
exhausted even as I'd hit the pedal.

The early travel got me every time.

Days were only rescued by telling lies
about exciting, non-existent, love lives.

They are working

They sit on a velour couch
in a panelled hotel lobby.
Lamps on side tables

create a dull glow. A carpet,
with red, cyan and yellow circles,
gives a nineties kitsch feel.

She rocks imperceptibly,
almost, has a terrorised
smile, wears business:

best dull wool dress,
formal hair and make-up,
pumps over new tights.

She is young, stocky,
pulls at her dress, small talk
hysterically difficult.

He has the charcoal
lived-in suit, wears a
jaded look, hardly

catches her eye.
His taller torso
leans over her.

He demonstrates how
to make the phone call,
get the appointment.

Now they haul themselves
up, gather their things.
He strides out ahead,

she scrambles after
him, vainly attempting
to keep up.

A Journey of Work

I've been a loyal party follower
all my working life
I did my time, dug the trenches
bolstered the men with their puffed plumes
saw them on and off pedestals
waited with an eye always to
what could be given the right chance

Then he came like a gentle breeze
worked those same trenches over and over
till an overnight success appeared

He knew who had done the work
He knew how to place in the space
He knew his demographics
He knew just where to place me

So he did and I did and I watched his back
each ministry tried me lifted me
till I was on the edge of revolution
possibly a woman Prime Minister

The next one was different in every way
it put me next in line I was ready
unfortunately bumpkins unravelled
reshuffles placed me precariously
right in the firing line an impossibility

Like rolling hills in an earthquake
eruption and eruption until and until

I held the line rowed in behind
held it together then the train wreck
that was me done under-bussed

Old Threads

After a lifetime of work
making a career of it,
I received a surprise
invitation to present myself
as a job candidate.

It last happened twenty years
ago, so there is a crisis:
business suits and an overcoat,
hung, unused in the wardrobe,
have a tiredness about them.

They are old, worn
and in need of restoration.
The oldest, a fine blue wool,
Italian cut, served my working
image for over a decade.

A chocolate brown, with orange
lining followed, slightly riskier
for corporate, though it did
lift my sombre image,
brought a warmer look.

The most recent, a mere three
years old, is M&S off-the-rack,
dark, quasi formal, bought
on the cheap for a wedding,
dressed with a maroon waistcoat.

The overcoat, soft navy wool,
raglan sleeved, lifted everything
to the height of elegance,
gave an executive appearance
and served me well until now.

In real terms, they have reached
the point of the unwearable.
Threads used to make fine fabric
have come to a natural ending
deserving of gentle withdrawal.

On Being Interviewed for a Job

I am going . . . well . . .

I am being interviewed
for work tomorrow.

I face corporate in all its regalia:

Glass offices, suave suited
Been there, etc

Younger, wide-eyed, naïve
Arse from elbow, etc

I do have a copy of the questions
Forgotten more, etc

Highly skilled, experienced
Track record, etc

It is still daunting, scary
What if, etc

I am going . . . well . . .