

Pillow talk

How did it come to this?
I am no longer young.

A languorous morning moment
with belly of a thousand beers
and the thoughts I never speak
circling like vultures above
the living carrion from which they leapt.

Memories will have their day.
Such is symbiosis.

Born to the Land of My Fathers
(but not the land of my father),
grown on tales of different places
and swept to another Motherland
(but not my mother's land).

As if shipwrecked by choice,
I face my dreams alone.

Weak spring sunshine warms the window
in reminiscence of comfort
and throws light across the pillow,
bringing to my mind a lover
and another and another.

Someone older, someone new,
someone borrowed, someone blue.

A pantheon of castaways
waving hankies and making fire;
a catalog of passing ships
releasing and weighing anchor.
Do stop a while and hear my tale

before lovers run out,
before the end of time.

The route to the future lies through the past

My dumbed-down, fast-food, living data stream
is boxed in a deserted attic dream:

An old oak chest chained with a double lock.
From its inside I hear a mighty knock.

The knocking gets stronger, wood splits, chains break,
and out of the dark leaps an old heart-ache.
The ache gives a sneer: "You buried me here,
but that can't kill me or rid you of fear."

Then I am aware of a rising tide
of old wooden boxes knocking inside.
The locks cannot hold; the contents spill free:
a child's abandoned dreams still to be;
a teacher's scorn; a lover's sly deceit;
a half-healed wound; retreat to self-defeat.
All penetrate my skull and burn my mind
and crank the well of tears my will confined.

These daymare ghouls of not-forgotten past
drag me through thoughts they raise in me at last.
"Face us," they scream, "know us! You can't suppress
our all-suppressing angst and bitterness."

I strip my soul down to the real me.
Catharsis comes, the demons fade in glee.

The morning postman's steps tick like a clock.
A box marked future gently starts to knock.

Teenager at thirty

I was a teenager at thirty.

It's there in a faded news cutting:
me smiling with an unfurrowed brow;
me quoted saying clever, clever things.

Ambition was today's escape,
tomorrow's fun.
Not long-term strategies
that now kick off too late.

I roamed at will, not needing home.
I scorned such things
as apron strings and rolling pins.
No room in my overnight bag
for another's toothbrush.

I browsed through pubs and clubs
like a child in a candy shop,
salivating at the sugar coatings
that, as I recall, sparkled back.

I planned the feast,
all there to take away,
and didn't heed that, unlike teeth,
the heart's cavities could not later be
so easily repaired.

Now, some time on,
as years and beers sink the gut,
and bedtime stories etch the face,
I have gained and lost and lost again.

Love back then was a pleasure garden
of ponds for painted ducks.
Not a raging ocean in which to drown.

I was a teenager at thirty.

Seaside holiday

Leeward, the older men concentrate.
Rods whir, water ripples gently.
Sandwiches in Tupperware,
the catch dripping in baskets.
A couple look on from deckchairs.

I watch a while and think of her.

At pier's end stand the day-trippers
gasping at the breaking waves.
Bikinis and lollipops,
goosebumps and rubber toys,
scents of salt, sugar, and suncream.

I watch a while and think of her.

Windward, the youngsters cluster.
A few dangle baited lines.
One of them gets lucky
and brains a flapping fish
bloodily against a mooring post.

I watch a while and think of her.

That Paleozoic trilobite groove

This is the age.
This is the Cambrian Period, man.
Not some fusty Archean sludge.
It's cool; it's happenin'.
Deal with it, proto-grandpa.

Hang with the 'bites.
Dig that exoskeletal gear.
Perfect for piercings and tattoos.
Hard rock, blind fury.
Rage against the marine!

Screw limestone, bro.
You seen those protozoans there?
Long eons crumbling into dust.
Live fast, die neo.
I's not headin' their way, dude.

Just get a life!
Three lobes good, two lobes bad. No sweat!
That evolution's some good shit.
Don't split, go sexual.
Make love not walls. Forevah!