

My sister's neighbours

My sister and I were neighbours twenty years, more; between us just a bathroom, an open bedroom door.
And when we moved apart, our letters and our calls gave us both instant entry beyond the other's walls.

And then my sister's rapists came.
First they were thieves, battering into her house,
Savaging the phone at its power source,
Lurching her drawers out of her cupboards,
Gouging themselves into her body,
Grinding her secrets into the floor,
Stealing her sleep, her trust, her self.

Then they moved in next door,
Just out of sight, but heard at every hour,
Their dull bass thump vibrating in her heart,
And quickening her pulse,
Sharing a full time conversation in her head.

Their garbage smell festered in her garden,
Their washing loomed over the fence, ragged, stained.
They threw a fence up around both their homes
Keeping them inside together
Keeping me outside.

Whenever I came to see my sister,
She was more in their shared place than ours.
Her head turned quickly, straining to their voices.
She would rise to shut the window,
But the room was hot with their breath.

She was polite to me as you would be to a visitor
Who's foreign to your estate,
And has to come in through a boom gate

Guarded by a visored man.

The flowers I gave her had little fragrance,
Their scent confined to their own tight little circle.
By the end of the afternoon they were spoiling at the edges.

The only thing she could offer me
Was a cup of coffee with the cakes I brought,
But she'd lost her liking for sweet things
And sat crumbling the pieces between her fingers,
Waiting for me to go,
Waiting for the sound of her neighbours
Waiting for their return.

I closed the gate behind me as I went,
Leaving her with her neighbours,
Returning to the other country
Where I now live.
