

The sepia bone is still at last

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Contents

Sandstone	3
Valuers & Surveyors	4
Lincolnshire Reds	4
Unable to touch	6
As good as it gets	6
Contentment	7
Oak and Birch	8
Forever changes	9
What was to become	10
Constructive criticism	11
Always more	11
Gone fishing	12
Labyrinth	13
Emeritus	14
Back to the future	14
A tape & a theodolite	16
Neat & Tidy	17
Buena Vista in Whitby	17
Streetlights, sky and sea	18
Archway	19
Love	19
A musicians kind of life	20

Sandstone

Old books
Bones
Tears of dried up dust

Parchment
Pretty pinks
Artists
On the candelabra caper

Eyes closed
Eyes less than halfway
Wide open

Turned stones
Clay specks
Decked on dormant rust

Just because you can
Indeed so much you must

Just because I am
In the time I learned to trust

Old books
Where now the repetition
Translated from dawn to dusk

By shores of the longer river
With the smooth pebble
Skipping on the water

Parchment
Old white
Egyptian paper
Stated in fair governance

The night of the elder moon
With the dream
In the palm of your hand

Valuers & Surveyors

I saw a cow
Six or seven months in calf
Sold for seventeen hundred guineas

I borrowed a book
Writing Poetry by Doris Corti
With an introduction that I mistook
For being about me

Galvanized railings
Concrete slabs for seats
The auctioneers rattle repeats
I face untold deceit

Sadness, but on reflection
Surefooted the sun shone through

Lincolnshire Reds

Two brothers
Almost beyond middle aged
Hardly well dressed
Although one is sharper
Than the other

An older woman
With a clay compact complexion
A good hat
With a broad velvet rim

The smiling man
With the bidding catalogue
Among a group of friends
Or well wishers

The lad
In the ring with a stick
Turns the cows in calf
Steadily around

We are observers
You though a regular
Only came for the day
...later

Back forty miles to Boston
To the thousand acres
Of the potato king
Before the marriages fell apart

How hideous
To have worn that soft cotton
Silk striped multi coloured shirt
How oblivious

That even though you talk of
Yourself as the country boy
You could not be less at home
Anywhere as here today

In the cattle market
Where the Lincolnshire Reds
Are a worthy prize
For the valued price of breeding

Unable to touch

Is the sugar high or low
Does the doubt walk in
If or why or now I know
Where to next begin

Always to reach
For the drift of sleep
To meet a keep
Beneath the crinkled craving

I'm waded as drowned
Underneath my skin
Awake I shake to take
The guidance within

Is the autumn just for show
A funny kind of weather
If or why or now I know
The end to turn my tether

As good as it gets

Soft leather
Plumped up cotton
Cushions

Vast chairs of day or night
With backrest
For support

Anyhow this is
Some way to heaven
At rest

Look at the breeze
Feel some way
Secure

On the brink of reason
Available
The entrance fairwith

Contentment

All manner of persuasions
In shadows
They flicker by

O my, o my, how to be
Enslaved
To this, the naked eye

Behind the eyelids
Somewhere deeper
Creepier than the smile

The golden mile
Of pleasure
A treasure trove of ever

One last line
A chance to say goodbye
The romance stayed together
Only at the final furlong

Did we start to cry
It takes such a toll
Washing flagstones
Wringing sheets

It's a death step
The kneeling
From these knees
It is too far to fall

Sit in silence
Flit in between
The nurses and the carers
Just in case you sneeze

Oak and Birch

One last line
It comes to us all
At any rate
To all I ever knew

Now it's my turn
Turn up the radio
Music maestro please
Open the windows

Bring on the clowns
& the comics...

Laughter
Always let there be
Laughter

You gave out leaves
I talk of lesser things
You turned to grieve
I heard the robin sing

We do this for a purpose
Though always to remember
To surprise our audience

You turn up the heat
I listen: tick, tock, tick, tock
You in your unsettled seat
Turn off the lights and twist the lock

We do this for a reason
& always, but I don't remember
Why we still wait until the autumn

Forever changes

A war fought
In a memorial hall
Blood on the pages
Foot off the ball

Angry young men
Girls with viscous hearts
Though let me give you an
Explanation, of pimps and tarts

Set for you a scene
My six string machine
Gun with sunlight
Smoke clouds stay evergreen

Talk of freedom
Talk of peace
Lease the land of reason
Free from past identity

Or any other bollocks
That you think I might
Forget, or to get even
To think I'm right

& forget to fall
All over in love
Or worse to regret
That I once held you by the hand

What was to become

I was thirteen, forty one years ago
And forty one was
The number of my house
Thirteen years past this day

You marched on London
Or flew in from the states
Via Donegal

Read your poetry
From the lectern
In that domed roof
Circular celebratory hall

In Bradford of all places
Handing out fallen
Or stolen sticks & leaves

Without a hint of
Maharaja or Punjab

Or Afghanistan
Or even
God bless them all

Is it for better or worse
To have travelled
& have fought the few

Is it for richer or poorer
To have liberated
& taught the new

I was thirteen, forty one years ago
I forget your answers
But I see your hand

Undeniably white
In the dark light
Of the trick twisted stick
Beside blighty's blight flickered leaf

Constructive criticism

Take it on the chin
But at least
Let them know
- You did it on purpose

OK your literary history
Is thin
The holler & the din
The scholar under your skin

F words that say luck
Stalls of all frustration
Your station
Stick to it, don't duck

You blew it
Do you hear what I say
But I know you loved the game
- And the joy of its play

Always more

Never is ever enough
Forever
Still some stuff

Archimedes
Pythagoras
Blunt & Blair

Does it matter what they wear
Or even
If they care

Water
Into wine
Frost pines to share

Clever is never enough
Whatever then to
Call my bluff

Gone fishing

Constructs
Everyone makes them
Tear ducts
Dried now and forever always

First
Thump before forsaken
Struggled hugs
Unknowingly awakened

It's what you want
Or so you say
But what I want to know
Is how you know

What you want
- Just how
Long
Is your list

If it's not broken
Then don't fix it
But
What if it is broken

Even now
You smile
How deep must be
Your memory

Or in sleep
How easy
That it is
To forgive

Labyrinth

Before my eyes
Several stages of glass
Windows, binoculars, spectacles
An even longer, clearer view

Air cruise cabin portholes
Light house look out stations
Waves of seas, shades
Of clouds on mountains
Some place seldom renewed

Disposable income
Unfortunate wealth
Gifts so easily made
What did you want to say
Way, a long way
Over yonder

Is it night or day
And even would
That money matter
As you scatter seeds
For the hawks
And doves that prey

The lay lines
In peace time
Shattered
Flatter yourself
Latterly
That you turned away

Emeritus

Would that such a presence
A clarity

*O bother, not another one
Boy he can go on*

Transfixed, transposed, transitory
The story of

*Yes I kind of know what you mean
But those eyes just see them sparkle*

If only I or they could understand
I feel so much but want to say

*So little wonder that we are still here
Heaven knows what's for afters*

Back to the future

Why would you
Put those words together
You know –

I love you
You make me laugh
Then you say you want to stay forever!
How much fun in the playground is that to be

Yes I know cacophony is not de rigueur
For only yesterday I spoke
With the Jehovah's
Though I thought them quite unsure

Your words, usually a complete sentence
With a subject and a meaning
& sometimes even the trick
Of an hidden snare

I remind you

That John Clare
Walked into or out of
The insanity sanatorium
With windblown hair

Or maybe he did
Or maybe
He did not
I have no way of knowing

You said to meet at six
I heard the clock strike seven
What a hick, caught up in the thick fog
Of my own monotone monologues

I ring you on the mobile
Text to say I love you

Blow kisses out the window
Thrash around in a panic of a sweat

Why would I
Put these words together
You know -

I love you
You make me laugh
Just then to look at the photograph
As ever

Of you sliding
With a grin
Gliding down the wires
Backwards

A tape & a theodolite

Straight strip lines of sunlight
Cut through the countryside
Nestled on the reflected surface
Of the canal's dark water

Going nowhere, going forwards
Going backwards to return
Going slow where nowhere beckons
Reckon on the time to burn

Straight out, on and over the horizon
Trenches cut for Roman roads
Rail lines through the meadows came
Articulated trucks on tar macadam plains

Going nowhere, going forwards
Going backwards to return
Going fast where money reckons
Beckon on the time to turn

Straight out strips of reflected stocks
From Norton Disney to Southampton Dock
A reasoned trip, a change of season soon
The long approach of an autumn afternoon

Neat & Tidy

Lines of a linear life
Discontinued curves
Of emotion and latitude

Lips fall over what you heard
How absurd the continuum
Of worthwhile strife

Clips carried in closed containers
Devotion plays again
Come Saturday night

All the same the songs we made
The glue, clued up with our dues
That holds together what's often true

Buena Vista in Whitby

Gulls fly
Out of factory chimneys
In my dream
By the sea

Feet shuffle
Knees; cartilages, tissue
All alive
In some vernacular motion

Cigars
As big as men, if they could
They would
Have smoked them

Streetlights, sky and sea

Only you and only me
In the whole

Of here and now
Or Whitby as we stroll

...soft lads complicate
Their night out

With a fight, or with a fear
Of roustabouts

*You are my boyfriend aren't you
Why do you leave me all alone*

*You're my darkness aren't you
Hand me please your testosterone*

*Only you and only I
The girl, happy that I love you*

*Look after her
For she is someone special blue*

Only you and only me
And corporation cosmetic lawns

In the sodium & the dark of night
By the sea, before the dawn

Archway

Semi tone
The sepia
Bone
Is still at last

The epigraphs
Chromatic mask
Sails on home
Sails a tome

Beside the
Wholesome weather
Held together by clouds
And thunderous winds

The epitaphs
Negative task
Sails to home
Sails a lone

Love

All the strains
To chains of loss
You remain
The sane refrain at such a cost

Ten thousand years
Or more
Quite incredulous
To conjure up such a score

Of dark nights
Comedies, tragedies
Poetry & music
Calls of past civilizations

When all that I had to say
In near or far history -
Hear my seven stories
All of them the words of love

A musicians kind of life

Stillness in your rhythm
Your engaged smile
Shares your past
Provision

Tonight you sing
A song
To say goodbye

As you will tomorrow

As maybe
You did yesterday
& you might
Just go on forever

Stillness in your eyes
Your blue
And purple fingers
Cast a fast precision

Stillness in your skin
Your leather
Wrinkled baggage
A chorus of the life within

Tonight you sing
Your song
To say goodbye

As you will tomorrow

As maybe
You did yesterday
Say thanks *Ibrabim*
Thank you forever

Tonight you sing
Your song
& you might
Just go on forever

