

# **The Word's the Thing**

## **The Poems**

### **Episode 6**

#### **Background**

These poems were written in deliberate attempts to cover a range of lengths and styles. Some are meant to be taken quite lightly; others are meant to be lingered over. The people involved in bringing these poems together have donated them for use in the Year of Reading in Birmingham.

## **Bells**

They strike out in the depth of night  
and take their toll  
on the sleeping soul  
leaving you awake  
and wondering  
why God  
condones torture  
by bell-chime.



## Dark Matter

This is the world:  
It's all there is,  
yet with more to things than meets the eye.

Dark matter.  
Impossible to see.  
Inside the lightness.  
Darkly different  
Clumps of nothingness  
Insubstantially mattering.

If this missing mass were not there  
our worlds would fall away,  
parting from their celestial skeleton:  
That empty scaffold on which everything finally hangs

## **Maybe**

Maybe the only way to experience pain  
is to hold yourself together long enough  
to imagine it as more than it really is.  
Maybe silence is a force too loud to ignore  
in its insistence that we speak into it  
instead of quietly sitting out its storm.  
Maybe a pace that could last forever  
is the only way to explore those sharp edges  
where one idea rubs up against another.  
Maybe each summer recreates its own intimacy  
of drowsy air that carries you up into imaginings  
of everything and anything that sometime  
just may be.



## **Obesity's link to social deprivation: the most obese place being Hull**

It was just another Wednesday afternoon  
market day in Hull.

An expansive man lurched out of a chip shop  
and fell into the unconditional welcome  
of an epidemic of obesity.

A mutual agreement suddenly stumbled upon,  
incalculable in its proportions and consequences.  
Creative collisions on some statistical terrain.

A fall from grace  
on just another Wednesday afternoon in Hull.



## **Birthday Celebrations**

(August 14/15 2007)

Two sixty year olds  
not quite sharing a birthdate  
that reflects their differences  
back to each other  
all down the years  
and all that was done and all that was not.

Twinned by their births  
to separate futures  
looping their histories  
onto intersecting arcs  
their paths now crossing again  
in not quite simultaneous celebration.

Messages sent to each other  
as now, in their different maturities,  
one prospers, one struggles;  
one bullish, one muted;  
one coming together, one falling apart;  
each reliant on the other after all the years.



## **Iron Man**

Iron manhood:  
with your  
heavy metal  
faceless mask;  
Riveting blankness  
cold-shouldering  
past industrial heritages.

Rusted roundhead:  
with your  
designer artform  
welded scars;  
Breathless structure  
over-shadowing  
current romantic sensitivities.



## **Mind Control**

After three days  
I will tell you  
that the Second World War was won by Japan,  
that the moon landing was faked by men from Roswell,  
and that everything I've ever known is simply a dream  
from which I am due to awake.

After two more days  
I will tell you  
that black is blue  
and red is white;  
that I am you  
and wrong is right,  
and that everything I've ever held dear is a nightmare  
from which there is no escape.

Beyond that  
I will tell you  
anything at all.

## The death of a man who fell

Brown bomber jacket  
Blue jumper and tie  
Having no more to say, went outside  
Alone on the terrace  
and fell.

Becoming in that instant:  
A body in the road  
A tragic accident  
A state of shock  
An unpleasantness in the night.  
The death of a man who fell.

## **Columns still march**

This is no longer an age  
for ragged bands  
of weary souls  
singing themselves to slaughter.

This is not an age  
for flashes of bayonets,  
the banter of comrades  
wishing themselves far from battle.

This is an age  
for the ins and outs of rapid deployment,  
units and warriors,  
drones and rangers;  
for the laser guidance  
of busting bunkers.

It is an age for  
greenzones and checkpoints,  
humvees and carbombs,  
insurgent collateral  
and unfriendly fire from ones allies.

## **Lloyd's Starbucks**

Well-suited meetings  
Banking on better outcomes  
Folders at breakfast  
A tall wet latte to stay  
Ideas to go.



## **Models**

Smaller than expected  
yet every centimetre a supermodel.  
In an outsized nation with oversized attitudes.  
A model to follow  
in support of everyday life  
being consumed at well-measured rates.



## Words

I can be rough with them:  
Knocking lines into shape,  
chopping bits out from here or there,  
forcing them into rhymes or rhythms  
from which they simply slither free.

I can be cajoling:  
Luring them out with hooks,  
wheeling deep into their structures,  
coaxing something out of nothing  
and leaving it for any who come by.

