

The Word's the Thing

The Poems

Episode 4

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.

Losing the plot

I've lost the plot.
I left it here
in this poem
but now, on rereading,
it's not to be found – it's hidden far, far away.

I've lost the thread.
It tied up ideas
into new insights
but now, on reflection,
it's really snapped – ripped off and away.

I've lost the rhythm.
It drove things along
in patterned sound
but, now that I'm listening,
it's silent -

Hammer Horror rises from the dead

Your blood will run cold as

Frankenstein has his well-earned revenge
on Dracula rising once more from the grave;
and Mummies decide to return from space
to hear at last the Werewolf's curse;
as Quatermass experiments with candle and bell
on monsters recently transported from hell;
whilst behind the scenes the barely Invisible Man
tracks zombies and the truly Abominable Snowman
in all new terrifying technicolour
at a screen near you
tonight.

The equation and the egg

There is an elegant equation
that defines the degrees of curve
the hardness of shell
the shadings of colour.
This pattern of numbers
captures degrees of breakage
the glutinous flow
the density of yolk.
All the essence of eggness
is contained in the maths
but however it adds up
and however hard it tries
the equation can never become the egg.

Being me

Scanning back issues through my life
In episodes
Going over and over
The swings and the roundabouts
of childhood's dank darklands.
A huge question mark.

Challenges in received versions
Things now at odds
Ends barely comprehended
Without recriminations
shaping what I am now.
That's the way it goes.

A lattice of arrogances
All confusions
Almost equilibriums
Through bonds easily severed
on the crooked corners
of those one way streets.

Now here in this adulthood
Having got there
With my accumulations
In case of emergency
Held for security
As long as I'm me.



When time runs out

When time runs itself far out of breath
things no longer sort themselves out
and memories reshape in the mind.
Best not be open to wind and hail
safer to be snug, not out and about
when time runs itself far out of breath.

Its then that things default to fail
best-done plannings reset to nought
and memories reshape in the mind.
Firm directions start to derail
solidly knowns are worried with doubt
when time runs itself far out of breath.

Things once fast begin to fail
old rules no longer hold clout
and memories reshape in the mind.
Steadfast colours start to fade
silence builds itself into a shout
when time runs itself far out of breath
and memories reshape in the mind.



Man with no ties

Man with no ties:
is still hoping to meet
imaginative, outgoing, sincere person
with good sense of humour.

Man with no ties:
into coffee and reading and walking and talking
- definitely no cats or timewasters-
comes with a history
going to waste;
own hair and teeth.

Man with no ties:
would really like to live happily ever after
with unconventional exotic dancer
able to cook a good stew.

Man with no ties:
odd but strangely attractive,
hopes you are still reading this
and that you could be the one.

PS

My wife says not to mention
how loudly I snore
but to really stress
how much I'm seriously
in need of some new ties.

Ode to urban

Enough grass to bloat out the cattle
Enough trees to stack up a beacon
Enough rainfall to flood through a fenland.

There's more rural left than you think
Taking up the space between our towns
Holding conurb from suburb
Buffering mapgrey from roadway
Holding real life apart.

So:
Send for the tarmac
Mix up the concrete
Bring in the builders
and forgers of towns.

Pull back the flowery
Force back the greenery
Uproot the pastures
and the edges of fields.

Slap down some hardcore
Truck in some readymade
Slice through the forageland
and the times long ago.

Obituary

Maybe you've heard of him
and maybe you haven't;
it doesn't really matter
not to him, not now he's dead.

He's suddenly more famous
than he ever knew how;
with a thousand words heaped on
his life, charting it's route to an ending.

Sentences stretched to a limit
covering what might have been;
fulsomely all-encompassing
yet missing the point of it all.

It marks, for some, a passageway
of words to aid an onward journey;
still at the end of the day
it seems much, much too late
to think of rewriting a life.



Digital

1,6

2,7

X,Z

Y,C

Combination One:

Opens up knowledge of the secrets of life
giving us hope that things can always get better
and tantalises us with expectations way beyond our horizons.

Combination Two:

Opens up the kennel door to free the black dogs
offering us times of bleakness and gloom
and draws off traces of energy we try hard to retain.

Combination Three:

- ah, Combination Three –
Combination Three
opens up my heart.

Maybe 2050 is just one more year

I was thinking last night
about that time in the future,
between 2030 and 2070,
when all predictive graphs kick off
asymptotically.

It is supposed to be
when all that is held in common,
everything always taken for granted,
clicks on to a worldly endgame
catastrophically.

Of course pundits can err:
2001 was less surreal,
1984 was less than fiction.
Maybe 2050 will turn out to be just one more year ...

