

Lapse

All for you, hammerheads and brickies, once threatened and now at peace, work only to music above the rentaskip catastrophe that is High Street, rebuilding in a blaze of scaffolding when we skirt the stanchions and empty windows, the foundations roused again from their weighty slumbers to bask in the swelter of a few more days, just as Londinium was clumsily aired by an Anglo-Saxon mob, and anonymous zealots inched Ilium through her nine lazy beds... Yes, all for you (or so it seems), Methuselah of my heart, watcher of my waking, sighing now, having seen it all before and making sure we never escape your version of the past—the planted opiates of parades, wide streets and Sundays at an open, well-managed fire, *The only true faith is a martyred faith*—the faces excavated from your imploding memory, their names, Sarah, George, Walter, Davy, nothing grand or heroic, just those who overtook you on the road to destruction, their sheer ordinariness making us what we are... The car turns a corner, the catacombs, the columbaria, and again—a little lapse, a blank slate—you call me by a name I haven't heard before.

The Mouth

All those who love the mouth and lean on it
bite off its words to ease digestion.
It's one of their own, a class apart,
cursing in a dialect akin to verse.

They love it because it says what they can't—
straight to the point, not behind the door.
They bow and scrape and sing its praises—
“they” being “them”, not you or me.

We're more detached and out of here anyway
with no answer that isn't glib, and run a mile
rather than care what any of them think,
it not being part of our religion to make minutes

or tell tales, and as for the mouth, out loud
it's only a hole in the head. Shut your ears then
while the gob grows into a gap in the cloud,
a break in transmission, a big cheesy grin,

the roof-tops one day, the tree-tops the next:
unbiodegradable and beyond market forces,
it uses any old flimflam to suck them in—
a suit and tie; money, fear and jargon.

So take an infinite breath. Here it is at last.
Repeat all you've heard. Give your mind a break.
Words turn into swords. Songs into chants.
“Ceasefire” and “Perdition” are clichés already.

Tribe

Thrawn underdogs philosophical in defeat,
they wear lanate coats, and soothe haffets
with electuaries ancient and modern distilled
from year-old honey born of the skep.
For it is written these people must ignore
ministrations and venomous churches, fear not
the empty road and sunshine, the misgivings
of hindsight; these Laodiceans, decent skins,
scholars of quietude and rivers, experts
in longarms and backstairs wit, these holders
of zodiacs and wordy ephemera, their symbolic
narratives and epic abstractions memorised
then buried in a quicklimed ditch,
these backwoodsmen, pariahs, pye-dogs,
suckling their babes on the devil's buttermilk.