

Coming to Terms

I'd never dwelt on my peculiar gait
—a slightly to-fro swagger; the way
I can't seem to push a wheelbarrow straight.

But these days of being able to buy
size 14 short-length trousers off the peg
(UK size) I'm having to think about why

there's always the same discrepancy
—one hem rubbing a shoelace, the other
hugging an anklebone. And just lately

sifting through the biscuit tins of photos
(I've been meaning to sort them out for years.
Why so many beaches, flowers and rainbows

and unbelievable sunsets?) I find
my stance is feet-apart-and-one-knee-bent
as if countering some imagined incline.

It's unbalancing, this having to admit
that one leg's shorter than the other.
Somewhere along the line I've learned to tilt

against the grain; I've learned to subcontract
shortcomings. It's a safety net of sorts:
I don't look down, and try not to look back.

The Misunderstanding

She went her own sweet way
(there was a touch of the gypsy in her)
and nobody ever thought to say

We'd really like you to stay—
afraid they might discover
she went her own sweet way

because of the sky's relentless grey.
They couldn't control the weather,
so nobody ever stopped to say

The grass is greener here... Make hay...
(not even the ones who loved her).
She went her own sweet way,

flitting from wave to wave along the bay
—a solitary sandpiper—
and nobody ever dared to say,

scared she'd suddenly fly away;
and when she did, they told each other
She went her own sweet way;
there was nothing we could do or say.