

Choosing an England

Bacon chunks, raw and fatty,
will do to attract crabs
out where the Blyth meet sea.
Tin helmet shells, miraculous
close up, are no protection. Captured forms
trace their fall-out of sand before
you throw them from roped buckets
back into the frothy dark, moving.

Idle Ours, Karl Marx, Thalassa...
An odd name along the row of beach huts
distracts from a glimpsed interior.
(A kettle whistling, rocky
on a Primus; that larder, winter-damp,
left open to air.) And you might think
you've really made it: an England
of your choice, complete

with groynes, lighthouse (twinkly, inland)
and cannons pointed, redundant,
across Sole Bay to some past exchange.
Behind these shelters though,
from stalls of shingle, tiny explosion
in orange streaks, so bright
you calculate the damage
to the retina. Marigolds.

Take a mushroomy pebble,
worth it just for the feel,
and blip it across water.
Watch it scamper, dimple, bomb.
Stop to study, a few paces on,

some dry pickings: rice paper
texture, a dead gull's ribcage
of crushable short straws.

Light and shadow spider
over moving detail—across
the beached evening a car
joins a long line of dots.
Red signs alert you to Sizewell B
as you indicate right and swing
towards Earl Soham, alive now
to the lights flashing.