

TWO POEMS



Howard Wright

THE BRACELET

Fanned out, lark-risers, men and boys fishing
along the parapet of a long low bridge,
all morning landing this and that, when one son
sniggles something furious on the riverbed,
a deep feeder, heavy, a live wire raging against
its torrential luck (for it's a secular fish),
the boy reeling back, rapidly freezing,
dragging its weight in slow motion then giving slack,
then letting go, allowing the fierce catch
to drive forward thinking itself free (an idealistic fish),
only for him to reel and haul and let go again,
his ankles braced with the pressure
into the angle of the wall, if once
then a dozen times, until the evil streak of liquid,
that slippery apodal anger, snaps clear,
is spat out by the fast shallow river
and its stonewashed Ophelias, and ascends writhing,
tying and untying itself like the bait on the barbs
clutching its slimy guts. Fearless,
the boy wrestles the shining hatred to the ground
to remove the immovable hook, making
the wild thing curl, squeeze and embrace
like a long-lost forearm his forearm, from genuine pain
or overt affection, in a lithe Celtic pattern,
a *fin-de-siècle* spiral, an ornate looping bracelet
that would stay with the youngster, the scar
from knuckles to elbow ready to spring to life
when he eats that flayed devil boiled with onions,
its vicious alien head imprinted on his palm.

INTERFACE

The tourbus pulls up, and those who pay
Get out: it's the world and its mother,
Camcorders are not as steady as they
Used to be. Someone's lost their brother.

Comedy is debate. Bed and breakfast
Is geography. Education is consumerism,
Biology is mathematics and mighty Belfast
A single street. Religion is schism,

Musical instruments and quangocrats;
A land of feudal executives-in-chief.
Gravy trains go there with fat cats.
Chuckies and Brethren choose faith or disbelief.

And there's us, somewhere in the middle, stuck
In the middle. Talk of love and you're laughed
Out of court. And talking of love, fuck
The begrudgers, the heroes, the morally daft.