

Days

(A Coronet)

1

Days are too short to measure the time
survivors survive, wishing they
had saved the plank to cling to
during more private storms.

2

Storms the Tax Office, takes a red
delicatessen ticket, sits and rehearses
his case, trying not to stare at
the desk fan shaking its head.

3

Overhead the parent squalls in circles
as a juvenile unspangled starling
crosses the road in a cat's
mouth, one wing flapping.

4

Flapping halyards on the flagless pole
emphasising the Magistrates' Court fire
warning shots above
the heads of passers-by.

5

By passing eastwards in endless
procession across the fens, the grey
flat-bottomed clouds add a sense
of direction to the days.

Brought up

(A Coronet)

1

Brought up on underage drink drunk
from dented cans, we relished each dent,
till keepers reported the crack
of ring-pulls in the covert.

2

Covert yokels maybe, but never known
to mount a horse, filly or colt, or
any animal with more than
two legs, we had standards.

3

The standard evasion of the gooseberry
bush was accepted without question,
following the discovery
that most mothers have one.

4

Mothered (and besotted) by an angel (sots
that we were) whose kisses made us men,
in a beauty spot with burst matt-
resses and ruined playpens.

5

Pen plays over paper, can be overheard
harking back to haps and mishaps
which, brought up better, I would
never have brought up.

Orison

A morning washed to gleamy skin and bone, to the vapoury
 radiance left by
 Rain, to such absolutes as my own shadow burnt on treebark
 and hedgeleaf and
 Living its other life there while I walk this present, provisional
 body towards
 The vanishing point, peering backwards to see a small fleet of
 ducks muckraking
 On the grass verge—for earthworms, I guess, whose thirst has
 brought them out

To savour the aftermath of last night's downpour, blind blood-
 coloured bodies
 Sliding through raptures of damp, through such palpable slow
 ecstasies of drip
 And slobber, the smells of freshened earth their paradise as the
 ducks peck and
 Swallow the morning's manna—a gift they give thanks for in an
 anthem of quacks
 As they waddle a swamp of sunlight, totally for the moment and
 at home in it.