

Elderly Iceberg off the Esplanade

Last night it came knocking, a first
since the end of the Ice Age. A stray eddy brought it,
a backhander from the Gulf Stream. It was heading
inland, could it be to spawn?

It had jumped ship from the loosening Arctic.
Was a waster, pock-marked, sunken-featured,
in its mud mac. Lurked in the sea lane, only wanted love.

Was a monster, unnaturally born

from the wreck of a thousand-tonne reefer.

Unassuming little thing, it was huge
in no definite sense. Past help, on the edge of extinction,
it still had it in it to bite

beneath the waterline. It was a blatant falsehood;
admitted as much to your face. Call it a bad dream
if you like but when I looked this morning
it was still in sight

trapped in a tide pool, half a mile out
on the silt you can't trust your weight to,
not to bear you, not to let you go.

It was all I could do

not to wade out and follow. It wasn't the last,
just a message from last-ness, a crumpled
brown parcel from an unsuspected

awful aunt who might

just turn up any day to stay. Naturally
it was impossible; such things have to be
believed – *quia impossibile est*.

That species of *true*.

Don't breathe a word of this;
they'll be heaving it out, to *preserve*. Let it go.
This world should not detain it.

It would do the same for you.

Meander

which is anything
but indirection.

The river desires

with a fixed and single-
minded purpose
to be everywhere,

every drop of it free

to fall into conversation
with a loose
grain here, a slow-

eroding seepage there,
of possibility –

such gentle rigour
with raggy pink balsam
at its edges, gasholders beyond

and the plosh of a rat shape

into water
eddy away
also part of the argument:

we shall return to this,
later,

no hurry,
but we shall return.

The Moveable Island

...shifts, like the hull of a boat
left drifting, grounded on a different shoal
each morning, in the midway, out
where the Severn is letting, has let,
itself go into sea, like a thought into sleep:
now you're there, now you're not.

Today the outlook's vague, the weather
iffy. *Precipitation within sight: good... Lom,*
losing identity... If God could *dither*
here's how it would look: these grand
tides like a lesson in bad governance, all power, no
fixed purpose. No wonder the island
keeps its distances. Its reticence. Whichever
shore you look from, it seems closer to the other.

It's an abiding absence: in some
lights, a prison hulk; or, grey mornings after
the storm, a lighthouse stump;
a tanker, *stricken* (as they say, as if
the load that leaked, to blight our foreshores,
was heart's-blood or grief).

Sometimes it wallows, half
submerged, King Log hauled to and fro in state
twice a day – a life or afterlife
beyond us, though you can almost
see a way at lowest tides from shoal to shoal
stitched with bird-tracks where a soul
not weighted by its body might – but for one last
narrow channel between – might just pass.

And now I'm closer, in the narrow
focus of my father's old field-glasses, adrift
on a plain of brown wave-furrows
till there: a skirt of mud-rock, un-
approachable by any craft, steepens to paler grey,
with lichen blotches, then green
above the tide-line, grass, almost

wind-dried, salt-pickled, enough for a castaway
goat. A self-sufficiency. Or so
his binoculars say, though what
do they know – army surplus before I was born,
discharged from the ranks maybe
for just such imaginings: seeing a place that is not
for owning, most there only when you look away?