

Thinking of how he had been, I
recalled his rough fame. A grafter,
A shifter of stone-chip mountains,
A sought-after deep trencher;
A man of renown among
the unrenowned.

Years of tearing his gut
out in self exploitation
earned him a few bright
coins above the wage,
and the combined accolades
of the exploiter and exploited.

His swaggering strength was
stilled when a trench collapse
smothered his small value:
'Our company's safety record
- a cursory glance would
have warned him. '

I saw him in town today,
confused now, disorientated.
He inspects meticulously the
same few shop fronts/hour
upon hour, never passing through
their fascinating portals.

Signing on, his frayed cap
hangs from his hand like
a limp flag of surrender.
'Late again - how many warnings!'
shrills the spotless young clerk
radiant with importance.

Her voice echoes around the
room, unabsorbed by the
bricks he had humped.
He nods his assent to everything,
his humility seeping down/to
the foundations he had hewn there.