

Flowering

As colliery manager,
her husband had found Cupid
in the consistency of tonnage.
Enamoured of figures,
he accomplished the movement of coal
with all the finesse
of his pen's excited strokes.
And on Sundays,
hugged by his leather chair,
he would peruse the works of Gibbon.

Their garden was her domain.
In springtime, hatted and gloved
and averting her eyes from fornicating nature,
she would tend and replenish.
Bees and flowers were quite safe,
with no obvious carnality in their interaction.

Her odd job man came twice in each week;
and through the years
she suffered his person,
addressing him only to instruct.
Once, she had found him lopping the hedges,
his lips vivid
through the pit dirt still on him,
and his clothes seeping an odour
of dank places.

Chill with loathing, she had sent him away.
He smothered his resentments,
affecting humility for the payment's sake.
It topped up his collier's wage,
helped fill his glass,
and fund brief interludes
in the arms of some honest wanton.

It is all long past:
they have seen their seasons through,
and here in the nursing home,
bees and blooms are replaced
by the sterility of potted silks.
Yet capricious time,
and their lives' exhausted soil,

have sprouted a final paradox,
inseperable now,
they shuffle the lengths of corridors,
holding hands, exchanging the kiss of infants,
and sharing incoherence
in the flowering of a strange benevolence.